

Five-Man Panel, \$500,000 Sought for Watergate Probe

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A resolution allocating \$500,000 for a special five-member Senate committee to investigate the Watergate bugging and related allegations of political spying against the Democrats was introduced yesterday by Sen. Sam J. Ervin (D-N.C.).

Republican sources on Capitol Hill said yesterday that several Republican senators are planning to oppose the resolution or have it weakened. However, one source said that such Republican opposition may dry up because of the overwhelming support for the resolution by the Democratic majority.

The Senate Watergate investigation "is a potentially extremely embarrassing situation that could crucify the White House," one Republican source said, "but to fight it is to magnify it and that's the last thing we want."

As Ervin's resolution was introduced yesterday, Minority Leader Hugh Scott (R-Pa.) asked that the vote setting up the special committee be postponed until today so the Republican Policy Committee, the 15-member minority party leadership group, can establish a position.

While saying that he had no personal position on the resolution, Scott reminded senators on the floor yesterday that he has earlier suggested that a special committee of the American Bar Association undertake the Watergate investigation.

The Republican Policy Committee meets this afternoon and Scott said that he would be bound by its decision.

Ervin's eight-page resolution would establish a Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities that would report back to the full Senate by the end of February, 1974.

The special committee

would have a membership of three Democratic senators and two Republican senators. The Senate Democratic leadership has unanimously selected Ervin to head the committee.

As drafted, the resolution would allow the committee the broadest possible powers to subpoena White House aides and probe fully into the Watergate bugging, its funding, planning, purpose and sponsorship.

The resolution would also give the special committee the power to determine:

- Whether anyone was "induced by bribery, coercion,

threats, or any other means whatsoever to plead guilty" at the Watergate trial that ended last week. Five of the seven defendants in the case pleaded guilty amid reports that four of them received promises of money to change their initial pleas of not guilty.

- "Whether any books, checks, canceled checks, communication, correspondence, documents, papers, physical evidence, records, recordings, tapes or materials . . . have been concealed, suppressed, or destroyed." Federal sources close to the Watergate case

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ave said that numerous records at President Nixon's reelection committee were destroyed; testimony during the Watergate trial verified some of this record destruction, though the reason for it was not explored.

- Whether there were any efforts "to disrupt, hinder, impede or sabotage" the candidacy of any presidential contender from any political party, including personal surveillance of candidates. Federal investigators have said that as many as 50 persons, among them California attorney Donald H. Segretti, were paid to spy for the Nixon committee.

- Whether there was "any fabrication, dissemination, or publication of any false charges or other false information having the purpose of discrediting" a presidential candidate. Federal sources say that a so-called "Canuck" letter charging that Sen. Edmund S. Muskie (D-Maine) condoned a racial slur on Americans of French-Canadian descent as "Canucks" was such a fabrication.

- Whether the receipt and disbursement of money or campaign finances were properly reported, including "any secret fund or place of storage for use in financing any activity which was sought to be concealed from the public."

Federal sources have said that the Nixon committee had such a special or "secret" fund of up to \$900,000 used to pay for an intelligence-gathering operation against the Democrats.

The resolution also grants the committee chairman power to subpoena "any department, agency, officer, or employee of the executive branch of the U.S. government or any private person, firm or corporation."

One provision in the resolution seems to anticipate difficulty in enforcing some subpoenas, and says the special committee may recommend appropriate action to the Senate after the "willful failure or refusal of any person to appear."

The Watergate investigation by the Senate is likely to result in the first actual test of Congress to force testimony from the President's closest advisers, should they claim immunity under what is called executive privilege.

Executive privilege is the practice of presidential advisers maintaining that they have a right not to disclose to Congress confidential White House business.

The Senate Democratic majority has said that they want to challenge this tradition.

The resolution would also grant the special select committee the power to grant immunity from prosecution to any person who cooperates

fully with the Senate investigation.

According to the resolution, the committee would determine if any laws "are inadequate, either in their provisions or manner of enforcement to safeguard the integrity or purity of the process in which presidents are chosen."

Sen. Ervin, a relatively non-partisan member of the Senate, said that he would expect the select committee to hold public hearings within "a couple of months."

The Subcommittee on Administrative Practice and Procedure, headed by Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.), has been investigating the Watergate espionage for more than three months and will provide data on their findings to the Ervin committee.