GM Chief Called to Quiz
On Probe of Auto Critic

The President of General Motors Corp., a major Wash-ington law firm, and several private detective agencies be-came the objects yesterday of an upcoming Senate investiga-tion into the alleged “harass-ment” of Ralph Nader, a pop-ular critic of unsafe cars. Sen. Abraham Ribicoff (D-Con-n.) scheduled hearings into the Nader affair by a Ju-diciary Subcom-mittee on March 22 and invited GM Pres-ident James M. Roche to ap-pear, along with private detectives reportedly employed by the company to look into Na-der's background.

GM officials responded to Ribicoff's invitation by agree-ing to co-operate with the subcommittee. Sen. Gaylord Nelson (D-Wis.) said he hoped the Ri-bicoff Subcommittee would also determine if the Washing-ton law firm, Alvord & Alvord, was in contempt of Congress for directing the Nader investi-gation at GM's behest. GM admitted late Wednes-day that it had employed Al-ward & Alvord to investigate Nader following his repeated criticisms—in a book, in pub-lic appearances and as a Con-gressional witness — of GM's Corvair, a rear-engine compact. Nader has called 1960 through 1963 models of the car a “hazardous vehicle” which represents “a constant danger to (its) occupants and the occupants of other cars which are exposed to the Cor-vair's rear-end breakaway tendencies.” He charged recently that for many weeks he had been subjected to an intensive in-vestigation by unknown adver-saries who had inquired into his sex life, his political and religious beliefs, as well as his professional competence.

Last weekend GM denied any connection with the Na-der investigation. But Wednes-day it confirmed that a “rou-tine” investigation was being made to determine if Nader represented clients or lawyers involved in lawsuits against GM arising out of Corvair ac-cidents.

Nader yesterday denied any connection with the GM law suits and resumed his attack on the Corvair and the company’s “invasion” of his privacy. "The corporate shield," said Nader, "cannot protect General Motors management from responsibility for the excesses indulged in by the private in vestigators which they hire . . . Is it "routine" for General Motors to hire detectives to ask about one's sex life, religious practices, political affiliations and credit ratings? Is it routine for GM agents to solic- it information from a profes-sor of law at Harvard and other associates of mine on the wholly false pretext that I was being considered for a lucrative research job? Against such a faceless and privileged prober, who knows what other invasions of privacy have oc-curred which cannot be de-tected by an individual who becomes the target of such abusive assaults?"

Ribicoff entered the contro-versy this week because Na-der had been a witness before his subcommittee, which is concerned with automobile safety. "The safety of the Ameri-can driving public," he said, "is the basic issue before the committee. To this, must now be added the additional issue of a witness's right to testify before a committee of the United States Congress without fear of character assassi-nation or intimidation."