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Sen. Sam Erwin of North Carolina had some comments today about executive privilege as it concerns White House Aides not testifying about the Watergate affair. David Selvin reports:

Selvin: Sen. Sam Erwin, chairman of the Senate special Watergate committee, today rejected an offer from President Nixon to let presidential aides confer with the committee on an ifformal basis rather than under oath. Erwin said he did not think presidential aides were either "nobility or royalty and therefore should testify openly like other people." In the meantime Erwin said he favored proceeding with testimony of other witnesses in the investigation of the Watergate political espionage affair, and later if necessary he would issue subpoenas for the presidential aides if they continue to refuse to testify. Nixon has refused to permit formal testimony by his present and former aides on the grounds that to do so would be a violation of his executive privilege. In fact Nixon has said he would be willing to test his policies in court.

Today Erwin criticized Nixon for claiming such immunity. According to the Senator from North Carolina, "That's not executive privilege, it's executive poppycock." And as such, Erwin said he was going to suggest that Duke Law School give Nixon a refresher course on the Constitution. Nixon attended Duke, which incidentally is in Erwin's home state.

Erwin went on to say that it it was important that the aides appear in person so the committee "could observed their demeanor and conduct as witnesses." Erwin again, this time paraphrasing Shakespeare, "I wonder what meat the White House aides eat that they grow so great." And finally, Erwin concluded by saying "If all the allegations about Watergate are true, we have to consider ~~that~~ this was an assault on the integrity of the process by which the President of the United States is chosen. Every person, be he Republican, or Democrat or Mugwump, should cooperate with the committee to try to determine the truth of these allegations."
