

In announcing its willingness to surrender the materials sought by Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski, the White House has once again stepped back from the brink of a constitutional confrontation. This latest move toward accommodation gains significance as a follow-up to President Nixon's earlier decision not to contest a Federal court order turning the Watergate grand jury's special report on Mr. Nixon over to the House Judiciary Committee for use in its impeachment study.

Regrettable though it was that the initial resistance by the President's defense lawyers made it necessary for Mr. Jaworski to resort to a subpoena in the first place, yesterday's decision to comply will be met with genuine relief. The stiffening of attitudes within the Republican party, and particularly the warning vibrations sent out by Senator Buckley's call for Presidential resignation, undoubtedly contributed to the reversal. Indeed, the sudden turn of events underscores the power still exercised by the President's own party and thus the continuing importance of a firm and responsible Republican role in resolving the governmental crisis.

Regardless of motivation, however, Mr. Nixon's decision to return to his initial promise of cooperation with the special prosecutor deserves applause—and even more so if it foreshadows a new and continuing readiness on the part of the White House to avoid obstructing the constitutional process of the impeachment inquiry.