

GOP Names Aide in Senate Bug Probe

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By John Hanrahan

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Fred D. Thompson, a Nashville lawyer and former assistant U.S. attorney in Tennessee, was named yesterday as minority counsel of the select Senate committee that will investigate the Watergate bugging and related allegations of presidential campaign espionage in 1972.

Thompson, 30, was selected for the key post by Sen. Howard H. Baker Jr. (R-Tenn.), the committee vice chairman. Thompson was Baker's middle Tennessee campaign manager in Baker's re-election campaign last year.

Baker's office said the other two Republican members of the seven-member select committee had approved Thompson and approval by the full committee is expected to be routine. The Democratic-controlled committee Wednesday unanimously selected Prof. Samuel Dash, of Georgetown University Law Center, as chief counsel.

Dash said he expected hearings to begin by late April.

Thompson, a federal prosecutor from 1969 until last summer in the middle Tennessee (Nashville area) district, was known chiefly for his handling of bank robbery and moonshine whisky prosecutions. He won 14 of 15 bank robbery, burglary and larceny cases he prosecuted and also successfully prosecuted two sheriffs allegedly involved in moonshine operations.

Interviewed yesterday, Thompson said he was not familiar enough with all aspects of the Watergate case to outline detailed plans, but promised "a thorough investigation. This will be no witch hunt, but it will be a thorough investigation. Let the chips fall where they may."

Thompson said he anticipates no problem working with Dash or other Democratic appointed staffers, saying the majority and the minority have a mutual interest in investigating this matter and bringing all facts to light.

The Nashville lawyer said he also viewed his role as insuring that the committee staff keeps within the scope

of the investigation and does not delve into matters unrelated to political espionage.

Thompson said he expects to begin his committee work within a week and will work full time on the investigation at least until June, when he believes the hearings may be concluded. After that, he said, he would work part time on committee work and part time on private legal work as a

member of the Nashville law firm of Butler, McHugh, Butler, Tine and Watts.

He is a graduate of Memphis State University and a 1967 graduate of Vanderbilt University Law School. Baker said yesterday that Thompson "had an impeccable record as a prosecutor in the U.S. attorney's office. I feel fortunate to have him in a key role during this investigation."