

# Nixon Contacts Impeach Probers

Washington

President Nixon has taken the initiative to make first contact with the House Judiciary Committee concerning its investigation of whether he should be impeached.

James St. Clair, head of the President's legal defense team, wrote to Judiciary Committee Chairman Peter Rodino (Dem-N.J.) on Tuesday that Mr. Nixon had instructed him "to make myself available to consult with you or your special counsel, Mr. John M. Doar, and members of his staff, with reference to the current investigation . . ."

After meeting yesterday with Doar and with Representative Edward Hutchinson (Rep-Mich.), senior Republican on the committee, and his counsel, Albert Jenner, Rodino announced that Doar

and Jenner will arrange to meet "promptly" with St. Clair for "preliminary" discussions.

The ultimate purpose for contact would be for the committee to request documents or testimony it needs to help make a judgment on whether the President should be impeached for Watergate or other matters.

Rodino has indicated the committee has not yet reached the point where it knows specifically what it wants. First talks may rather seek some specific understanding as to what kind of information the President would voluntarily submit.

In his State of the Union message, Mr. Nixon promised to cooperate to the extent "consistent with my responsibility" to the office of the presidency. Republican leaders have taken this to mean he would comply with requests for "relevant" information, but not a "fishing expedition."

Vice President Gerald Ford said at a news conference yesterday that the President told him about 10 days ago that release of White House tapes and documents demonstrating Mr. Nixon's innocence of any Watergate coverup "was being actively considered."

Ford said he thought "it's a matter of timing as far as the (President's) attorneys when the decision will be made" and he believed that "at the appropriate time his lawyers will make certain recommendations to him to release the documents."

But when asked specifically if he understood the material would be released, but that it was only a matter of

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timing, the vice president replied that "I have no specific information."

Later, at the White House, Deputy Presidential Press Secretary Gerald Warren appeared to throw cold water on Ford's statements. Asked about it and whether release was under serious consideration, he replied: "I would say consideration."

The material in question is said to include summaries of the taped conversation between the President and his former counsel, John W. Dean III, on March 21, 1972.

Dean testified before the Senate Watergate Committee last June that this conversation proved Mr. Nixon knew of the cover-up, but Senate Minority Leader Hugh Scott has said he has seen the summaries and they prove the President's innocence.

Ford again said that he declined to examine the same material and "I intend to rely on the good word of Mr. Scott" that it supports the President's position.

The Vice President said he expected there would be reasonable cooperation from the White House with the House Judiciary Committee's impeachment inquiry and with special Watergate prosecutor Leon Jaworski, provided neither engages in "a broad fishing expedition" not specifically related to the constitutional definition of impeachment as "treason, bribery or any high crimes or misdemeanors."

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