

Senator Baker Writing a Novel; Doubleday Negotiating Contract

By ERIC PACE

Senator Howard H. Baker Jr. is customary, the Senator would retain control of the movie rights. of Tennessee, vice chairman of the Watergate Committee, said in Washington Sunday night that he was negotiating with Doubleday to publish a novel with a Washington setting that he started writing in the nineteen-fifties.

In New York, Thomas B. Congdon Jr., a senior editor at Doubleday, said the novel was still largely in the planning stage and happened to be about a Tennessee lawyer who was elected to the Senate.

Mr. Congdon said that, as a writer, Senator Baker "has a marvelous savor of words." And he added that the Senator had once told him, "Senator [Everett McKinley] Dirksen [of Illinois] used to say 'I choose my words not so much for what they mean but for how they taste,' and I guess I might say the same of myself."

Doubleday has been negotiating a two-book contract with Senator Baker, another executive reported, involving an advance payment of more than \$100,000. One book would be the as-yet-untitled novel, which would come out in 1975, and the other would be an unspecified nonfiction work.

The Senator, who was reached by telephone, said he had already done some work on the nonfiction book, and that "It deals with the whole range and structure of government" from a philosophical standpoint.

Under the contract, Doubleday would control the paperback rights to the novel, the executive said, and would split the paperback proceeds 50-50 with the author, which is the traditional industry practice. As

Mr. Congdon said a lecture agent had invited him to Washington to meet the Senator—and that he had been pleased to learn that Mr. Baker wanted to publish the novel because "I knew the truth could be told that way."

"The thing that is really impressive is that he wants to do it himself," Mr. Congdon said. And he reported that the prospective author was "good at dialogue, very good at the small story which reveals a lot, and he has a marvelous sense of place."

The tentative idea is for the book to be largely set in East Tennessee. Mr. Congdon said "It's about a young lawyer, and it's very much involved with the people who shaped the Senator and what they taught

Then the hero is elected Senator and moves to Washington, Mr. Congdon reported. "I wouldn't be surprised if there was a marvelous older Senator on the scene," he added, and by some accounts this older Senator will bear a resemblance to the late Senator Dirksen, Senator Baker's father-in-law.

Despite the Washington setting, Mr. Congdon said, "it is not a Watergate book. Nor is it the regular Washington novel; it's not going to have any sensational scenes, and there's not going to be much melodrama.

"It's much more a book that deals with ideals and motives and principles, what makes men act," he continued. "The villains won't be dastardly and they'll be kept pretty well off-stage."

Present plans do not call for the book to contain love interest, Mr. Congdon reported, although it will have women characters. Its length has not been set, he said, "but the longer it is the better."