

Ziegler Quizzed

Some Tapes May Not Exist

Washington

The White House yesterday conceded the possibility that some of the 42 tape recordings sought by the House Judiciary Committee may not exist.

Press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler, asked whether all of the recordings requested by the committee are intact in the White House, said, "it would depend on where the conversations took place," whether tape-recording equipment was in place and working when the President was talking to his aides.

He said it was his understanding that "a good deal" of the conversations in question was recorded but added, "I don't know how much." He said he had not been fully informed on the subject and wanted to talk to James D. St. Clair, the President's chief lawyer, and would provide further information in a statement.

However, when the writ-

ten statement was issued in the afternoon, it said, "I am not prepared to discuss any aspect of this matter further at this time."

Ziegler thus left standing his earlier implication that the White House does not possess all of the recorded conversations that the committee has requested in its impeachment inquiry.

The subject arose at the daily White House news briefing when reporters asked whether anyone in the White House had checked to see if there were recordings of all the conversations in question and whether any of the tapes had been tampered with.

"There has been no tampering with the tapes," the press secretary said, but he was vague on what steps had been taken to see how much of the material was on hand.

Giving rise to the questions was the fact that in White House material turned over to the Watergate grand jury, it was disclosed in court proceedings that there was an 18½ minute gap in a taped conversation about Watergate matters between President Nixon and H. R. Haldeman on June 20, 1972, three days after the Watergate burglary. Technical experts testified that the gap was caused by at least five manual erasures.

The 42 recordings sought by the Judiciary committee are currently the subject of controversy between Mr. Nixon and the committee.

The President has charged that the committee, in seeking the tapes and other documents, is on a "fishing" expedition for material that would bolster its case for impeachment. So far, he has refused to release any of the materials sought.

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