

Hearings on Watergate Seen Resuming Jan. 28

By Ferrel Guillory

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RALEIGH, N.C., Jan. 5— Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr., chairman of the Senate Watergate committee, has agreed to resume open hearings to explore Nixon campaign contributions by milk producers and the \$100,000 Howard Hughes cash gift to presidential friend C. G. (Bebe) Rebozo, Rufus Edmisten, the committee's deputy chief counsel, said here today.

Edmisten said plans are to have the hearings begin Jan. 28. Hearings will probably continue throughout February, he said, adding that the committee will not meet its Feb. 28 deadline for a report, which will be delayed until late March or early April.

In connection with the committee's hearings on the purported campaign contribution by Hughes, "There is no doubt but what Rebozo will be called," Edmisten said in an interview while he was attending a North Carolina Democratic Party meeting here.

Rebozo has acknowledged receiving \$100,000 from Hughes associates in late 1969 and early 1970 and has said he assumed it was meant as a political contribution. Rebozo has said he never gave the money to President Nixon or his campaign but kept it untouched in a safe deposit box until June, 1973, before returning the sum to a Hughes emissary.

Edmisten said the Senate committee has heard "all kinds of conflicting stories about what the \$100,000 was about" and intends to call witnesses, including Hughes associates, to explain the matter.

Edmisten said there is a "high possibility" that Donald Nixon, the President's brother, will be called as a witness on the Hughes matter.

The second area of inquiry involves \$427,500 in contributions to the Nixon campaign from milk producers. The contributions coincided with an administration decision to increase milk support prices.

"There is a very high probability that John Connally will be called," said Edmisten. Connally, former Secretary of the Treasury, headed Democrats-for-Nixon during the 1972 campaign. He has since become a Republican.

Edmisten said that the contributions by milk producers will be the first subject taken

up in the resumed hearings. It will involve about 12 witnesses and consume about five days of hearings, he said. The Hughes-Rebozo matter will consume about seven days of hearings, Edmisten said.

There had been reports just before the 1973 congressional recess that the Watergate committee was phasing itself out.

"We knew better," Edmisten said. "We just needed more time to develop more material."

Edmisten said the committee members gave Ervin authority to call hearings. The staff has recommended that hearings be resumed, said Edmisten, a close aide to the North Carolina senator, and Ervin has told him that he intends to issue the call for more hearings.

Edmisten said the writing of the report may be the "most difficult thing" for the committee to do.

"We are definitely going forward" said Edmisten.

Talmadge, Weicker Hit Nixon's Stand on Tapes

President Nixon's refusal to comply with the Senate Watergate committee's subpoenas of several hundred

tapes and documents makes people think "he has something to hide," committee member Herman E. Talmadge (D-Ga.) said yesterday.

Talmadge told a reporter in Georgia that the President "is making a great mistake in refusing to comply with the subpoenas. It indicates to the public he has something to hide and affects his credibility," he said.

"It doesn't come as any surprise," said Sen. Lowell P. Weicker Jr. (R-Conn.), another committee member. "The president and/or his aides continue to duck the hard one. Candor has been a word, it has not been a deed, in the White House for a considerable period of time."

But Sen. Howard H. Baker Jr. (R-Tenn.), committee vice chairman, said, "It was a mistake . . . to attempt to subpoena a great volume of documents which may not be relevant to the investigation."

"I was not consulted when these tapes and documents were subpoenaed. I knew nothing about it," Baker said. "I think the committee should reconsider the entire matter, and while I hope the committee should have any relevant tapes we should also avoid a fishing expedition."