

Nixon Aides Might Testify in Public

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Washington

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 yesterday.

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

Similar statements came from the Capitol.

A committee source said "active" negotiations are under way, but he insisted that "nothing final" has been worked out thus far.

MET

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

McCord was understood to have been prepared to discuss details of the case extensively, but neither he nor his lawyers would comment on yesterday's session. 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 second-hand information, have leaked from both the Senate committee and the grand jury investigating the case.

There has been continuing pressure from Republican members of the Senate and House for President Nixon

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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.

DEMANDS

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

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," Rhodes added.

AIDE

Senator George D. Aiken (Rep-Vt.) 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 (Rep-Ohio) said that the White House attitude "is that it has no guilt or responsibility, that they don't know anything about it." But the facts, he declared "indicate otherwise."

The Chicago Tribune reported yesterday 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.

PAST

Ziegler said, however, that "no decisions have been made," and Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr. (Dem-N.C.), the committee chairman, said he is 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.

Among the present White House aides whose names have come up publicly in the Watergate investigation are H. R. Haldeman, the president's chief of staff, and John W. Dean III, Mr. Nixon's counsel. A former adviser, who testified before a grand jury here this week, is Dwight L. Chapin.