

# White House Negotiates On Watergate Testimony

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Washington — The White House says it and the Senate's Watergate committee are still trying to wrap up an arrangement for presidential staff members to testify before the panel.

One committee member, Sen. Lowell P. Weicker Jr. (R-Conn), is upset that the negotiations are going on at all.

Weicker believes that White House aides have an obligation to testify and are not entitled to any special procedures, according to sources close to him.

Presidential press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler confirmed yesterday that the White House was negotiating with the Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities.

But he said reports that an agreement had already been reached were "incorrect."

## Testimony in Public

According to the Chicago Tribune, the accord would

allow White House aides publicly linked to the Watergate bugging scandal to testify in public and under oath.

Ziegler said "ongoing communications" were in progress. A spokesman for Sen. Howard R. Baker Jr. (R-Tenn), committee vice chairman, would not say whether an agreement had been reached, or was near.

But, he added, "If they're negotiating, it's obvious that they are a hell of a lot closer than they were before."

Another Senate source said he understood an agreement in principle had been reached, but that details remained at issue.

## Privilege Invoked

President Nixon has said that present and former White House staff members may not testify before the committee. He has invoked the doctrine of executive privilege, and argued that their appearance would violate the separation of powers.

But the committee chair-

the formal approval of the full committee, they said.

## No Compromise Needed

Weicker feels there is no need to compromise, that both the law and the Senate support the committee in its insistence on testimony.

Weicker, known for his strong independent streak, has been extremely critical of the White House over Watergate. He has called upon White House chief of staff H. R. Haldeman to resign if he will not testify.

Weicker is said to believe that a statement by Ervin and Baker, saying the committee had no evidence of involvement by Haldeman, was issued after one of the negotiating sessions. Its timing was extremely embarrassing to Weicker.

## Face-Saving Deal

According to the Chicago Tribune, announcement of the agreement is being delayed while face-saving for the White House is worked out.

The Tribune said the White House aides would be permitted to discuss their communications with each other, but would decline to answer questions about their talks with Mr. Nixon.

Ziegler would not say who was representing the White House at the talks, but said White House counsel John W. Dean 3d was not participating.

Watergate conspirator James W. McCord Jr. has told the Senate committee that Dean knew about the Watergate bugging in advance. He denies the charge.

## New Report

In another development, McCord was said by his lawyer to have taken FBI agents to four hiding places in Maryland where he had "stashed a way" electronic bugging equipment while he was out on bond following the Watergate arrests.

The lawyer, Bernard W. Fensterwald, said the bugging gear was purchased last spring but that he did not know whether it had ever been used.

Fensterwald said McCord can prove the hidden bugging equipment was bought with Nixon campaign funds because "he's got vouchers for the stuff."

*Continued From First Page*

man, Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr. (D-NC), has insisted on their testimony, under oath and in public.

In recent weeks, Republican concern over Watergate has escalated dramatically. GOP liberals and conservatives alike have urged the President to allow his aides to appear.

This pressure apparently played a major role in the White House decision to negotiate.

## 5 Members Left Out

Baker has endeavored to soften the White House position. He has consistently predicted that the White House assistants would ultimately testify.

According to Senate sources, Ervin and Baker were doing the negotiating with the White House, while the five other committee members have been left out.

Sources said Weicker was "very, very opposed" to the talks. He is upset that the sessions have taken place without

*Continued on Page 2, Col. 5*