

Ford Was In the Middle

Palm Springs

Vice President Gerald Ford said yesterday that he tried last week to work out a compromise between the White House and the House Judiciary Committee to avoid a showdown over tape recordings sought by the impeachment panel.

Ford thus confirmed reports that he had been actively involved in trying to head off the committee's subsequent decision to subpoena the requested tapes.

Ford, here for a week of relaxation and Republican party functions, disclosed his role in the negotiations over the tapes when questioned yesterday by reporters.

He said that he "got involved from both sides . . . The White House on the one side and members of the (Judiciary) Committee on the other."

He described himself as "sort of the intermediary trying to get everybody together."

The committee voted on Thursday to subpoena the 41 or 42 tape recordings. The committee rejected a White House offer to supply transcripts of at least some of the tapes that the White House felt were relevant to the impeachment inquiry.

Ford said he spent most of

last Thursday ^{11 APR} morning working with the White House and with various members of the committee.

He said he sought to get an agreement that the White House supply the requested material as soon as the transcripts could be typed.

"I felt that this was the very best evidence of the willingness of the White House to cooperate," Ford said. "The White House, through me, passed this word to the committee and it was agreed that these tapes, or the transcripts of them, would be delivered as soon as the mechanics were taken care of. Unfortunately, time ran out and the subpoena was issued."

Ford said he felt there had been "great sympathy on the part of many members of the committee that this would have been good evidence of White House good faith. But time kind of caught up with us and the net result was the committee went ahead with the subpoena which I think was unnecessary under the circumstances."

The Vice President said he is not now involved in efforts to negotiate an agreement between the White House and the committee.

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