

WATERGATE PANEL TO SPEED INQUIRY

Chapin and Segretti Likely to Be Moved Up, With Witness List Cut

By DAVID E. ROSENBAUM

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Sept. 27 —

The Senate Watergate committee, its Democratic Senators embarrassed by the outcome of yesterday's interrogation of Patrick J. Buchanan, is planning to speed up its investigation of political "dirty tricks."

Rufus L. Edmisten, the committee's deputy counsel, said today that when the hearings resume next week the witnesses will almost certainly be Dwight L. Chapin and Donald H. Segretti, perhaps the only remaining witnesses with enough stature to keep the hearings on national daytime television.

Mr. Segretti is the young California lawyer who was allegedly hired by President Nixon's re-election campaign to direct a sabotage operation against candidates for the Democratic Presidential nomination. He has agreed to plead guilty to four misdemeanors in connection with his activities and to testify for the prosecution against other campaign aides.

Mr. Chapin was Mr. Nixon's appointments secretary until he resigned in January to take a job with United Air Lines. He is expected to tell the committee that he hired Mr. Segretti and received regular reports from him but that President Nixon knew nothing of the operation.

The witness list is to be formally adopted when the seven Senators on the committee meet at the Capitol Saturday morning.

Three May Be Dropped

Committee staff members said that three men who were originally scheduled to precede Mr. Chapin and Mr. Segretti would most likely be dropped from the list.

One, John J. Caulfield, a former White House law-enforcement aide, who has been accused of wiretapping a newspaper columnist's telephone and organizing surveillance of Senator Edward M. Kennedy, is hospitalized with a stomach ailment.

Another, John Ragan, who reportedly helped Mr. Caulfield tap the telephone of Joseph Kraft, the columnist, is said by staff members to have too little new information to warrant interrogating him in open hearings.

The third, Kenneth Khachigian, Mr. Buchanan's assistant, was originally scheduled to follow Mr. Buchanan as a witness. But, as a Democratic Senator said today, "I think we heard enough of Mr. Buchanan yesterday."

The committee's staff had hoped to show, through political strategy memorandums, that Mr. Buchanan, a White House speech writer, had set the tone for sabotage activities that were carried out in the 1972 election campaign.

Instead, Mr. Buchanan came across yesterday as a perceptive, hard-nosed political strategist who, in his words, had neither suggested nor participated in anything that was "immoral, unethical, illegal — or unprecedented in previous Democratic campaigns."

One Democratic Senator said today that the interrogation of Mr. Buchanan was "a complete embarrassment," and a Republican member of the committee told an aide that "the final score was Buchanan, 36, the committee, zero."

Two Democratic Senators reportedly admonished the staff after yesterday's hearing not to produce more witnesses like Mr. Buchanan.

Senator Howard H. Baker Jr. of Tennessee, the committee's ranking Republican, said that he thought the day was not a total waste. One of the committee's mandates, he said, was to explore "not only what's illegal, but what's immoral and fattening."

Senator Edward J. Gurney of Florida, as usual the most outwardly partisan of the committee's Republicans, seemed gleeful over the Democrats' obvious embarrassment. "It was one of the most amusing days I have spent in a long time," he said.