

PANEL PROMISES A 'FAIR' DECISION

House Officials Pledge to Search for All Available Data on Impeachment

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 5—Senior officials of the House Judiciary Committee pledged today to seek all available evidence to reach a "fair and impartial" judgment of President Nixon's conduct in office.

The assurances, offered on the eve of a House vote on a resolution granting broad subpoena powers to the committee, appeared designed to rebut White House suggestions that the impeachment inquiry was a partisan venture.

At a two-hour closed briefing for the committee, John M. Doar, the special counsel on impeachment, said that six investigative panels would "seek out all the facts—those that exonerate as well as those that may implicate" the President in wrongdoing.

Mr. Doar listed 31 subjects as "examples" of the scope of the inquiry — ranging from the Watergate break-in to the President's refusal to spend funds appropriated by Congress—in a formal report on the progress of the investigation.

But the report, made available later to newsmen, emphasized: "The mere fact that we are undertaking investigation into a particular subject should not be interpreted to mean that we think there was any wrongdoing there, or that any prejudgment of the evidence has been made. Charges are not proof."

No Advocates

The Democratic chairman, Representative Peter W. Rodino Jr. of New Jersey, and the ranking Republican, Representative Edward Hutchinson of Michigan, told newsmen that they had taken steps to be sure that none of the 90 staff members, including 39 lawyers, hired for the inquiry were advocates for or against the impeachment of Mr. Nixon.

Mr. Hutchinson said in response to questions that he share Mr. Rodino's assessment of the staff as "totally professional and objective."

Patrick J. Buchanan, a White House speech writer, has been quoted as saying that the impeachment inquiry was tantamount to a legislative "lynch mob." President Nixon told Congress in his State of the Union Address Wednesday that he would cooperate with the inquiry to the extent that it did not require "doing anything that weakens the office of the Presidency."

The committee voted unanimously on Thursday to seek House approval of a resolution directing the panel to determine "whether sufficient grounds exist" to impeach Mr. Nixon and authorizing the committee to use wide-ranging subpoena authority to obtain evidence from any source.

Approval Expected

The resolution is expected to be approved overwhelmingly tomorrow, although some Republicans are prepared to seek an amendment setting an April 30 deadline for completion of the inquiry. Mr. Hutchinson said he would support a parliamentary maneuver to offer the amendment, but that he expected it to be defeated.

The resolution would authorize the committee to require "the attendance and testimony of any person." Mr. Rodino said "that he believed the panel would not hesitate to seek direct testimony from Mr. Nixon if it's necessary in order to make a fair judgment."

But he said that the committee would generally seek voluntary compliance with requests for evidence before resorting to use of the subpoena power.

The Watergate special prosecutor, Leon Jaworski, has refused to turn over to the committee the evidence assembled for several Watergate grand juries here, contending that he was bound to adhere to the secrecy of the proceedings unless Chief Judge John J. Sirica of the United States District Court authorized disclosure of the material to the committee.

Possible Volunteering

Mr. Doar said he was "looking into" the possibility that the grand juries could themselves volunteer the information under precedents in Jefferson's Manual of Parliamentary Practice and Rules of the House of Representatives.

The manual specifies that one method by which an impeachment inquiry may be set in motion is "by charges transmitted . . . from a grand jury."

Mr. Jaworski's spokesman did not respond to an inquiry about the possible use of the precedent to resolve the dispute.

The House Republican Committee on Committees is scheduled to meet tomorrow to decide, among other matters, on the assignment of a Republican member to fill a vacancy on the Judiciary Committee.

Normally the committee seats are regarded as choice assignments, but the prospect of involvement in the impeachment inquiry has apparently limited the number of Republicans seeking to fill the vacancy.

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