

NYTimes APR 10 1974
**WHITE HOUSE ASKS
STAY TILL APRIL 22
ON TAPE REQUEST**

**Will Be Ready Then, St. Clair
Says, to Furnish Material
Sought by House Unit**

NO PLEDGE ON ALL DATA

**Further Inquiry Delay Seen
—Issuance of a Subpoena
Is Believed Not Certain**

By **R. W. APPLE Jr.**
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 9 — The White House told the House Judiciary Committee tonight that it needed more time to decide how to respond to the committee's request for tape recordings of 42 Presidential conversations relating to Watergate.

James D. St. Clair, President Nixon's principal defense counsel in the impeachment inquiry being conducted by the committee, said in a letter that by April 22 the White House would be ready to furnish materials that "will enable the committee to complete its inquiry promptly."

But Mr. St. Clair's letter, addressed to John M. Doar, special counsel to the Judiciary Committee, contained no pledge to provide all the materials that the committee has sought since Feb. 25. Instead, it implied that the White House would decide which of the tapes it considered relevant and release only those.

The letter also seemed to make inevitable further delays in the inquiry, despite repeated White House requests for more speed. The committee, trying to expedite matters, last Thursday set today as a deadline for a Presidential response to its request.

Jerome R. Waldie of California, one of the Democratic hardliners on the committee, said shortly after the text of the letter had been released by the White House that he would move to subpoena the tapes when the committee met Thursday.

"Though clothed in words that sound conciliatory," he said of Mr. St. Clair's response,

"it is an outright rejection of the committee's request for assistance, and it has to be read as such. The attitude of the President toward the committee is the same attitude he's evinced toward every investigative body—it's contemptuous conduct toward us."

Representative Tom Railsback of Illinois, one of the more liberal Republicans, described the letter as "unresponsive," said that the committee "would be making a mistake to let Mr. St. Clair have the sole power to decide in advance what is

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relevant to our inquiry" and added that he would support a subpoena if it were sought by the committee's lawyers.

But the reaction of senior members indicated that a subpoena was not certain, although most members were irritated that there would be further delay before they even discovered what the White House was willing to deliver.

Comment Deferred

Representative Peter W. Rodino Jr., Democrat of New Jersey, the committee's chairman, said that he would not comment until he had studied the letter.

Representative Robert McClory of Illinois, the committee's second-ranking Republican, described himself as disappointed but said that he would probably prefer to await the next move by the White House, because "it's better to get their cooperation, even on a delayed or slightly limited basis," than to force a constitutional confrontation.

The recommendations of Mr. Doar and Albert E. Jenner Jr., the minority counsel, were expected to play a major role in the committee's decision on issuing a subpoena.

When the committee first sought the tapes, the White House counterattacked by accusing the investigators of engaging in a fishing expedition. Mr. Nixon said that Mr. Doar was trying to drive "a U-haul trailer" up to the Executive Mansion and haul away all its key files.

Since then, there have been extensive negotiations between Mr. Doar and Mr. St. Clair, accompanied by continuing White House demands that the committee hurry — such as the suggestion by Ronald L. Ziegler, the Presidential press secretary, that the committee and its staff work more nights.

To many members of Congress and to many outside observers, the White House strategy during the last six weeks has seemed to be built around the maximum delay possible in acceding to the requests of various investigatory bodies.

Finally, on April 4, last Thursday, Mr. Doar wrote to Mr. St.

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Clair. "We request a reply by Tuesday, April 9, at the latest with respect to whether or not the conversation . . . will be delivered."

Mr. St. Clair did not respond directly to that request. He

complimented Mr. Doar for having narrowed the definition of the conversations originally asked for—42 in all, covering a period between February and April, 1973—and restated Mr. Nixon's "desire to cooperate."

But the central passage of the letter said only:

["The President] has directed me to advise you that a review of the materials in question is under way. We expect that the review can be completed by the end of the Easter recess, and that the additional materials furnished at that time will permit the committee to complete its inquiry promptly."

The Easter recess begins Friday and ends April 22.

A White House official, speaking on the condition that he not be named, said that Mr. St. Clair's letter was "fully responsive." Mr. Doar's letter of April 4, he insisted, asked only that the White House define by today "its intentions." That word appears nowhere, however, in the letter's text.

On a related issue, Mr. St. Clair also told Mr. Doar that a decision should be made as soon as possible on his request to take part in the impeachment inquiry, preferably before the recess.

ST. CLAIR LETTER

I am pleased by the progress evidenced by your letter of April 4. As we have discussed previously, the request of the committee of Feb. 25 consisted principally of a blanket demand for tapes and related materials of all discussions between the President and certain of his aides between specified dates.

Obviously, these conversations would have covered a variety of subjects, and this made it difficult to balance the requirements of confidentiality against the legitimate needs of the committee. However, your letter of April 4 goes a long way toward providing the additional

specifications we felt were lacking in your original request for tapes and materials.

Although further specifications might be desirable, to assist the President in determining what he should provide the committee, he has directed me to advise you that a review of the materials in question is under way. We expect that the review can be completed by the end of the Easter recess, and that the additional materials furnished at that time will permit the committee to complete its inquiry promptly.

Regarding an important related issue, I hope that the committee will decide on my role in its proceedings before the upcoming recess. There is much work to be done if the committee is to meet its timetable, and I once again urge that this vital issue be resolved as soon as possible.

The President wishes me to reiterate to you and the committee his continuing desire to cooperate so that the pending inquiry can be brought to a prompt conclusion. If any problems develop, I of course stand ready to meet with you in an attempt to resolve them.