

LAWYERS TO BRIEF INQUIRY ON NIXON

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Aides Will Report Today to
House Panel on Talk With
Counsel to President

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By BILL KOVACH

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 13. —

Members of the House Judiciary Committee are expected to receive their first direct evidence of President Nixon's willingness to cooperate with the panel's impeachment inquiry at a briefing tomorrow.

The briefing, set for 10:30 A.M., follows a private and unannounced meeting yesterday between the committee's staff counsels, John Doar and Albert E. Jenner, and James D. St. Clair, counsel to President Nixon.

The meeting, which is expected to be the first of a series as the inquiry moves toward the collection of evidence, was described today by the committee chairman, Peter W. Rodino Jr., Democrat of New Jersey, as "cordial."

"There was some movement," Mr. Rodino said when he confirmed that the meeting had occurred, "but I don't care to characterize it any further."

The committee staff and Representative Rodino's office declined to discuss yesterday's meeting with the press and took the position that no public statements on the inquiry's progress would be made until reports had been made — in private sessions — with the committee members.

This position has been taken, staff members say, to avoid trying the issues in the press and to allow a "methodical" approach to the impeachment inquiry. They refused, in fact, to confirm that the meeting had occurred, but Representative Rodino confirmed it to newsmen when questioned as he rushed from the Rayburn House Office Building to the Capitol for today's House session.

The purpose of this first meeting was apparently to discuss ground rules for obtaining White House information for the inquiry but it apparently

did not go into details on the kinds of information the committee might seek.

Clarification Seen

There were indications, however, that Mr. St. Clair had given the committee staff attorneys a clearer picture of what President Nixon meant when he said, in his State of the Union address on Jan. 30, that he would cooperate with the inquiry only so far as his sense of preserving the power of the Presidency would allow.

"A more interesting question about the meeting might be what St. Clair told the staff attorneys," one source said today in indicating that the President's position might have been clarified in the meeting.

The only other public statement made by the President of his attitude toward the inquiry came several weeks ago when he told Republican members of Congress that he intended to "fight like hell" against it.

Committee members, hopeful of concluding the inquiry by the end of April, have said if that statement meant needed information would have to be subpoenaed and fought for in court the inquiry would be delayed as much as a year.

Last week the House overwhelmingly endorsed a resolution granting the Judiciary Committee full subpoena powers to conduct the impeachment inquiry. Those powers are conceived by committee members to be broad enough to demand any information necessary from the White House, and most members agree that no Presidential claim of executive privilege could deny access to that information.

However, it is doubtful whether the meeting yesterday dealt with specific evidence since the committee has yet to decide formally what an impeachable offense is. Until that determination is made the staff would have trouble determining what information it needs to conduct an inquiry into charges of those offenses.

A full committee meeting is scheduled for next Wednesday. At that time the staff is to report on its research into historical precedent on the question, and the committee is expected then to reach a conclusion on what charges against the President might include impeachable offenses. After that determination the staff will begin to seek pertinent information from the White House and other sources.