

Senator Hit on Watergate

Washington

Samuel Dash, former chief counsel of the Senate Watergate committee, says Senator Howard H. Baker Jr. (Rep-Tenn.) worked behind the scenes to curtail the Watergate investigation and undercut the testimony of John W. Dean III, then counsel to President Nixon.

Dash charges in a book to be published next month that the secret efforts of Baker, the panel's vice chairman, were at variance with Baker's public position of support for the investigation.

Baker denied Dash's statements but declined to make a point-by-point rebuttal. Dash was appointed by the committee's Democratic majority.

"I didn't pay much attention to Sam during the hearings and I don't intend to worry about him now," Baker said through a spokesman.

Dash's book, entitled "Chief Counsel: Inside the Ervin Committee," says Baker initially tried to block the committee's grant of partial immunity to Dean, its key witness, after Baker had met secretly with then President Nixon.

Baker, in a closed session a month before Dean's 1973 testimony, made a "wild attack on Dean" and called him "the principal culprit in this Watergate affair," Dash wrote.

Dash said Baker's outburst fol-



SAMUEL DASH
Watergate probe counsel

lowed Dash's recommendation that, based on his own private meetings with Dean, the President's counsel had "evidence ... vitally important to the committee's investigation" that could only be obtained if Dean was granted immunity from prosecution for his testimony.

But after Baker and Senator Edward J. Gurney (Rep-Fla.) voted against immunity — and five committee members voted in favor — Baker moved that a second vote be taken to show unanimous approval, Dash said.

"I don't think it's good for this committee at this early stage of its

work to present a divided image to the public," Dash quoted Baker as telling his colleagues.

Dash said Baker had earlier met with Mr. Nixon "to obtain guidance" on how to conduct himself on the committee. Baker has acknowledged such a meeting, but has said he urged the President to allow his aides to testify without invoking executive privilege.

Prior to the committee's first public hearings, Baker proposed a short witness list on which he was overruled by the committee, Dash wrote.

"Baker's strategy," the book says, "called for producing first the principal witnesses who were the targets of the investigation — such as Mitchell, Colson, Ehrlichman and Haldeman — and offering as the last witness the potentially most powerful accuser, John Dean. It was topsy-turvy. The accused would testify before the accuser was heard."

Dash referred to John Mitchell, the former attorney general, and former Presidential aides Charles Colson, John Ehrlichman and H.R. Haldeman.

Dash said Baker also favored abbreviated hearings — less than half the length of the televised hearings that were held. Aides to Baker have said the senator changed his mind after the hearings produced startling evidence.