

Dispute Erupts in House On Meetings With Nixon

By JAMES M. NAUGHTON

Special to The New York Times

Continued From Page 1, Col. 7

WASHINGTON, Nov. 15 — The Democratic leader in the House of Representatives, Thomas P. O'Neill Jr., accused President Nixon today of trying to "curry favor with his prospective grand jurors" by inviting members of Congress to meet with him at the White House.

The charge by the Massachusetts Democrat ignited a partisan dispute over a resolution authorizing the House Judiciary Committee to spend \$1-million on its inquiry into the possible impeachment of the President. The resolution was approved by a vote of 367 to 51.

In the Senate, meanwhile, Republicans who met last night with the President said privately that Mr. Nixon had accused former Attorney General Elliott L. Richardson of misleading the Senate Judiciary Committee in sworn testimony about his role in the dismissal of Archibald Cox, the first Watergate special prosecutor.

Although some accounts were that Mr. Nixon had declared flatly that Mr. Richardson "lied," the White House denied it and one of the Senators said the President had not used the word but had clearly implied that the former Attorney General had not told the truth.

Mr. O'Neill said in a brief House speech that the series of meetings between Mr. Nixon and members of Congress — the fifth, sixth and seventh of which were held today — amounted to an "unbecoming, if not improper," attempt to influence the outcome of the impeachment investigation.

Common courtesy requires that House members accept White House invitations, Mr. O'Neill said, "so it is deplorable that the President should abuse the respect due his high office by using it to make members an offer they can't refuse."

House Republicans, 78 of whom attended a White House breakfast this morning, hissed at Mr. O'Neill's remarks and countered with accusations of partiality by Democrats who control the Judiciary Committee.

Representative Harold V.

Continued on Page 24, Column 3

Froehlich, Republican of Wisconsin, angrily asserted that the impeachment inquiry was being "run out of the majority leader's and the Speaker's offices" and said the Judiciary Committee's Democratic chairman, Peter W. Rodino Jr. of New Jersey, was merely "running the errands."

Representative David W. Dennis of Indiana, like Mr. Froehlich a minority member of the Judiciary Committee, called the \$1-million authorization "premature" and "improvident" and said there was "a danger of getting a predetermined result" to justify spending the money.

The incident on the House floor tended to obscure the latest signs of disharmony among Republicans as to the likelihood of Mr. Nixon's restoring public confidence in his Administration.

Kuykendall Is Convinced

Representative Dan Kuykendall, Republican of Tennessee, said after the poached egg and country ham breakfast that he wished "15 reporters could have been there" because, in his view, "no fair-minded person could fail to believe [Mr. Nixon] was telling the truth."

But other participants in the same session, such as Representative Peter A. Peyser, a Westchester Republican, said the White House meetings were no more than "opening step" and there was "still a great deal unanswered."

Mr. Peyser urged the President to release "immediately" the tape recordings of Watergate conversations not under subpoena by a Federal grand jury.

Ironically, perhaps, the House dispute forced an indefinite postponement of a meeting Mr. Nixon had scheduled for 50 Congressional Democrats. They were unable to leave the House this afternoon amid a series of procedural votes on the impeachment inquiry funds.

The conflict over Mr. Nixon's purported statement last night about the former Attorney General centered on Mr. Richardson's testimony that he had opposed White House attempts to persuade Mr. Cox to top trying to gain court orders to force the President to turn over Watergate tapes and documents.

Senator Roman L. Hruska of Nebraska said that Mr. Nixon had told the Republicans that Mr. Richardson's recollection was "inaccurate." Others who attended the White House meeting said that Alexander M.

Haig Jr., the President's chief of staff, had joined the discussion to say Mr. Richardson had in fact been an originator of the plans to curtail Mr. Cox's search for White House materials.

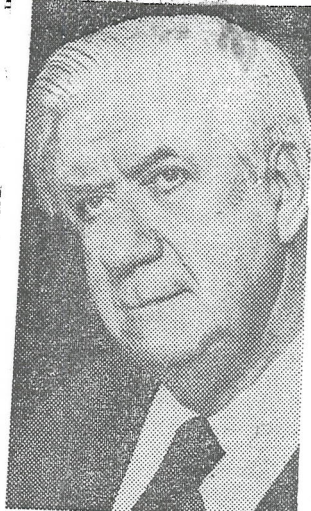
Kenneth W. Clawson, the deputy director of communications for the Nixon Administration, issued a statement tonight asserting that it was "simply no true" that the President had either accused Mr. Richardson of lying or suggested that the Senate investigate the possibility of perjury charge against the former Attorney General.

According to Mr. Clawson, however, the President did refer to "several versions of the events" that led up to Mr. Richardson's decision to resign rather than carry out an order from Mr. Nixon to dismiss Mr. Cox.

In his most recent Watergate discussions with members of Congress, Mr. Nixon repeated much of what he began telling the legislators on Monday. But some new details of his defense against charges of impropriety, as well as some blunt comments about his Watergate ordeal, emerged in the accounts of his guests. They included the following:

He told 14 Republican Senators last night that he paid \$50,000 to \$100,000 in taxes for 1969. This rebutted suggestions that he had taken unfair advantage of his position to avoid payment of Federal income taxes.

He reportedly did not dispute published accounts that favorable rulings on deductions for mortgage interest, real estate



The New York Times
Representative Thomas P. O'Neill Jr., the House majority leader.

taxes and the gift of his Vice-Presidential papers to the National Archives enabled him to pay only \$792 in 1970 and \$878 in 1971 on his \$200,000 Presidential salary.

He told his breakfast guests, according to Mr. Kuykendall, that three weeks after taking office in 1969, he was advised by former President Lyndon B. Johnson on the tax write-offs that were available in making

the gift of Mr. Nixon's Vice-Presidential papers.

The President spoke sympathetically to House Republicans of former Vice President Spiro T. Agnew, who resigned on Oct. 10 and was convicted of income tax evasion.

"Let's not pour any more coals on his head," Mr. Nixon said of Mr. Agnew, according to Representative Earl F. Landgrebe, Republican of Indiana.

Card for Agnew's Wife

Representative Ralph S. Regula, Republican of Ohio, said that the President had also pointed out that he had sent a birthday greeting to Mr. Agnew's wife, Judy, and that he did not "give a damn who knows it."

Several Republicans remarked on Mr. Nixon's feisty attitude, saying that he had seemed determined to persuade the public of his innocence of any wrongdoing in the scandals that have beset his Administration.

Mr. Peyser reported that the President had described his personal plight by saying:

"It's been seven months of pure hell over Watergate."

And Mr. Landgrebe, expanding on Mr. Nixon's public comment that "zealots" in his 1972 re-election committee had taken it upon themselves to act improperly, said that the President had offered some advice to Congressmen who will run for office again next year.

Always direct the campaign personally, said the President who shunned political details last year, to "be sure to keep the jackasses from taking over."

A number of Mr. Nixon's White House visitors said that the President had described, without indicating a final choice, the options that he might take in offering a public explanation for his conduct in office. Mr. Nixon was said to be searching for an "adversary" format in which he would be subjected to difficult questions.

Among the possibilities he cited were an appearance before Congress or a group of legislators — perhaps even the Senate Watergate Committee — or a televised news conference with only a few newsmen who would be able to follow up questions.

Representative Stewart B. McKinney, Republican of Connecticut, said that the President had left him with the impression that the White House was already preparing to issue a set of detailed "white papers" responding to specific allegations against Mr. Nixon.