

House Unit Expected to Probe Ford's Testimony on Pardon

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The House Judiciary subcommittee that heard President Ford's testimony on the pardon he granted former President Nixon is expected to go ahead with a broad investigation into reports Mr. Ford has not told the full story about the pardon.

Four of the seven members of the subcommittee chaired by Rep. William L. Hungate (D-Mo.) said in interviews last week they would insist that witnesses be interviewed about circumstances leading up to the pardon.

A subcommittee meeting to debate and vote on the matter is scheduled for Tuesday.

Hungate said last week: "I think this subcommittee has a good reputation and it didn't get it by shutting books but by opening them."

The three other subcommittee members favoring a broader investigation are Reps. Elizabeth Holtzman of New York, Edward Mezvinsky of Iowa and Martin A. Russo of Illinois.

All are Democrats on the Judiciary Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, which heard Mr. Ford's testimony on the pardon Oct. 17, 1974.

Rep. James R. Mann of South Carolina, the fifth Democrat on the subcommittee, said this week he has not decided whether to support an investigation into the pardon.

Rep. Charles E. Wiggins of California, the ranking Republican on the subcommittee, and Rep. Henry J. Hyde of Illinois, the subcommittee's other GOP member, reportedly oppose any further investigation into the matter.

Hungate, Holtzman, Mezvinsky and Russo said last week they want to explore news accounts that Mr. Ford gave Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr., Nixon's former chief of staff, a private assurance that a pardon would be granted.

These four members also want additional information on a three-page memo urging a pardon drafted Aug. 28, 1974 by former Nixon counsel Leonard Garment, and a 2 1/2-page statement drafted by Raymond K. Price Jr., Nixon's chief speechwriter, announcing the pardon 10 days before it was granted.

Last month presidential press secretary Ron Nessen was given a list of questions by a Washington Post reporter about the alleged role of former Nixon staffers in the pardon decision.

Nessen said that he raised the questions with Mr. Ford last Friday night but the President declined to answer them. "He stands by his testimony before the Hungate subcommittee," Nessen said. "That is the complete and accurate story."

Pressed for details on the reported Ford-Haig pardon discussion that Haig has since acknowledged took place, Nessen said: "The President is just not going to talk about it."

Haig has taken the same position, saying, "I don't think I should talk about these things or conversations with a President, especially an incumbent one, and I won't."

Reliable sources in the Nixon and Ford administrations said that Haig told at least three of his associates he had assurances from Mr. Ford that a pardon would be granted.

According to the sources these assurances were given on Aug. 28, 1974—the day of Mr. Ford's first press conference as President and 10 days before the pardon was announced.

President Ford, who took office Aug. 9, 1974, has previously denied that he gave

any assurance to Haig that a pardon would be forthcoming.

Sources in the Ford White House said that the President did not tell his own staff of his discussions with Haig regarding a pardon, and Mr. Ford's top advisers were not aware there were any until questioned last December by reporters.

Had these advisers known of the conversations, the sources said they would have urged they be disclosed when Mr. Ford testified before the Hungate subcommittee on Oct. 17, 1974.

None of the sources suggested that there was any kind of deal on the pardon. One source explained it this way:

"Look, this man was thrust into the presidency and Al Haig was the guy around who knew the most. He came to rely on him . . . The President was arriving at the pardon decision naturally, or he would have, I'm convinced of that, and Al in his subtle way was pushing for it and it had its influence.

"The President wasn't about to go up and testify two months after becoming President and say that Al Haig and the old Nixon staff, which everyone had so many suspicions about, was urging a

pardon . . . "He wasn't going to relinquish his authority by saying Al Haig arranged it and I think he did the right thing . . . It was a strange time and he had to keep all his authority and do things in his own name. And he did."

Hungate and Chairman Peter W. Rodino Jr. (D-N.J.) of the full House Judiciary Committee ordered a review last December of Mr. Ford's testimony before the subcommittee to determine if hearings should be reopened.

Though there are no absolute conflicts between the news accounts and Mr. Ford's testimony, the subcommittee members favoring further investigation said they believe all questions about the matter should be answered.

Mezvinsky said, "I think we should find out the answers . . . It is important for the sake of Congress and for the President's sake. We need to clear the air."

Mezvinsky said Haig and Philip W. Buchen, Mr. Ford's counsel, should be called to testify.

Russo said that a lawyer with investigative experience should be hired by the subcommittee to head a broad investigation of the matter.

Holtzman, who has been the most active in urging a full investigation, said there still exists the possibility that President Ford "concealed important information" when he testified.

Mann said that he "leans slightly" against the investigation but added, "There is always something to be gained by hearing the truth."

In his testimony of Oct. 17, 1974, before the subcommittee, Mr. Ford said: "At no time after I became President on Aug. 9, 1974, was the subject of a pardon for Richard M. Nixon raised by the former President or by anyone representing him."

A White House official said recently that this does not necessarily conflict with the possibility that Haig raised the pardon issue because at the time Haig was acting chief of staff for Mr. Ford and accordingly not "representing" Nixon.

But during his testimony Mr. Ford gave a more blanket denial when he said, "Nobody made any recommendation to me for the pardon of the former President."