

Rodino Bars Compromise On Tapes Under Subpoena

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WASHINGTON, April 18—The chairman of the House Judiciary Committee ruled out today any compromise with the White House over the committee's demand for tape recordings of some 42 Watergate-related conversations.

Representative Peter W. Rodino Jr., Democrat of New Jersey, said in a television interview that it would be unacceptable for President Nixon's lawyers to decide unilaterally which portions of the recordings were relevant to the committee's impeachment inquiry.

"We have issued a subpoena," Mr. Rodino said. "I believe it is necessary that the White House comply because it's in the interest of answering a nagging question that is before the American people."

He added, in an appearance on the National Broadcasting Company's "Today" show this morning, that if the President did not comply fully with the subpoena this might constitute, by itself, a ground for impeachment.

Mr. Rodino's remarks amounted to a rejection of the reported White House plan to screen out "irrelevant" portions of the tapes before turning them over to the committee by the deadline next Thursday.

Administration officials who declined to be identified told newsmen earlier this week that the President's lawyers would give the committee only those portions of the recordings that the White House considered relevant to the inquiry into Mr. Nixon's official conduct. The officials said that extraneous or national security matters deleted from the surrendered material would be identified in a statement submitted to the committee.

Scott Sees Danger

In related developments, several leading politicians addressed the tapes issue and Watergate generally.

The Senate Republican leader, Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, warned in a newsletter to Republicans in his state that if Mr. Nixon refused to cooperate with the House inquiry he would put his Administration in grave danger, "possibly leading to impeachment."

Gov. Mills Godwin of Virginia, who switched from the Democratic to the Republican party last year, told newsmen in Wakefield, Va., that "impeachment was needed to restore public faith in government leaders then Congress

ought to move in that direction."

And Senator Charles H. Percy of Illinois, a likely contender for the Republican Presidential nomination in 1976, declared in Chicago that Mr. Nixon's resignation "would be somewhat of an advantage to the party and possibly to the country."

Some news accounts have suggested that Mr. Nixon might withhold the tapes altogether and instead supply the committee with transcripts of portions of the recorded conversations.

Mr. Rodino said the committee would not accept any process that would enable the White House to make "the final determination" of what evidence was relevant to the House inquiry. He said that if the President turned over transcripts rather than tapes "it would be considered a refusal to comply" with the subpoena.

Ford View Differs

The Vice President said in California, however, that he thought it would be "fully sufficient" for the White House to respond to the subpoena with edited transcripts.

"I don't see why the White House wouldn't make the tapes available," Mr. Ford said, "but if they [committee members] want to be saved the problem of having to go through them, then I think the transcripts would be adequate."

Senator Edward J. Gurney, Republican of Florida, said that neither the Senate Watergate Committee, on which he serves, nor the House Judiciary Committee had reached any conclusions about President Nixon's involvement in the Watergate scandal.

Nonetheless, Senator Gurney charged, news media coverage of Watergate has apparently affected public opinion to the extent that a majority of the people "already have convicted the President in their minds."

By contrast, former Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson, who resigned last October rather than carry out the President's order to dismiss the first Watergate special prosecutor, Archibald Cox, praised news media coverage of the scandal.

Mr. Richardson told the American Society of Newspaper Editors, at their convention in Atlanta, that he was "grateful for what the press did" and that Watergate investigative reporting had been, "on the whole, extraordinarily resourceful."