

PANEL MIGHT HEAR PRESIDENT'S AIDES

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Talks Between White House and Senate Hint Possibility of Watergate Testimony

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WASHINGTON, April 13—The White House and the Senate committee investigating the Watergate case are discussing an arrangement under which Presidential aides would testify publicly on the scandal, it was reported today.

Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House press secretary, said there was "ongoing communication" with the Congressional investigators, but he asserted that it was "incorrect to say that we have reached agreement."

Similar statements came from the Capitol. A committee source said "active" negotiations were under way, but he insisted that "nothing final" had been worked out thus far.

In another development today, James W. McCord Jr., one of seven men convicted in the Watergate case, met secretly with members of the Senate committee staff.

Resignation Offered

McCord was understood to have been prepared to discuss details of the case extensively, but neither he nor his lawyers would comment on today's session. The committee counsel, Samuel Dash, said he had warned them not to talk about the testimony.

McCord's earlier statements linking prominent officials with the conspiracy, largely on the basis of secondhand information, have leaked from both the Senate committee and the grand jury investigating the case.

In another development, Harold Lipset, a San Francisco private detective hired as a special investigator for the Ervin committee, offered his registration today in anticipa-

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tion of reports about an eavesdropping case in New York in which he was involved in 1969.

Mr. Lipset pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor in the case after he said an associate had installed a listening device in connection with work on a divorce case. The charge had been reduced from a felony, He said, and was of a "minor nature."

While the detective said he was "proud of his record," he pointed out that his presence might prove "a source of embarrassment" to the Senate. He charged that "efforts to discredit me came from the enemies of the committee," but he did not elaborate.

There has been continuing pressure from Republican members of the Senate and House for President Nixon to permit his advisers to go before the investigating committee.

Mr. Nixon declared last month that members and former members of his staff would refuse, on the ground of executive privilege, to make a "formal appearance" before any Congressional committee.

The President promised to supply "all necessary and relevant information through informal contacts" with Congress, a position that has been interpreted to mean that there would be no public, sworn testimony.

But in the month since Mr. Nixon took this stance, there have been public complaints about it from members of his own party. Some have voiced fears that White House silence would hurt their re-election chances next year.

The Republicans continued today their demands for White House testimony on the conspiracy to wiretap telephones at the Democratic National Committee headquarters and on related political espionage efforts.

Representatives John J. Rhodes of Arizona, chairman of the House Republican Policy Committee, said the "continual mystery surrounding Watergate is hurting the image of President Nixon and the Republican party in the eyes of people everywhere."

He urged the White House to take "all steps necessary to clear up the confusion and suspicion" surrounding the affair. It is time "for all the facts to be laid out in the open for all Americans to see and judge," Mr. Rhodes added.

Senators Urge Testimony

Senator George D. Aiken, Republican of Vermont, said that if he were a White House aide accused of involvement in the scandal, he would "be up here this morning pounding on the door, asking them to let me tell them everything I knew."

Senator William B. Saxbe, Republican of Ohio, said that



Associated Press

James W. McCord Jr., left, convicted in Watergate case, leaves with his lawyer, Bernard W. Fensterwald, after meeting with staff members of Senate panel investigating the case.

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the White House attitude "is that it has no guilt of responsibility, that they don't know anything about it." But the facts, he declared, "indicate otherwise."

Senator Howard H. Baker Jr., Republican of Tennessee, vice chairman of the investigating committee, interviewed by The Washington Star-News renewed his call for White House testimony "in public and under oath."

The Chicago Tribune reported today that a deal had already been struck under which Presidential aides whose names had come up in the investigation or who would know about campaign activities would testify.

Mr. Ziegler said, however, that "no decisions have been made," and Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr., Democrat of North Carolina, the committee chairman, said he was aware of no agreement on the subject. He has said in the past, however, that he believes the aides will testify.

The precise status of the negotiations was unclear, and the participants on behalf of the White House and the Ervin committee have not been identified.