

A G.O.P. Leader in House Backs Impeachment Panel

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WASHINGTON, March 17—A House Republican leader today praised the Judiciary Committee's handling of the impeachment inquiry, saying it was acting with restraint and care.

Representative John B. Anderson of Illinois, chairman of the House Republican Conference, said the White House should turn over all evidence requested by the committee.

Continued refusal to do so could become "the basis for a charge relating to impeachment," Mr. Anderson said on the National Broadcasting Company's "Meet the Press" program.

Mr. Anderson praised the committee for not being stampeded into hasty action by recent White House attacks and refusal to turn over information.

He described the committee's work as a "solemn" constitutional task that should not be "demeaned in any way."

He said he hoped that the current series of public appearances by the President did not represent a strategy of going over the heads of the Congress in fighting impeachment.

"If, indeed, the strategy has become to go to the country—in effect to go over the heads of Congress, to go over the heads of the members of the Judiciary Committee—I think this is a mistake," Mr. Anderson said. He continued:

"I don't think that the committee should be reviled or should be demeaned in any way. To date I think its procedures have been careful. They have been in accordance with a mandate that we have under the Constitution.

"I hope very much that that does not prove to be the strategy of the White House."

Prediction by Mills

A powerful figure from the Democratic side of the House, Wilbur D. Mills of Arkansas, chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, appeared on the Columbia Broadcasting System's "Face the Nation" program and he said he expected the President to be out of office by the November elections.

"By resignation, by impeachment?" he was asked.

"One or the other," Mr. Mills replied. "I do not know which at this time."

He added, "If he stays in office as President, members of his own party know they'll lose seats in the House."

Mr. Mills predicted that a surprising number of Republicans would vote for impeachment.

"The significant thing to me," he said, "is that so many members have told me that it would cost them votes right now with all of this in the air to have the President come to their district to campaign for them.

"Now, this the President must know. I'm sure he knows it."

Mr. Mills said he would be glad to sponsor and try to pass legislation that gave [Mr. Nixon] complete immunity from persecution once he was out of

office, if he makes the decision to resign."

Impact on Public Seen

He said he thought the President's problems with his income taxes had had a profound effect on the American public. Mr. Mills is a member of the Joint Committee on Internal Revenue Taxation, which is studying Mr. Nixon's taxes.

"I don't care how he did it, why he did it or anything else," Mr. Mills said.

"The American public—the ones that I've talked to—think he hasn't paid as much taxes as he should," Mr. Mills continued, "And I doubt that anything we could say in behalf of him in our report would change that opinion among the American people."

Mr. Mills listed as key problem areas the question of a deduction for the gift to the National Archives of Mr. Nixon's Vice-Presidential papers, the value of a portion of the President's San Clemente property in California that was sold, and whether the President followed the law when he sold a New York condominium and reinvested the funds in San Clemente.

Mr. Anderson said that if the President maintained his resistance to turning over documents to the House Judiciary Committee, it would cost him support among Republicans in the House.

'Tapes Held Relevant'

"If a confrontation does occur between the White House and the Congress on the delivery of relevant information that the House needs to make its investigation, that issue, I think, could be one that could become the basis for a charge relating to impeachment," Mr. Anderson said.

He said the tapes needed were relevant to the question of possible obstruction of justice.

"It think it is coming down largely to a question of whether or not there is or is not evidence the amounts to the obstruction of justice, to a cover-up or a conspiracy, either through the offer of clemency or through the payment of so-called hush money to cover up the events that took place in the Watergate burglary," Mr. Anderson said.

Asked if he thought the White House tried to stampede the Judiciary Committee into a test on executive privilege rather than on the merits of the impeachment investigation, he replied:

"Yes, and I am frankly very happy personally that to date the chairman of that committee, Mr. [Peter W.] Rodino, has managed to restrain the somewhat more impatient members of his committee, because I think it is important that consistent with the objective of trying to resolve this matter as speedily as possible, that the committee does proceed very circumspectly and carefully and cautiously to assemble all of the facts and the evidence."