

# A Plea to Halt the TV Hearings

FROM MURDER cases to political trials, judges had become increasingly concerned over pre-trial publicity that threatened chances for a fair trial in court.

Last week Senator Sam Ervin's Senate committee investigating the Watergate case was faced with that issue when special Watergate prosecutor Archibald Cox asked the committee to delay its hearings at least one to three months, until he had completed the investigation.

Cox, who only a few days earlier had stated he would "never consider for a mo-

## Prosecutor fears guilty could go free

ment" asking that the hearings be stopped, asserted that there was a "grave danger" that the guilty might go unpunished and the full facts be lost if the public hearings continued.

Cox conceded that it was a "difficult request for me to make because there will be false charges that I am attempting to cover up the truth."

But Senator Ervin (Dem.-N.C.), the Senate's foremost authority on the Constitution recognized the dilemma. What it came down to, he declared, was that in this instance discovering the truth and informing the American public were more important than

putting any particular person in prison.

"The people of this land," Ervin responded to Cox's letter, "are entitled to know the truth without further delay and are entitled to have their government resume its operations in a manner to promote their interests."

### Ervin's Answer

There was another aspect of the hearings, however, that bothered even some of the committee. Since they opened on May 17, the hearings had plodded along slowly with minor witnesses taking the stand, many of them by their hearsay evidence implicating President Nixon.

"We have had minor witnesses," complained committee member Senator Edward J. Gurney (Rep.-Fla.), "who can shed little real light on the involvement of the President. However, their testimony had provided huge, black headlines charging Presidential involvement based solely on hearsay or opinion. . . Both the presidency and our nation deserve better than this."

Gurney suggested that the committee "get to the heart of Watergate" quickly by calling former high ranking White House aides immediately, a plan that found great sympathy with Ervin but no support. Ervin contended it was necessary to build the foundation first.

First to testify last Tuesday, as the 12th witness to appear nation-wide on television was Sally Harmony,



HARMONY

the former secretary to convicted Watergate ringleader G. Gordon Liddy.

She had previously testified four times before the Watergate grand jury and had been accused by a former fellow employee of the Committee to Re-elect the President of perjuring herself before the jury.

Biting her lip and wringing her hands during questioning, the blonde, fortyish divorcee denied under oath that she had told friends that she lied or planned to lie to the Watergate grand jury but admitted that she had been told in March 1972 by Liddy that "he might be involved in clandestine activities" as general counsel to the CRP.

But Mrs. Harmony insisted that she had no idea that the activities would be illegal, and did not know until the arrests of five men inside Democratic headquarters at Watergate June 17 last year that the informa-

tion she had handled was obtained illegally.

She admitted typing at least eight wiretap conversations from tapes, but said she was not aware that they were conversations resulting from bugs and did not know their contents.

### Senator Inouye

Senator Daniel K. Inouye (Dem.-Hawaii), apparently in reference to President Nixon's statement of the previous week citing national security as responsibility for some of the clandestine operations, asked Mrs. Harmony if any of the information "endangered the president of the U.S. or endangered the U.S. government itself?"

"... No," she answered. "Do you recall," he asked, "any information relating to any conspiracy with foreign governments?" "..." No," she replied again.

Mrs. Harmony pleaded ignorance to much of the activities around her but recalled that the day before the Watergate break-in that Liddy was looking for some stationery with the McGovern letterhead. He couldn't find it, she said, and "we Xeroxed an example of the McGovern letterhead."

She said she typed on the facsimile a message: "To whom it may concern. This will authorize the bearer to enter the premises." She added: "The signature was signed by Gary Hart (a top McGovern campaign staffer)."

At the same time, the Senate committee learned they would not be getting immediate testimony from Liddy, who refused to appear while his 6-to-20 year sentence was being appealed.

"We can't take a whip and make him talk," said Senator Howard H. Baker Jr. (Rep.-Tenn.).

But testimony linking higher-ups in the affair came quickly from the next witness, Robert A. Reisner, who served as administrative assistant to deputy campaign director Jeb Stuart Magruder.

Reisner said that two weeks prior to the Watergate break-in he had put papers from the "Gemstone" political espionage file into an envelope prepared for a meeting with the then Attorney General John Mitchell.

At mid-week, Cox asked a federal court to block live broadcast coverage of "self-incriminating testimony" by key witnesses who have been granted immunity when they testify.