

Reply to House Due Today

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After a week of silence, the House Judiciary Committee was told it should learn today whether the White House will provide information requested for the committee's impeachment inquiry on President Nixon.

Nine days ago, Special Counsel John Doar wrote presidential counsel James D. St. Clair requesting documents and tapes already provided by the White House to Watergate Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski. Doar estimated at the time that the material could be assembled and produced within a day or two.

There have been predictions by some committee members that St. Clair's strategy would be to try to delay the inquiry in every possible way. There was at least one suggestion yesterday that the committee should stop requesting information from the White House and demand it by a subpoena.

But before the session St. Clair wrote Doar promising "to expedite a response." It had the effect of postponing any committee action until the committee learns his response.

Chairman Peter W. Rodino (D-N.J.) told reporters: "We have waited a reasonable time. The committee is of a mind to exercise its powers and to issue subpoenas if there is no cooperation."

Rodino scheduled a committee meeting for Thursday to take up St. Clair's response and decide what, if any, action should be taken. Rodino and Rep. Edward Hutchinson (Mich.), senior committee Republican, have power to issue subpoenas, but Hutchinson said he would request a full committee vote on issuing a subpoena to obtain information from the President.

The Thursday meeting would also hear a report from Doar on today's U. S. District Court hearing on whether sealed documents given by the Watergate grand jury to Chief Judge John J. Sirica last week will be turned over to the House committee. The documents bear on the President's involvement in Watergate matters, which is the focus of the committee's inquiry.

Hutchinson said at a news conference with Rodino that the White House "has a duty" to cooperate with the committee. Hutchinson also said he had read Doar's letter to St. Clair and felt its requests were "reasonable." On Monday Hutchinson had expressed the belief that the letter had been changed, and perhaps made unreasonable, after he read it. Yesterday he said he was persuaded this was not so.

But Hutchinson urged caution on taking a course that would put the committee and the President in confrontation. "Confrontation doesn't solve anything," he said. "When you talk of throwing power against power, you bump right into a stalemate."

The staff's 22-page progress report stated in greater detail than before specific allegations the staff is investigating. But the report said the staff could not predict a date by which it will have completed assembling information from which the committee would determine whether Mr. Nixon should be impeached. Rodino has said he hopes to make a report to the House by the end of April.

The report lists 26 categories of allegations of efforts by the White House to use federal agencies for political purposes and White House involvement with campaign contributions.

These include allegations of illegal contributions by for-

eign nationals in exchange for promises of favorable treatment by federal agencies, of illegal contributions by labor unions, of commutation of prison sentences in return for support during the 1972 campaign, that lawsuits were not prosecuted by the Environmental Protection Agency because of contributions by affected corporations.

Doar reported that his staff also is investigating allegations that intervention with federal housing officials was promised in return for contributions and that the Commerce Department failed to put certain safety standards into effect because of contributions by the industry involved to Mr. Nixon's 1972 campaign.

Doar said requests for information on these charges have been sent to seven government departments or agencies.

The departments of Agriculture and Interior both replied that responses to the requests will be made by St. Clair. Doar said Attorney General William B. Saxbe said he would respond directly to Rodino but has reservations about handing over some documents that should not be made public. The committee has adopted a rule designed to assure confidentiality of sensitive materials.

Doar reported that the committee's special impeachment staff now includes 43 lawyers and a total of 101 fulltime employees.