

Leaks May Stop Secret Sessions on Watergate

Washington

Because of new leaks of closed-door interviews, the two ranking members of the Senate Watergate committee indicated yesterday that the committee may stop taking testimony in secret.

Detailed news accounts surfaced this week about testimony by fired White House counsel John W. Dean III in a private session with Senate investigators last Saturday. Some of his testimony implicates President Nixon in the Watergate coverup.

The Committee postponed until next week Dean's scheduled televised appearance while Mr. Nixon conducts his current conference with Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev. It was felt that Dean allegations fere with the progress of the talks.

SOURCES

But Dean's Watergate story flooded out from Senate sources.

"I know of no way to stop men from talking," said Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr., the committee's chairman.

"I nearly despair of doing anything about it," said Senator Howard H. Baker (Rep-Tenn.), the vice chairman. "It's probably impossible for us to provide security for this information."

"From a practical standpoint it means that most, if not all, of our testimony will have to be taken in public."

A spokesman for Ervin said that step is under consideration but that no decision has been made. "It probably will work out that way."

The Watergate committee tried once before to eliminate private sessions with witnesses and it didn't work.

PRESS

That step was taken after most of what convicted Watergate consideration James W. McCord Jr. told senators in an executive session leaked to the press. Execu-

tive sessions later resumed and written summaries of what witnesses have told staff investigators in private have leaked to newsmen with regularity.

Some sources close to the Senate investigation claimed the week's delay in the hearings has hurt both Dean and the committee.

AWARE

These sources said the delay has left Dean open to a week of attacks on his credibility and have caused counter-leaks and infighting within the committee. The sources said the internal battling apparently has been brought under control.

News accounts this week have quoted Dean as saying Mr. Nixon was aware of the Watergate coverup and once

suggested to Dean that Internal Revenue Service audits be "turned off" on some of his friends.

Stories based on Dean's closed-door testimony have quoted the president as saying President told him that the late J. Edgar Hoover once advised Mr. Nixon his 1968 campaign was the subject of electronic surveillance. Dean was reported to have quoted the President as saying Mr. Nixon might use wiretapping against future political opponents.

Another story quoting Dean said the White House torpedoed an early House probe into the Watergate affair on orders from the president. One leaked story said Dean reported he was told Mr. Nixon had been consulted before an offer of executive clemency was made in his name to a Wat-

ergate defendant.

Another story surfaced reporting Dean had acknowledged to investigators he had borrowed \$4800 from Nixon campaign cash then in his possession to finance his wedding and honeymoon. Dean's defenders claimed the story deliberately was leaked to discredit him. Dean refused to take part in any further private interviews with the staff after the story appeared.

Counter-leaks appeared purporting to give the full story of the honeymoon funds.

Senate Republican leader Hugh Scott attacked the leaks, saying most of them came from Dean in an attempt to shore up his credibility.

"It is obvious Dean has been leaking like a sieve with considerable bravado," Scott said yesterday. He said his statement was not prompted by White House suggestions.

Baker said he has little reason to hope the leaks can be stopped soon and he believes Dean has a good point in refusing further interviews with committee staff.

Baker said he is concerned that other key witnesses may refuse to be questioned by the committee and its staff in private sessions that many believe are essential for an orderly development of the investigation.

Associated Press