

More Watergate Tapes

Washington

The House Judiciary Committee, digging deeper into the Watergate coverup as part of its impeachment hearings, found more gaps in the evidence yesterday as a result of the White House refusal to supply more tapes.

Chief counsel John Doar recommended that the committee consider issuing subpoenas today for as many as 11 of the 76 presidential conversations it has requested.

Chairman Peter Rodino (Dem-N.J.) said the request will be considered today before the committee resumes hearing evidence gathered by the impeachment inquiry staff.

(The New York Times and the Los Angeles Times reported that the committee is expected to overwhelmingly vote to subpoena the tapes. The vote will be taken in a public session.)

A legal brief opposing Doar's request, prepared by President Nixon's chief Watergate lawyer, James St. Clair, was rejected by the committee on the grounds that it violated committee rules regarding confidential material.

St. Clair's brief already had been distributed when objections were raised that it dealt with secret grand jury evidence covered in a closed-door session last week.

The committee is conducting this phase of the inquiry in secret to protect individuals mentioned in that evidence and for that reason Rodino ruled that St. Clair's memo was unacceptable.

One member said St. Clair's brief also concluded that the committee had no need to subpoena an April 4,

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1972, tape in an effort to discover whether Mr. Nixon had prior knowledge of the Watergate break-in, because evidence furnished by the White House makes it clear he did not have.

The two April 4 conversations took place four days after the plan for the Water-

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gate break-in had been approved by Mr. Nixon's reelection committee, according to testimony by reelection committee official Jeb Stuart Magruder. In addition to those conversations, Doar cited nine other holes in the evidence he is presenting to the committee.

Six deal with meetings and telephone conversations on June 20, 1972, between Mr. Nixon and his former aides H.R. Haldeman and Charles Colson. Also, tapes of three meetings between Mr. Nixon and Haldeman on June 23, 1972, were not sup-

plied to the committee, Doar said.

In material justifying a request for a subpoena, Doar noted that the June 20 meetings and conversations took place after Mr. Nixon had conferred by telephone with former Attorney General John Mitchell.

The White House has said this conversation, the first between Mr. Nixon and Mitchell after the break-in, took place on a telephone not included in the White House recording system.

A Dictabelt recording of Mr. Nixon's recollection of that conversation with Mitchell was played for the committee yesterday, its first opportunity to hear any of the tapes or Dictabelts it has received.

Doar's justification for needing tapes of the three June 23 meetings notes that previous testimony in Watergate trials and investigations indicates that the White House was concerned that the FBI investigation of Watergate might disclose a secret CIA operation.

In addition to listening to the Dictabelt, the committee received two fat loose-leaf books filled with statements and supporting documentary evidence. Rodino said they contained a detailed account of events from the Watergate break-in through June 28, 1972.

Members describe the material as interesting and illuminating. Representative Jerome Waldie (Dem-Calif.), asked whether what he had heard tended toward impeachment rather than away from it answered, "Yes. I wish I could say more."

The hearings are being conducted behind closed doors and members are bound by committee rules not to disclose any details of the information being presented.

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