

End of Public Watergate Hearings

Washington

The Senate Watergate Committee decided yesterday not to hold further public hearings.

The committee, which burst into the national spotlight last spring with spectacular televised sessions, backed off the center stage without fanfare.

The chairman, Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr., who became a celebrity during the height of the hearings, emerged from a half-hour private committee meeting and, standing in a corridor in the Capitol, read a three-page statement to reporters.

The hearings are being ended, the North Carolina Democrat said, because "the committee believes that it should be careful not to interfere unduly with the ongoing impeachment process of the House Judiciary Committee or the criminal cases which will soon be prosecuted by the special prosecutor, on which the attention of the country appears now to be focused."

Ervin said that between now and the end of May, the committee would continue to investigate various allegations, would pursue its court case to gain access to the White House tape recordings and would prepare its final report.

Later, by a voice vote, the Senate agreed to extend the panel's life until May 28.

Ervin said the only dissenter to the Committee's decision was Senator Edward J. Gurney (Rep-Fla.), who wanted the investigation shut down totally now and the report written immediately.

Samuel Dash, the committee's chief counsel, said that in the weeks ahead the committee would release transcripts of private sessions with witnesses in matters that have not been the subject of public hearings.

These matters include the circumstances surrounding the \$100,000 cash contribution given by agents of Howard R. Hughes, the billionaire, to President Nixon's friend C. G. (Bebe) Rebozo, and the contributions by the dairy industry to the Nixon re-election campaign.

Ervin said that Rebozo,

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who has refused to comply with a committee subpoena of certain documents, would be called to testify under oath to the committee's investigators.

For nearly three months — from last May 17 to August 7 — the Watergate hearings, broadcast live on

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commercial television during the day and replayed on public television at night, captured the attention of much of the nation.

The seven senators on the committee and such witnesses as John W. Dean III, John N. Mitchell, John D. Ehrlichman and H. R. Haldeman became familiar faces from coast to coast.

After recessing through the rest of August and most of September, the commit-



UPI Telephoto

SEN. SAM ERVIN
A report by May

tee resumed public hearings briefly last fall, but the testimony was much less dramatic. As interest in the proceedings waned, they were dropped by the television networks.

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