

# RULING IS HAILED BY HOUSE PANEL

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## Members Say It Will Speed Inquiry and Intensify Effort to Get White House Data

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WASHINGTON, March 18 —

Members of the House Judiciary Committee expressed confidence today that their impeachment inquiry would be accelerated by Judge John J. Sirica's decision to give the committee a sealed grand jury report dealing with President Nixon's conduct in office.

But the committee members also declared that the court decision would increase, rather than diminish, their determination to obtain relevant tape recordings and documents being withheld from the inquiry by the White House.

In a 22-page legal opinion, Judge Sirica appeared to underscore the committee's contention that it had the right to obtain any material that would assist it in determining whether there were grounds to recommend the impeachment of the President.

"Although it has not been emphasized in this opinion, it should not be forgotten that we deal in a matter of the most critical moment to the nation, an impeachment investigation involving the President of the United States," Judge Sirica wrote.

"It would be difficult to conceive of a more compelling need than that of this country for an unswervingly fair inquiry based

Continued on Page 25, Column 8

Continued From Page 1, Col.

on all the pertinent information."

Representative Tom Railsback, Republican of Illinois, cited the judge's comments as a "summary" of the committee's attitude.

"I feel exactly the same," he said.

Other committee members noted that the court ruling brought into sharper focus the panel's need for additional evidence from the White House to affirm or rebut allegations against Mr. Nixon that presumably are not dealt with in the grand jury report.

Although the grand jury spent nearly 21 months investigating the burglary on June 17, 1972, at the Democratic party's offices and the subsequent cover-up attempts, the House Judiciary Committee's inquiry covers a variety of other allegations of misconduct by Mr. Nixon's Administration. Among them are charges of Government favors to corporations in exchange for campaign contributions and of improprieties in Mr. Nixon's Federal income tax returns.

### Nixon's 'Responsibility'

"The President has a responsibility to cooperate fully in this inquiry," Representative Lawrence J. Hogan, Republican of Maryland, said in an interview.

He added that he was "frankly disturbed" by comments in recent days from the President and his aides that, in Mr. Hogan's view, "presume to dictate to the committee its responsibilities."

The committee's two senior members voiced gratitude at Judge Sirica's ruling.

"I am very pleased," said Representative Edward Hutchinson of Michigan, the ranking Republican. "I think the court has made the right decision."

The committee chairman, Representative Peter W. Rodino Jr., of New Jersey, said that he was "gratified" by the decision and confident that higher courts could dispose promptly of any appeals that might be filed by lawyers representing defendants in Watergate criminal trials.

Mr. Rodino said the committee's lawyers would not take part in any litigation before the courts but would make known the committee's position that it is entitled under the Constitution to any evidence bearing on the President's conduct in office.

The chairman noted that the committee was still waiting for a reply from the White House to the panel's request of three weeks ago for tape recordings of 42 Watergate-related conversations between the President and former high officials of his Administration.

### Doar-St. Clair Meeting

Mr. Rodino said that John M. Doar, the committee's special counsel, met this morning with James D. St. Clair, the President's special Watergate counsel, but that there had been no clear-cut answer from the White House.

Representative John Conyers Jr., Democrat of Michigan, charged that the White House was trying to "tie us up in court and prolong this matter" until Mr. Nixon's term expires in 1977.

He said he would support any formal effort to obtain White House evidence and said that "we only need one sufficiently strong article of impeachment to move this matter before the House of Representatives for disposition."

Representative William S. Cohen, Republican of Maine, said he assumed that the information in the grand jury report would "lend support to the committee's efforts to obtain all reasonable and relevant information."

Several members of the panel took note of Judge Sirica's informal request that the committee try to keep the grand jury information confidential.

The committee has adopted rules strictly limiting access to evidence to its senior members and lawyers.

Mr. Railsback said, "We're trying our best to keep everything confidential."