

5 Key Witnesses

Report of Senate Panel's Plan for Hearing Recess

Washington

The present plan of the Senate Watergate committee is to hear five more witnesses and then end its public hearings on the actual Watergate burglary and coverup, according to authoritative committee officials.

In this procedure, which is said to be favored by the committee's chairman, Senator Sam Ervin Jr. (Dem-N.C.) is followed, many other key witnesses would not testify publicly.

Among them would be E. Howard Hunt Jr., who has admitted complicity in the Watergate burglary and that of the office of Daniel Ellsberg's former psychiatrist; Egil Krogh Jr.; and David Young, who headed the White House "plumbers" unit, and Lieutenant General Vernon A. Walters, deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

DECISION

The committee has made no formal decision on when to end this phase of the hearings. It will meet before the public hearing begins this morning to try to decide the question. Originally, the committee had planned to recess August 3, when the Senate begins its month-long break.

But the committee has yet to finish its examination of John Ehrlichman, President Nixon's former domestic affairs adviser.

GRAY

And the next scheduled witnesses — H.R. Halde- man, the former White House chief of staff, and Charles W. Colson, President Nixon's former special counselor — are of major importance, and their testimony is likely to last more than a week.

Furthermore, Ervin is re-

ported to believe that the committee must hear publicly from L. Patrick Gray III, former acting director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Richard G. Kleindienst, former attorney general, and Henry E. Petersen, assistant attorney general in charge of the Justice department's criminal division.

Thus, it seems likely that the hearings will recess sometime during the second full week of August and no later than August 10.

When the senators return after Labor Day, they will move into the other two phases of the hearings — one dealing with campaign finance and the other with political sabotage, or "dirty tricks."

LIST

At least three committee members — Senators Herman Talmadge (Dem-Ga.), Edward Gurney (Rep-Fla.) and Lowell Weicker Jr. (Rep-Conn.) — would prefer that the committee continue public hearings throughout August in order to complete the entire witness list.

It is possible, but doubtful, that these senators will be able to persuade Ervin and the committee's vice chairman, Senator Howard Baker Jr. (Rep-Tenn.) to change their minds about paring the witness list. Normally, a committee chairman, after consulting with his ranking Republican, makes the final decision on scheduling.

Ervin and Baker are aware that most of the members of the committee have long-standing plans for August. In addition, as Baker remarked last week, "The committee is tired. The staff is tired. We need the break. It'll do us good."

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