

The Nixon-Ervin Crunch on Papers

Washington

The Watergate summit meeting appeared yesterday to be building to a showdown when Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr. said that if the White House refuses to cooperate with the Senate Watergate committee, the committee would subpoena what it wants.

What the committee wants is personal testimony from President Nixon and access to any government documents that might shed light on who knew or did what and when. The White House has said the committee will get neither.

Yesterday, Ervin, the committee chairman, said that if the White House position remains unchanged after his meeting with the President, the committee probably will vote to subpoena the sought after White House papers.

"I believe the entire committee would vote to do so,"

the North Carolina Democrat said in an interview on NBC's "Today" show.

ILLNESS

Whether Mr. Nixon's bout with viral pneumonia will delay their session is unclear. Before the day's Watergate hearings opened, Ervin told reporters he believed the original intent was to hold the meeting next week and said he still hopes to do so.

The President's doctors have said, however, that Mr. Nixon probably will be in the hospital for a week to ten days. When White House Press Secretary Ronald Ziegler was asked if Ervin and Mr. Nixon might meet at the hospital he responded, "It isn't likely."

"I understand viral pneumonia is what they call walking pneumonia," Ervin said, referring to the fact that Mr. Nixon's illness is not considered serious. "I am sorry the President is

sick."

During his television interview Ervin made one of the strongest appeals so far to Mr. Nixon to come forward and testify in person before the committee.

"I have no doubt of the fact that there was a cover-up," he said. "There is one human being on the face of the earth who is in a better position, of all the earth's inhabitants, to show that the President had no knowledge of any of these very peculiar circumstances . . .

"There is only one human being who is the most competent witness on the point and that is the President of the United States. And that is one reason why I am unable to understand why the President is unwilling to testify before the committee."

Ervin suggested that representatives of the committee and the White House sort through the papers in question and screen out only

those that are relevant to the committee's inquiry.

Ervin also indicated that he thought the committee might be able to get the facts even without the documents but added that he won't change his mind about seeking a subpoena for them if that becomes necessary.

Despite the fact that White House spokesmen have reiterated statements that Mr. Nixon will not testify or turn over his papers under any circumstances, Ervin said Mr. Nixon might be persuaded to change his mind.

Associated Press