

Ervin Insists Hearings Will Continue

By Henry Eichel

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SHELBY, N.C., Aug. 23—Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr. today challenged President Nixon's appeals to the American people to leave the Watergate scandal to the courts and move on to other things.

"The select committee didn't invent Watergate," Ervin said at a news conference here, "even though some people seem to think so. It was invented by men entrusted by the President with great political and governmental power."

Ervin, here for a county Democratic rally, also said that Watergate has not impeded Congress' work. Rather, Ervin said, "This Congress is further ahead with its work than any Congress in at least 10 years."

When one reporter asked Ervin if his request for tapes of presidential conversations wasn't really a "fishing expedition," Ervin replied.

"We have some fish in the pond already. The question is whether the President will let us catch the right fish."

Shortly afterward Ervin added, "I'd say we've caught a lot of minnows, a few sharks, and maybe even a few whales."

Restating his appeal for President Nixon to turn over the tape recordings, Ervin said, "It is really to impede a search for truth."

Ervin turned his sarcasm on full force when asked about Mr. Nixon's assertion Wednesday that Presidents Kennedy and Johnson had authorized burglaries "on a very large scale."

Ervin said he had never heard of any such burglaries, then added, "That argument basically is that it's all right to commit evil in the present because evil has been committed in the past . . . Murder and theft have been committed since the earliest history of mankind, but that fact has not made murder meritorious, or larceny legal."

Asked whether he believed President Nixon's assertions that he knew nothing about a Watergate cover-up, or former White House counsel John W. Dean's testimony that the President did know, Ervin said

he had reached no decision—and that only the release of the tapes could answer that question.

"I don't agree with a lot of people who dismiss John Dean's testimony out of hand on the unsupported assertion that he is a liar," Ervin said. "In the practice of law, I have found that sometimes liars tell the truth."

Earlier, Ervin said that "the recordings are the best evidence there is." He said that if Mr. Nixon releases the tapes, "We can make a determination of fact very quickly."

Ervin said, "We're not going to continue the investigation until the last lingering echo of

Gabriel's horn trembles into ultimate silence, but we are going to continue until we get the truth."

Meanwhile, commentary from other officials followed predictable lines. In Honolulu, Sen. Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.) praised the President's performance, but suggested that he release those portions of the White House tapes relating to the Watergate incident "and totally clear up the situation."

He called the President's comments "the best statement he's made so far. I think he should hold a meeting like this possibly once a week.

"But if I were the Presi-

dent," Goldwater added, "I would downgrade Watergate, answer all the questions he can, but point out that while Watergate is a dreadful thing, this country is in very, very serious trouble on a number of fronts."

In Washington, Republican National Chairman George Bush called the President's news conference comments "straightforward and direct." His counterpart in the other party, Democratic National Chairman Robert S. Strauss, said, "Unfortunately most of the questions (about Watergate) still have not been answered."