

Ervin Reply To Pleas for Fast Probe

Washington

Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr. (Dem-N.C.), chairman of the Senate Watergate Committee, said yesterday he would like to zero in quickly on the central issue—President Nixon's role in the affair—by calling his former aides immediately.

But Ervin said there is no choice but to wait until Mid-June to summon two key former White House aides, John W. Dean III and Jeb Stuart Magruder.

Responding to an appeal by Senator Edward J. Gurney (Rep-Fla.) for an end to hearsay testimony, Ervin said in Winston-Salem, N.C., it will be about June 14 before Dean and Magruder are granted immunity from prosecution to tell their own stories.

TELL

"I wish the top level White House officials were available," Ervin said. "If everybody connected with the White House would come out and tell what they know we could find out in a week."

But Ervin noted that the attorney general has refused to waive a 20-day notice period blocking an immediate order of immunity from chief U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica.

In a lengthy letter to the other six members of the special panel that began televised public hearings May 17, Gurney complained that things are going too slowly and not cutting to the heart of the issue: whether Mr. Nixon was involved.

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"Thus far, we have had minor witnesses who can shed little real light on the involvement of the President," he said. "However, their testimony has provided huge black headlines charging presidential involvement based solely on hearsay or opinion . . ."

"Both the presidency and the nation deserve better than this."

He said the committee could "get to the heart of Watergate" in short order by calling seven one-time Nixon lieutenants — H.R. Haldeman, John D. Ehrlichman, Dean, John N. Mitchell, Maurice H. Stans, Herbert W. Kalmbach and Charles W. Colson.

Gurney said they should be called beginning next Tuesday, when the hearings resume after a week's recess.

Another committee member, Senator Herman E. Talmadge (Dem-Ga.), last week similarly urged the panel to call key witnesses at once.

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