

Watergate

Hearings

On TV

N.Y. Times Service

Washington

The deputy director of President Nixon's campaign organization ordered a file that apparently contained political intelligence removed from his desk hours after the Watergate burglary, a Senate select committee was told yesterday as it began public hearings into the case.

The file was taken from the office of deputy director Jeb Stuart Magruder late on the afternoon of June 17 for "security" reasons, according to Robert C. Odle Jr., another campaign official.

Odle was the first witness before the Senate committee hearings, televised nationally. He said he had not read the file but added, "I suspect that things which have no place in a political campaign were in it."

Odle testified that he returned the file to Magruder upon his return to Washington two days later, but so much of the contents contained in it have never been found by investigators.

IMPACT

The committee heard two other witnesses in starting the hearings, which are expected to continue off and on into the fall and which are expected to have a major impact on American politics and Government.

The panel, under Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr. (Dem.-N.C.) is investigating the plot to spy on the Democrats last year and an alleged Administration effort to cover up the conspiracy.

The public sessions began in the Caucus room of the Old Senate Office Building

See Back Page

From Page 1

before a packed audience of spectators and reporters.

ARREST

The initial witnesses talked in detail about the structure of the Nixon organization and the White House and about the arrest of five conspirators in the offices of the Democratic National Committee at the Watergate complex.

Odle's testimony drew laughs several times from the hundreds of reporters and spectators jammed into the hearing room.

When Odle, in all seriousness, prefaced one answer with "let me make a couple of things perfectly clear . . ." it brought down the house. Even Odle, somber throughout most of his appearance, grinned at his unconscious use of one of Mr. Nixon's pet phrases.

Odle was questioned closely about Magruder's file, suggesting that the Senate committee was attempting to develop evidence of high-level involvement in a coverup attempt immediately after the arrests.

The 29-year-old former director of Administration at the Nixon re-election headquarters also said that John N. Mitchell took part in making political decisions while he was still the attorney general.

This appeared to conflict with testimony by Mitchell in March, 1972, when he appeared before the Senate Judiciary Committee during its hearings on the International Telephone and Telegraph Corp.

MEMOS

Odle testified that "decision memos" were sent to Mitchell at the Justice Department and that the former attorney general was involved in the "major campaign decisions" as early as 1971.

The question of the file removed from Magruder's desk was first raised by Senator Lowell P. Weicker Jr. (Rep.-Conn.) and then was pursued by other members of the committee.

The senators were at times openly incredulous about Odle's insistence that

he had never examined the file, described as a legal-sized, light gray folder about an inch and a half thick.

Finally, Senator Joseph M. Montoya (Dem.-N.M.) asked: "Are you a very curious man, Mr. Odle?" The spectators laughed, but Odle replied:

"I wasn't curious enough to read it that weekend. I was more curious to read the Washington Post to find out what was going on down at the re-election committee.

Senator Howard Baker (Rep.-Tenn.) who is vice chairman of the investigating committee, pressed Odle on whether the file held memoranda dealing with wiretaps on Democratic party telephones, material with the code name "Gemstone."

EXCHANGE

There was this exchange:

Baker: Do you have any information, did you have any information at that time about the content of that file that might relate to that document, Gemstone?

Odle: No sir.

Q. Did you ever later learn what was in that file?

A. No, not until very recently.

Q. Well, do you know now what was in it?

A. Well, I can speculate what was in it.

Q. You suspect that the Gemstone material was it?

A. I suspect that things which have no place in a political campaign were in it, yes sir.

TELEPHONE

Magruder and other Nixon re-election committee officials were in California on the weekend the arrests occurred and Odle had explained that he and Robert Reisner, an assistant to Magruder, talked by telephone with Magruder.

Magruder wanted certain files taken from his desk for safekeeping, according to Odle, and these were selected by Reisner, Odle said.

Odle said he could not say how the files were chosen nor why the one particular folder was given to him. He said Reisner's briefcase was filling up with the "advertising" files.

Magruder, who is believed to be among those under close scrutiny by a federal grand jury now investigating the conspiracy, returned from California the follow-

ing Monday.

CLOSET

Odle said he had kept the briefcase containing Magruder's file in a closet at his home and brought it back to the committee headquarters and returned it to Magruder when he asked for it on Monday.

Immediately after the break-in was disclosed, Odle testified, G. Gordon Liddy, later convicted as a conspirator in the bugging, asked him for instructions on how to operate a large paper shredder.

Liddy was dissatisfied with a small shredder, Odle said, and began feeding his

records into a large one. Odle said he didn't know what was in Liddy's records.

REACTION

Describing his first reaction to the Democratic headquarters break-in — before any participants were identified — Odle drew laughter in testifying he told associates: "That could never happen here because I've got this man working for me named Jim McCord."

McCord, at the time of his arrest, was security coordinator of the Committee for the Re-Election of the President and the Republican National Committee. A short time later, upon learning McCord and four others had been arrested in the break-in, Odle said he fired McCord "in about one minute."

Odle was followed to the stand by Bruce Kehrli, aide to former White House chief of staff H. R. Haldeman, who quit under fire in the Watergate scandal on April 30.

Kehrli's testimony was restricted to describing White House staff organization. The senators reserved for a later appearance by Kehrli questions concerning his drilling open the White House safe of Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt.

Kehrli did say that a mysterious figure named Roy H. Sheppard apparently gained access to Hunt's files immediately after the break-in because Sheppard had a special pass from the U.S. Department of Transportation.

A federal grand jury has been told that Sheppard hauled away eight cartons of records from Hunt's office

before an official search of the office was made by Kehrli and others.

OTHERS

Also testifying were Sergeant Paul W. Leeper and John Barnett, who were on the police detail that surprised five men in the act of rifling Democratic headquarters in the Watergate office building in the post-midnight hours of June 17, and arrested them.

"They were probably five of the easiest lockups I've ever had," Leeper said.

In an opening statement, the 76-year-old Senator Ervin said the committee is determined to "uncover all the relevant facts . . . and to spare no one, whatever his station in life may be . . ."

"If the many allegations made to this date are true," he said, "the burglars who broke into the headquarters of the Democratic National Committee at the Watergate were in effect breaking into the home of every citizen of the United States.

"And if these allegations prove to be true, what they were seeking to steal was not the jewels, money, or other property of American citizens, but something much more valuable—their most precious heritage, the right to vote in a free election."

Ervin said that since the break-in a "mood of incredulity" had prevailed and that it was the committee's job to "allay the fears being expressed by the citizenry."



UPI Telephoto

FIRST WITNESS ROBERT ODLE
He reported a conversation with Jeb Magruder



UPI Telephoto

BRUCE KEHRLI POINTED TO ORGANIZATIONAL CHART
Special assistant to the President described the White House staff