

Saxbe Decries Subpoena

'Fishing Expedition' Laid to Watergate Committee

By Donald Lambro
United Press International

Attorney General-designate William B. Saxbe said yesterday the Senate Watergate committee's subpoena of more than 400 White House tapes and documents was a "fishing expedition" created to keep the committee in business.

Saxbe also said in an interview that he would pursue "strict, vigorous enforcement" of the antitrust laws and would conduct an investigation of the oil companies to see if they did anything to contrive the fuel shortage.

The Ohio Republican senator, to be sworn in today as President Nixon's fourth Attorney General, said he planned to run the Justice Department like "a good law office" and promised to handle its affairs "with dignity, honesty and fairness."

Saxbe said he believed the President has "cooperated" with Watergate Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski's investigation and renewed his pledge to honor Jaworski's full independence.

"He has his operation and I have mine," Saxbe said. "I don't know of any place I'd get involved unless he wants me to."

Saxbe said the committee's subpoena of more than 400 of Mr. Nixon's tapes and other papers "is obviously a fishing expedition. It had to come to this sooner or later.

"To keep in business the committee has to have grist for its mill," he said. "If they can keep dredging stuff up, they'll go on forever."

[The committee's chief counsel, Samuel Dash, denied Saxbe's charges and said the tapes and documents were carefully selected and specified, even though they run into the hundreds.

"Every tape and document we've asked for is relevant to our investigation," Dash said, "and we can document that. It is not a fishing expedition. Clearly

we've asked for a large number of items, but our resolution (setting up the Senate Watergate committee) is very broad and it calls for a complete investigation."]

Saxbe said the committee's action will "come to a point where the President has to decide whether there is any privacy in his office."

He said he wanted "vigorous enforcement" of the antitrust laws, asserting that "conglomerates

have hurt more people than they've helped."

said, "absolutely. I hope they (the department) are doing it right now."

Saxbe said he didn't have enough information to support any suspicion that the major oil firms may have acted to hold down fuel supplies but that "the average person thinks there is reason" for such conjecture.

"And as an average person I share their view," he said.

Saxbe said he has consulted with former Attorneys General Richard G. Kleindienst and Elliot L. Richardson and plans to seek advice from former Attorney General Ramsey Clark, who served during the Johnson administration.

Saxbe said he established only one condition when he accepted Mr. Nixon's nomination — "that I'll be able to talk with him when I need to." He said he foresaw "no problem" in gaining ac-

cess to Mr. Nixon when it is necessary.

But Saxbe cautioned that while he would seek "strict enforcement" of antitrust laws, there was a tendency among the courts and prosecutors "to try to legislate their views" against big corporations.

Asked if the department would conduct an inquiry into whether the big oil corporations took any deliberate steps to contribute to the fuel shortage, Saxbe

Saxbe, who developed a reputation in the Senate as something of a maverick Republican, also said that as Attorney General he will have to "mellow" his inclination to speak bluntly.

Saxbe also said:

• Civil rights problems had lost the prominence they earned during the 1960s but warned that "firm but fair enforcement is necessary or we could easily slide back into the practices of the '60s."

• Mr. Nixon's attempt to answer questions arising out of the Watergate scandals had helped to ease tensions with Congress but Saxbe was unable to assess whether the President had improved his own standing among the people. "Only time will tell on that," he said, adding, "it (Watergate) doesn't make my job any easier."