

Sharp Attack on Sam Ervin

Washington

The testimony of Robert Benz, Florida associate of Republican political saboteur Donald H. Segretti, before the Senate Watergate Committee yesterday, produced a dramatic exchange with Senator Sam J. Ervin (Dem-N.C.).

In a rare challenge to the Watergate committee chairman, Benz shouted from the witness chair:

"Can you tell me whenever a president has been investigated by the news media and by a committee as much as this one?"

"Second, where were you in 1960 when it was accused that an election was stolen out in Chicago? We are talking now about a campaign being influenced, and I believe you were a member of the Senate when it was accused that a campaign was stolen, Senator. Where were you then? Where were you in 1964 and 1968?"

Spectators in the crowded hearing room gasped: Ervin, his own voice rising, replied:

"I was right here in the U.S. and I never heard of a campaign being stolen on the credible testimony of any individual. And this is the first time in the history of the U.S. That the Senate

of the U.S., by a unanimous vote, has been moved by reports of rascality on a national scale to set up a committee to conduct an investigation"

Benz, who admitted misdeeds of his own, was referring to Republican charges that ballot irregularities in many Democratic precincts, especially in Illinois and Texas, cost President Nixon his first bid for the presidency in 1960 when he lost to John F. Kennedy by 118,574 votes.

Although a few witnesses have dueled verbally with Ervin, the outburst by Benz was the first time anyone had leveled hostile questions at the committee chairman.

Benz was challenged by several senators after testifying he employed admittedly illegal tactics in Florida last year because Democratic workers had done similar things against a Republican candidate for the senate he worked for in 1970.

His outburst at Ervin occurred after Ervin said:

"I challenge you or anybody else to point out a single instance in the history of this nation where money donated to advance the political fortunes of a president was used with the consent of the president's assistants in the White House to spread libels against candidates of



ROBERT BENZ
Combative witness

the opposition political party."

Ervin referred to testimony that Segretti, who paid Benz \$150 a month for his help, was himself receiving campaign funds — with the approval of White House aides — from Herbert W. Kalmbach, Mr. Nixon's personal attorney.

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