

# White House Clashes With Ervin on Watergate

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Washington—Weeks before it begins its televised public hearings, the special Senate committee investigating political sabotage finds itself sharply at odds with the White House.

In a statement at the Western White House yesterday, Press Secretary Ronald L. Ziegler urged Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr. (D-NC), committee chairman, to "get his own disorganized house in order so that the investigation can go forward in a proper atmosphere of traditional fairness and due process.

Ziegler charged that the panel had been "plagued by irresponsible leaks of tidal wave proportions."

Only hours earlier, at a press conference on Capitol Hill, Ervin had attacked the White House posture in the Watergate bugging case as a "terrible disservice" to the office of the presidency.

Ervin is upset because President Nixon has refused to let his former or present White House assistants testify before the panel—the Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities.

The White House is upset because accounts of the panel's closed session last Wednesday have appeared in newspapers.

At that meeting, convicted Watergate participant James W. McCord Jr. said he had been told that former Attorney General John N. Mitchell had approved the bugging of Democratic headquarters in the Watergate apartment complex. McCord also mentioned other administration figures.

Ziegler, who denied Friday that the White House wanted to "cover up" the full story, said yesterday the Adminis-

tration intends to cooperate with the committee.

But, he added, "we do not intend to try the issues on television shows, at press conferences, by leaks, innuendo or overstatement."

The White House has denied that any employees other than those already named were involved. Three men who at one time worked for either the Administration or the Nixon reelection committee have been convicted in the Watergate bugging.

Ziegler said the Administration hopes to "work out procedures" to allow its assistants to convey information to the committee.

But it draws the line at formal testimony before public hearings. This, Mr. Nixon says, would violate the doctrine of executive privilege.

But Ervin and many legal scholars say the Nixon interpretation of that doctrine is too broad. They argue that it applies only to confidential discussions between the President and his advisers, not to contacts between advisers and third parties.

Ervin called the President's interpretation of the doctrine "executive poppycock."

"I am going to suggest that Duke Law School give him a refresher course in what is privilege," he said. Mr. Nixon attended Duke University in North Carolina.

"If I was President," Ervin declared, "I'd fire in not more than two minutes any aide that would not go down and testify."

Ervin argues that public testimony is absolutely necessary. He says any aides who refuse to answer subpoenas should be arrested and charged with contempt of Congress.

Ervin charges that the President is giving the impression that he is "unwilling" for the truth to come out.