

# Rodino Said to Ask Release Of Evidence on Watergate

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WASHINGTON, May 24 — The chairman of the House Judiciary Committee will propose next week that the panel make public most, and perhaps all, of the Watergate evidence it has been examining in closed impeachment hearings, well-placed Congressional officials said today.

According to the officials, the chairman, Representative Peter W. Rodino Jr., Democrat of New Jersey, told senior colleagues on the committee yesterday that he favored releasing the material as soon as possible.

The officials said that Mr. Rodino would first seek clearance from the special Watergate prosecutor and officials of several other Congressional committees that provided confidential materials to the impeachment inquiry.

The following related developments occurred today in the impeachment controversy:

¶ A spokesman for the Internal Revenue Service confirmed

reports that the agency had refused to give the Judiciary Committee an audit of the President's income tax returns pending a Justice Department ruling on the legality of such a disclosure.

¶ A Democratic member of the committee, Representative John Conyers Jr. of Michigan, declared at a news conference that President Nixon "may be continuing the cover-up" of the Watergate scandal by withholding tape recordings and other evidence from the impeachment inquiry and the courts.

Although technically a side issue in the investigation of Mr. Nixon's official conduct, the dispute over the collection and disposition of evidence has dominated the recent public dialogue over impeachment.

Gerald L. Warren, the deputy White House press secretary, objected again today to what he called "selective leaks" of information from the closed

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committee hearings. Last week, the President's lawyers asked that all impeachment hearings be conducted publicly and that information presented in private by immediately disclosed.

Mr. Rodino and a majority of his colleagues on the committee countered that, while they regretted the leaks, the White House could hardly complain of selective disclosure of information after publishing edited transcripts of Watergate-related White House conversations and refusing to honor subpoenas for the recordings.

Officials close to the inquiry said today that, when the committee holds a business meeting next Thursday or Friday, Mr. Rodino plans to recommend the publication of the Watergate evidence. They said that the disclosure might take some time, however, so that the sources of confidential evidence, particularly the special prosecutor and the senate Watergate committee, could be consulted.

Before disclosing such evidence, the committee must vote either to amend or to breach its formal rules assuring the confidentiality of the evidence.

Mr. Conyers has been among the most ardent advocates of full disclosure of the material. He said today that it was appropriate to point out that the Judiciary Committee's members were not trying to judge Mr. Nixon's guilt or innocence of impeachable offenses but were

servicing as "the gumshoes for the Congress, the detectives."

After three weeks of closed hearings on the Watergate burglary and its aftermath, Mr. Conyers said. "We've got a lot of leads but not a lot of hard evidence because the cover-up, in my opinion, is continuing."

He said, in that connection, that the Internal Revenue Service had "stonewalled" the committee.

The inquiry staff, examining the possibility of fraud in Mr. Nixon's income tax returns for the years 1969 through 1972, has asked the revenue service for details of the agency's audit of the President's tax payments. The agency ruled last month that Mr. Nixon owed \$432,787 in back taxes, plus interest.

The I.R.S. spokesman said that William E. Simon, the Secretary of the Treasury, had referred the matter to Attorney General William B. Saxbe for a ruling on the propriety of the request.

Under the Internal Revenue Code, information on an individual taxpayer's returns may be provided only to the Senate Finance Committee, the House Ways and Means Committee and a select committee of either house that has been authorized to receive tax information.

The spokesman said there had been no ruling yet from the Justice Department as to whether the House Judiciary Committee's constitutional authority over impeachment permitted release of the tax data.