

G.O.P. House Chief Backs Full Inquiry on Watergate

Eventual Impeachment Vote Assured as Rhodes Predicts Republican Support for Full Authority to Judiciary Panel

By BILL KOVACH

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Feb. 1. — An eventual vote on the impeachment of President Nixon was virtually assured today when the ranking Republican in the House of Representatives predicted strong minority support for a move to give the House Judiciary Committee full constitutional authority to pursue its inquiry.

The House Republican leader, John J. Rhodes of Arizona, endorsed the Judiciary Committee's resolution, scheduled for a vote Wednesday, and predicted that the White House would cooperate with the inquiry by furnishing "all relevant information" requested.

The resolution, already backed by nearly all Democratic members of the House, appears certain to pass and will set in motion a sequence of events that will almost surely require a vote on whether President Nixon should be impeached. The resolution will give the committee full subpoena power in its inquiry and commits the committee to report to the House a recommendation on the matter of impeachment.

Mr. Rhodes also rejected an effort by some Republican members of the Judiciary Committee who seek to restrict the inquiry by setting an automatic cutoff date of April 30 on the investigation.

Will Rely on Rodino

He told reporters today that he did not favor such a deadline but preferred instead to "rely on the word" of the Judiciary Committee's chairman, Peter W. Rodino Jr., New Jersey Democrat, who has promised to conclude the inquiry as quickly as possible.

The minority leader's statement came as three Republican members of the committee announced that they would try to amend the resolution when it came to a vote by the full House.

The resolution is, in parliamentary jargon, one of highest privilege and cannot be amended unless a majority of the House members vote to allow it. Most observers believe that there is too little support to allow such amendments, and that the resolution will pass in the form adopted by the committee yesterday.

In essence, the resolution would confer on the committee all constitutional authority to inquire into impeachment, in-

cluding the right to subpoena the presence of or evidence from anyone, including the President.

Three Republican members of the committee today filed separate statements of their intentions to add restricting amendments to the resolution, although all three have, like all other members of the committee, agreed to support the resolution in its present form. The three proposed amendments that had been offered, and rejected, when the resolution was considered in committee. They were as follows:

¶ A proposal by Representative Charles E. Wiggins of California that the committee's inquiry be limited to a search for "relevant" evidence as opposed to the present request in the resolution for power to seek "all necessary" evidence.

¶ A proposal by Representative Robert McClory of Illinois that the committee's powers automatically expire on April 30 and require a renewal after that date if the inquiry is incomplete.

¶ A proposal by Representative David W. Dennis of Indiana that the ranking Republican and Democrat on the Judiciary Committee each be given power to subpoena witnesses. As now worded, the resolution would allow subpoenas to be issued only when approved by both the ranking Democrat and Republican.

White House View

Mr. Wiggins's proposal seems to reflect the White House's attitude toward the impeachment inquiry. President Nixon has said that he will offer cooperation limited by precedent and his own wish not to erode the power of the Presidency. The majority on the committee take the position that the President cannot refuse a subpoena for his appearance or to furnish information.

Mr. Wiggins's request that the inquiry be restricted to "relevant" evidence echoed the word relayed to the press from the White House today by Senator Hugh Scott, Republican of Pennsylvania.

The White House, Senator Scott said, is willing to furnish "all relevant information" requested by the committee. He added that the question of relevancy could be determined "in consultations between majority and minority counsels of the committee and counsel for the President."