

Judiciary Panel Rejects Move To Reopen Nixon Pardon Inquiry

By Richard L. Lyons

By a Washington Post Staff Writer

A House Judiciary subcommittee voted 4 to 3 yesterday against reopening its investigation of the circumstances under which President Ford granted a pardon to his predecessor, Richard M. Nixon.

Rep. Elizabeth Holtzman (D-N.Y.) had requested the further inquiry. She said an article in *The Washington Post* in December suggested that President Ford had not told the whole story of the pardon during his appearance before the subcommittee in October, 1974. She said the American people were entitled to all the facts.

President Ford testified that no one had asked him to grant the pardon, which applied to any crimes that Nixon might have committed while President. The *Post* article said Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr., then White House chief of staff and now North Atlantic Treaty Organization commander, had urged this course on the new President.

The *Post* article also quoted unnamed sources as stating that a staff memorandum urged the pardon on grounds that Mr. Nixon might otherwise commit suicide. The sources said that they were not sure Mr. Ford had seen the memo, but that Haig made its arguments to him in urging the pardon.

Holtzman said Mr. Ford had made no mention of this

despite the subcommittee's specific request for any information he had of Mr. Nixon's mental or physical health.

Yesterday two Democrats—Reps. James R. Mann (S.C.) and Martin A. Russo (Ill.)—joined the subcommittee's two Republicans in opposing any further inquiry, on grounds that the contradictions were not proved and in any case were insufficient to reopen the inquiry.

Russo had indicated earlier he would support Holtzman, but that was before he read Mr. Ford's testimony or the *Post* article. After reading both Wednesday evening, he changed his mind.

Rep. Charles E. Wiggins (R-Calif.) said the committee's original interest was whether there had been a deal for Nixon, who faced impeachment, to resign in exchange for a pardon. Mr. Ford categorically denied any deal and the new matter has no bearing on that question, said Wiggins. He said the new questions raised were "trivial at best" and that the effort to reopen the inquiry "reeks of politics."

We have to call a halt sometime. The time is now."

Mann said he did not think the public interest requires "further exploration of the details of that decision-making process."

Holtzman's motion would have directed the subcommittee staff to interview Haig and Philip W. Buchen, the President's Counsel, and report back to the subcommittee, which then would have decided whether to conduct more hearings.