

Weary Watergate Committee to Continue

NYTimes Panel Extends Its Day; 7 Witnesses Scheduled

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WASHINGTON, July 30—The Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities, despite weariness, decided today to lengthen the hours of its hearings and to press ahead until it had completed the Watergate phase of its inquiry.

At an executive session this morning that was described as "stormy" by one of the participants, the committee decided to hear seven more witnesses before recessing. Committee aides said this would probably take the current hearings at least into the middle of next week, even though a Saturday session has been scheduled.

Senators Sam J. Ervin Jr., the chairman, and Howard H. Baker Jr., the vice chairman, along with some of the five other members had been eager to finish the initial part of the investigation by Friday, when Congress is due to recess until after Labor Day.

However, as witness after witness, including John D. Ehrlichman, who was on the stand for the fifth day today, took more time than had been expected, it became apparent that the committee would either have to extend this phase of the hearings or complete it after the break.

9:30 Start Planned

The closed meeting this morning, before the day's hearings began, was reported to have been marked by arguments about changes in the schedule and in the witness list.

The committee voted to start its daily hearings in the Caucus Room of the Old Senate Office Building at 9:30 A.M. instead of 10 A.M., starting tomorrow.

The sessions, which have occasionally been cut off by 5 P.M., also will continue until 5:30 or 6 P.M. each day, and the lunch break will be cut from about an hour and a half to an hour.

A staff member said that the committee was intent on questioning the seven witnesses on the revised list and finishing the Watergate portion of the hearings "come hell or high water."

Earlier, the committee had decided to divide its inquiry into three phases, Watergate, political sabotage or "dirty tricks" and campaign financing.

"Dirty tricks" will be the subject of inquiry when it resumes after Labor Day.

The witnesses who will be heard before the first phase ends are as follows:

H. R. Haldeman, former White House chief of staff, who followed Mr. Ehrlichman to the stand today.

Richard G. Kleindienst, former Attorney General.

Henry E. Petersen, the Assistant Attorney General who directed the Watergate prosecution.

L. Patrick Gray 3d, former acting director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Gen. Vernon A. Walters, former Deputy Director of Central Intelligence.

Richard Helms, former Director of Central Intelligence; and Gen. Robert E. Cushman Jr., another former Deputy Director of Central Intelligence.

Charles W. Colson, a former White House political adviser, who had been expected to testify soon, was omitted.

Too Many Questions

A committee aide explained that Mr. Colson would be called as a witness during the "dirty tricks" phase. The aide said that the Senators had decided that it would take them too long to complete their questioning of Mr. Colson, extending the hearings beyond the point on which they could agree to stay in Washington.

One reason the committee is said to be eager to finish the Watergate phase before recessing is that President Nixon has

said that he will make a public statement after the Senate unit completes its examination of it.

The Senators are reported to be unwilling to give the President an excuse to delay any pronouncement.

Meanwhile, they are said to have decided against writing an interim report on Watergate themselves during the recess.

After more than two months of the nationally televised hearings, which have required long hours of preparation almost daily, the Senators and their aides are beginning to show signs of fatigue.

Today, the frayed nerves that apparently led to disputes in the executive session were readily apparent in the open hearing.

More frequently than usual, Senators took exception to lines of questioning pursued by their colleagues, and a staff rivalry that has seethed for some time beneath the surface broke into the open.

Dash-Thompson Exchange

At one point this morning, Samuel Dash, chief counsel for the committee, was questioning Mr. Ehrlichman as to whether President Nixon had been advised in 1971 that a plan suggesting break-ins for national security information was "clearly illegal and constituted the crime of burglary."

As Mr. Ehrlichman argued that Mr. Dash was apparently "charging me with somebody's opinion" in a document about the plan "without having first laid the foundation that I have ever seen the document," the committee counsel interrupted him.

"Mr. Ehrlichman, I asked you a question," Mr. Dash said.

Then, Fred Thompson, the committee's minority counsel, who has been at odds behind the scenes with Mr. Dash for some time, interrupted.

"Excuse me, Mr. chairman," he said, "as I understood it when the gavel was used just then Mr. Ehrlichman was in the middle of an answer. I do think it's unfair."

"No, it wasn't," Mr. Dash shot back.

"Excuse me, Mr. Dash," Mr. Thomson, a husky 6 foot 6 inch Tennessean, said. "We ought to let the witness answer the question and then if it's inappropriate and unresponsive . . ."

"Mr. Thompson, I don't want to get into a debate with you," replied Mr. Dash, a slender, baldish law professor at Georgetown University. "So far we have not heard answers, but all we have had are speeches."

"That is your conclusion," Mr. Thompson declared.

"I want to answer and I don't want counsel to interfere with the answer," Mr. Dash insisted.

That ended the exchange, but before the committee recessed for the day, Senator Ervin, the white-haired North Carolina Democrat, seemed to feel compelled to spread some oil on troubled waters.

In a long statement in which he admonished the audience again to refrain from applauding or showing approval or disapproval in any way, Senator Ervin conceded that some of the "questions given to Mr. Ehrlichman were rather robust."

"And the answers sometimes given by Mr. Ehrlichman were kind of robust, too," he added.

"I'm sure that Mr. Ehrlichman gave as good as he got," the Senator went on.

Before the gaveling the session to an end, Mr. Ervin praised the committee for the work it has been doing. Then he added, pointedly:

"Mr. Dash has done a marvelous job as chief counsel and Fred Thompson has done a marvelous job as minority counsel."

TUESDAY, JULY 31, 1973

Inquiry During Congressional Recess



Associated Press

Conferring on testimony of H. R. Haldeman, front row, from left: Fred D. Thompson, minority counsel; Vice Chairman Howard H. Baker Jr.; Chairman Sam J. Ervin Jr.; Samuel Dash, chief counsel, and James Hamilton,

assistant counsel. Rear: Senator Edward J. Gurney; William Shore, assistant minority counsel; Senator Joseph M. Montoya, next to Mr. Dash, and Rufus L. Edmisten, deputy counsel. Witness was told to tell about tapes.