

DREW PEARSON

Dept. of Justice, Dodd Play 'Game'

WASHINGTON — Connecticut's embattled Sen. Tom Dodd is playing a subtle game with the Justice Department to keep out of jail.

As a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, he has a powerful voice on matters affecting the Justice Department. The committee is split ideologically, with eight conservatives and eight liberals, not counting Dodd. This gives him the swing vote on controversial legislation and appointments.

He has made it clear he hardly can be expected to support the Justice Department if it is going to indict him for income tax evasion.

Indeed, Dodd has let it be known his votes on other key issues will be determined by the Nixon administration's handling of his tax case. All the polls indicate, for example, the Senate is divided evenly over the controversial anti-ballistic missile system. As an outspoken hawk, he would be expected to favor the ABM system.

He has served notice on the Nixon administration, however, that he hasn't made up his mind how he'll vote. Hints have been dropped that favorable word on his tax case would help him make up his mind.

Attorney General John Mitchell has demonstrated, meanwhile, he knows how to play this backstage game. He used the FBI to dig up derog-



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atory information on ex-Justice Abe Fortas, then took the information to Chief Justice Earl Warren. Thus pressure was brought on Fortas to resign, creating another Supreme Court vacancy for President Nixon to fill.

WITH THE SAME cold calculation, Mitchell has turned the tables on Dodd and has let him know that no action will be taken on his case until after the ABM vote. This leaves an implied threat that if he votes wrong he might be prosecuted.

The Nixon administration, apparently, is determined to win the Senate showdown over the ABM, which will be the President's first big test of strength. Several senators have complained privately of arm twisting. Sen. James Pearson, the Kansas Republican, has had his arm twisted so hard he has warned Nixon administration leaders he is going to be around until 1972 and is not going to yield to pressure.

Senate liberals were told, for example, the antipoverty program would be held up until after the ABM vote. The implication was that their pet antipoverty projects would depend upon their ABM votes.

MEANWHILE, the Justice Department hasn't even bothered to follow up charges

that Dodd violated half a dozen federal laws governing conflicts of interest. The Senate Ethics Committee justified its own failure to investigate these charges by explaining they were matters for the Justice Department to consider.

Only the tax case is ready for prosecution, because this was developed independently by the Internal Revenue Service. It is up to the Justice Department, however, whether or not to prosecute.

As we reported last December, Internal Revenue has recommended Dodd be indicted for income tax evasion. Treasury agents spent more than a year unraveling his tangled finances. They traced every cent that went into his multiple bank accounts and discovered a secret bank account in the Bahamas. This column missed that one.

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what they considered to be evidence of criminal violations. Their findings were reviewed by the Boston office, which concurred in the recommendation he be prosecuted.

Now the Justice Department is playing cat-and-mouse with Dodd. More important than the Dodd case, however, is the growing evidence that the Nixon administration is manipulating the law-enforcement machinery for political purposes.

Note: The New York Times has suggested the Nixon administration is holding

up action against Dodd until he is renominated for the Senate. Quoting unnamed sources, the Times reported: "These politicians said it would be obviously too much to expect the Nixon administration to do anything to hurt Mr. Dodd's chances of renomination when he may be the easiest candidate to beat."

PRESIDENT NIXON will have a chance personally to improve the very sour relations between his administration and Latin America this week when he receives President Carlos Lleras Restrepo of Colombia.

President Lleras is a competent, fair-minded executive who two years ago received Chief Justice Earl Warren, a nonpolitician, with enthusiasm and warmth, without a single anti-American shout coming from anyone in the crowd. Warren did a great service by this goodwill tour of several South American countries and even though Rep. H. R. Gross, Iowa Republican, blasted him for receiving State Department expense money, President Nixon ought to prevail on Warren to take more trips of this kind.

President Lleras, like most Latin presidents, has economic problems. But he has been solving them. He has also used the medium of television to explain his policies to the Colombian people. In this respect, he and Nixon will have a lot in common.