

Empty Mail From Ervin Committee

Washington

A lot of Americans have opened envelopes addressed to them from the Senate Watergate committee and found no letters inside.

The committee says it doesn't know whether this has resulted from mail tampering or from clerical errors.

The committee chairman, Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr., has written one Californian saying that apparently "much of the mail has either been opened, destroyed or returned to me."

The committee, which is being deluged daily by 7000 to 9000 letters (mostly fan mail), has answered about 100,000 letters.

Samuel Dash, chief counsel of the committee, said 147 of those who have been mailed replies by the committee have written a second time to complain that their envelopes were empty.

"The interesting thing is that about a hundred of those letters of complaint came from people in California," Dash said.

"Obviously it is no major thing, with 147 writing back out of 100,000, but it is not insignificant. And if 147 took the time to write a second time there must be others who got empty envelopes." *Los Angeles Times*