

Watergate Panel Will Delay Report

By Lawrence Meyer
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The Senate select committee voted unanimously yesterday to honor special Watergate prosecutor Leon Jaworski's request to delay issuing the committee's report until after indictments are returned by federal grand juries investigating the Watergate affair and related matters.

Following a closed afternoon session of the committee yesterday, chairman Sam J. Ervin Jr. (D-N.C.) said the committee had agreed to comply with Jaworski's request, reportedly made last week, in order to "obviate any danger" of damaging the rights of defendants.

According to Ervin, Jaworski said that "a number of indictments" would be returned in February. Ervin said he hopes that "a number" of the defendants will settle their cases by pleading guilty. Releasing the report immediately prior to or after the return of indictments, Ervin said, could encourage defendants to delay their pleas.

The committee also voted yesterday to make all its files available to the House Judiciary Committee, which has begun proceedings for the impeachment of President Nixon.

During yesterday's almost three-hour meeting, the committee staff at one point was asked to leave the room by Sen. Howard Baker (R-Tenn.), the committee's vice chairman. Neither Baker nor Ervin would say what the committee discussed while the staff was out of the room. Only chief counsel Samuel Dash and minority counsel Fred Thompson remained in the session with the senators during this half-hour period.

Ervin said after the meeting that the committee would ask the Senate to extend the committee's life until May 28 and to appropriate another \$300,000 to allow the committee to complete its work. Ervin declined to predict when the committee would issue its report, originally scheduled to be given to the Senate by Feb.