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House Probe Of Watergate Bugging Blocked

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The House Banking and Currency Committee voted 20 to 15 yesterday against holding public hearings on financial questions raised by the bugging of the Democrats' Watergate headquarters.

All 14 Republicans in attendance, four Southern Democrats and two other Democrats voted against committee chairman Wright Patman's request for the hearings, thus apparently ending any chance of a full airing of the celebrated case before election day.

Representative Garry Brown (Rep-Mich.), the key figure in engineering the defeat, acknowledged in an interview that he worked with the Justice Department and Representative Gerald R. Ford (Rep - Mich.), the House minority leader, to block the hearings.

Brown denied a charge by Patman that the White House brought "all kinds of pressure," but added: "I would have to presume that the White House wouldn't want further attention paid to this. I'm not so stupid to have to be told."

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Patman, a 79-year-old Texas Democrat, apparently anticipated yesterday's defeat and issued a prepared statement immediately after the vote:

"I predict," Patman said, "that the facts will come out, and when they do I am convinced they will reveal why the White House was so anxious to kill the committee's investigation. The public will fully understand why this pressure was mounted."

Patman held out the possibility of taking another vote but other committee members predicted that a second attempt at committee action would fail.

Thus, the only slim possibility for a full public inquiry before November 7 lies with Senator Edward F. Kennedy's Senate judiciary sub-

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committee on administrative practice and procedure.

Kennedy, according to those familiar with the Senator's thinking, intensely

wants to investigate the Watergate episode and related matters. However, he is said to doubt that he could command the majority vote of the full judiciary committee necessary to obtain enforceable subpoena powers for an investigation.

Interviews with nine of the 37 members of the House committee revealed that a GOP campaign to defeat the resolution for hearings included:

A letter circulated to the 15 Republican committee members by minority leader Ford telling them the importance of the vote.

Two meetings called by the ranking Republican on the committee, William B. Widnal (Rep-N.J.), "to discuss the merits of the hearings," according to Representative Margaret M. Heckler (Rep-Mass.).

A meeting last week of four southern Democrats on the committee called by Robert G. Stephens Jr. (Dem-Ga.). All voted to defeat the hearings. The other three are Tom S. Gettys (Dem-S.C.), Charles H. Griffin, (Dem-Miss.) and Bill Chappell Jr. (Dem-Fla.).

Chappell, it was learned, visited the White House last week and had his photograph taken with the President.

Chappell's press aide said the President had placed no restriction on using the photo during the Congressman's upcoming campaign.

After spearheading the successful opposition yesterday, Brown said if Patman actually wanted to win, he would not have submitted a list of 40 individuals and firms to be subpoenaed.

"Patman would not have come up with a list from hell to breakfast if he was serious . . . that was the best way to kill it. He couldn't have done more harm himself."

The list of 40 dipped into every corner of the White House and the Nixon re-election committee, calling for the sworn testimony of some of the President's top aides.

Three Californians are on the committee. Democrat Thomas M. Rees voted for the probe and Democrat Richard T. Hanna voted against it as did Republican John H. Roussetot.