

Joseph Kraft

Who's Who on The Watergate Committee

The inner politics, and likely outcome, of Watergate find expression in the anatomy of the Senate investigating committee. All the committee by-play (and that includes the prosecution of the investigation as well as the defense of the President) lies on the Republican side.

The Democrats, apart from defending against an occasional shot, are sitting back in judgment. Which means that if the evidence points that way, no artificial barriers are going to stand against a pinning of blame on the President.

The point man on the committee, the senator who has forced the pace of investigation all along is the Connecticut Republican, Lowell Weicker. Mr. Weicker is well-born, well educated,

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young (42) and idealistic. He was so shocked by the earliest Watergate disclosures that he made the scandal a theme during the 1972 campaign.

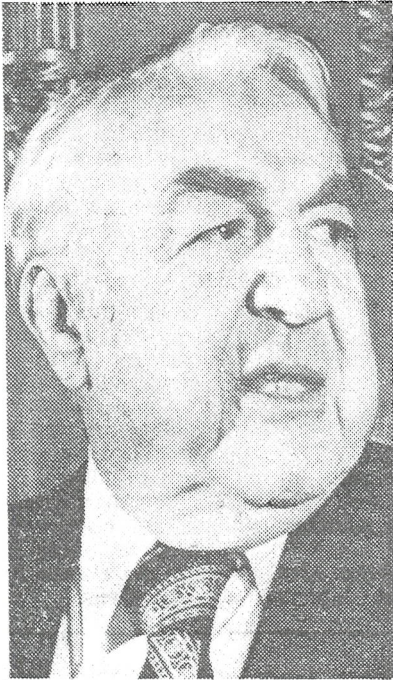
He has developed a four-man investigating team of his own. He has Connecticut contacts with two key witnesses—Acting FBI Director L. Patrick Gray; and Alfred Baldwin, a security man hired for the original Watergate break-in.

Not surprisingly Weicker has made the big points so far in the Senate hearings. On the first day, he elicited the information that Jeb Stuart Magruder had had files removed from his desk at the Committee for the Re-Election of the President on the day after the Watergate burglars were apprehended.

On the second day, Weicker showed that the Internal Security Division of the Justice Department, which is housed in the so-called Triangle Building, was collecting security information and passing it out on a regular basis to the Committee for the Re-Election of the President. We are probably going to hear a lot more about the Triangle Building and the activities it carried out under former Assistant Attorney General Robert Mardian.

The other Republicans on the committee are Edward Gurney of Florida and Howard Baker of Tennessee. Apart from a connection with Cuban-American constituents who participated at a very low level in various break-in operations, Senator Gurney seems to have no special information. He has been reduced to such small stuff as pointing out that only a very few persons implicated in Watergate were elected Republican political leaders.

Senator Baker is a far more formidable figure. He is probably the most intelligent man on the committee, and he is a distinct presidential possibility.



*Chairman Sam Ervin —
“about as nonpartisan as a
Democrat can be”—and Vice
Chairman Howard Baker —
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He is believed to be in regular touch with the White House. He has a friendly investigator from Tennessee, Fred Thompson, acting as counsel to the minority.

There has been speculation that Mr. Thompson would be able to show that some witnesses accusing White House figures of illegal actions were in fact double agents paid off by the Democrats. But so far, Senator Baker has had to rely heavily on newspaper clippings for his questioning. The inference is that Mr. Thompson has been a bust as an investigator.

As to the Democrats, they put their side of the committee together at a time when it looked as though they might be vulnerable to charges that

the Watergate investigation was blackening the names of Cuban patriots, and hampering the President's ability to handle grave problems of national security. Thus Sen. Joseph Montoya of New Mexico, besides being a man of impartial judgment, is the leading Spanish-speaking political figure in the country.

Daniel Inouye of Hawaii is a war-hero, who provides a bulwark against any charges the Democrats are soft on national security. It is typical that Senator Inouye used one set of questions to establish beyond peradventure of doubt patriotism of Democratic candidates as Sen. Edmund Muskie and Sen. George McGovern.

There remain the two Democratic

whales on the committee—Chairman Sam Ervin of North Carolina and Herman Talmadge of Georgia. They are highly intelligent, fair-minded men, respected by their colleagues in the Congress and about as nonpartisan as Democrats can be. Both have been at pains to point out that evidence against the President admitted to the committee would not be admissible in court.

But though they are reserving judgment, Senators Ervin and Talmadge are not shying away from the trail so far traced by the evidence. Probably the key sentence uttered so far in the hearings was a comment made to a key witness by Senator Talmadge: “You have made serious charges implicating the President of the United States . . .”

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