

RE-ELECTION UNIT OF NIXON GROWING

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Campaign Staff Busy Now
on Watergate Matters

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WASHINGTON, April 5 (AP)

—Five months after its original mission was accomplished, the Committee for the Re-election of the President is still in business and about to enlarge its staff.

It has become in effect a committee for response and rebuttal, speaking in defense of President Nixon's campaign personnel amid the hearings, lawsuits and accusations that stem from the Watergate wire-tapping.

The operation is tiny compared with that of the campaign period. The roster will number about a dozen persons with the addition of two or three legal and public-relations staff members. It may later be expanded to 15, depending on developments in Congress and the courts on the political-espionage case.

"Four more years" is the answer at the switchboard now.

It used to be "Re-elect the President," back in the days when the committee was a campaign organization with as many as 375 employees.

\$4.7-Million in Treasury

As long as the Watergate inquiry and its offshoots continue, said DeVan L. Shumway, spokesman for the committee, "we'll be here. It may be two months, it may be two years."

In either case, there should be no problem meeting the payroll. Mr. Shumway said the

committee's finance branch had \$4.7-million in unused campaign funds as of a month ago.

The committee's chief public function is rebuttal in behalf of Nixon campaign officials accused in statements, testimony or news accounts of involvement in political espionage against the Democrats.

That does not extend to the two former committee employees who were among the seven men convicted of breaking into Democratic headquarters last June 17.

In handling what he calls the "response mechanism," Mr. Shumway said he conferred periodically with former Attorney General John N. Mitchell, who once was chairman of the committee, and with Maurice H. Stans, who heads the finance committee. He said he did not deal directly with the White House.

Another Republican said the re-election committee remains in operation "because the White House doesn't want to take the heat" in dealing with accusations likely to increase as public hearings begin in the Senate.

White House spokesmen do handle matters involving officials and aides on the staff there; Mr. Shumway speaks for what was the campaign.

Many Legal Matters

In addition, the committee is involved in three civil suits stemming from the Watergate case. Another suit seeks to force full disclosure of Nixon campaign finances.

"A lot of our time is taken with talking to lawyers," Mr. Shumway said.

If it were not for the Watergate case and the problems it raised, Mr. Shumway said, the committee probably would have closed down about April 1.

But with televised Senate hearings on the Watergate likely to begin about mid-April, the rebuttal operation is likely to be busy.

A sample came after the disclosure of secret Senate testimony in which a convicted Watergate conspirator, James W. McCord Jr., said he had been told that Mr. Mitchell had approved the wiretapping plan in advance.

Mr. Shumway called Mr. Mitchell in New York, then relayed his heated denial, calling the statement "slanderous and false."

Later, the White House joined the counter-attack. Mr. Nixon's press secretary, Ronald L. Ziegler, sharply criticized the Senate committee investigating the Watergate, saying it was "plagued by leaks of tidal-wave proportions."

Mr. Nixon had said on March 15 that he and Mr. Ziegler would not be commenting on the investigation while it was in progress. Mr. Nixon also said that he did not intend to raise questions about the conduct of the committee,

as long as it avoided partisanship, hearsay, and guilt by innuendo or association.

But after accounts of testimony leaked from the panel's first, closed-door interrogation of McCord, Mr. Ziegler called it a "disorganized house" that

should be put in order to proceed with fairness and due process.

The panel called off a second secret session, and agreed to step up preparations for public hearings.