

Networks to Rotate

Watergate Hearings

NYTimes MAY 26 1974

By ALBIN KREBS

The three television networks agreed yesterday that when the Senate Select Watergate Committee hearings resumed June 5, they would broadcast each day's session on a rotating basis.

This will be the first time that the networks have rotated live coverage of a major news event.

The agreement was reached after widespread viewer unhappiness was expressed over the pre-empting of regular programming on the three networks, primarily of game shows and soap operas, for Watergate coverage.

In addition to viewer discon-

Continued on Page 47, Column 4

NETWORKS ROTATE SENATE HEARINGS

Continued From Page 1, Col. 1

tent, there was an economic consideration that the networks could not ignore, although spokesmen for them declined to comment on it. For each hour of daytime programming pre-empted, it is estimated that a network "loses," on the average, about \$120,000 in commercial revenues.

Thus, when pre-emption for Watergate covers at least four hours a day, a network could theoretically "lose" more than \$400,000.

Although advertising agencies, to collect their 15 per cent commissions on commercials placed for their clients, will accommodate the networks with what "make-good"—running the pre-empted commercials at a later date—the networks contend they never recover monetarily from "lost" commercial time.

By a drawing, it was determined that the National Broadcasting Company would carry the hearings live on its network, Tuesday, June 5, the Columbia Broadcasting System on June 6 and the American Broadcasting Company on June 7. Subsequent sessions will be carried in the same order of rotation.

As part of the agreement, which can be terminated at the request of any of the networks at the end of the first hearing week, any network, may carry, on its own, part or all of the live broadcast of each hearing session, or use videotaped portions of each session at its choosing.

Additionally, the networks are offering all stations unaffiliated with them access to their live or taped coverage under customary pool, chst-sharing arrangements.

It was pointed out that the rotation would make it possible for every area in the country to have access to live coverage of the hearings on at least one TV channel.

Since the start of the hearings May 17, live broadcasting has been provided by pool arrangements. Therefore each network's broadcasts have been identical to those of the other networks, except for the analysis and background supplied by network correspondents.

Special programs, regular news reports and documentaries based on the hearings will not be included under the rotation arrangement.