

New Procedures

Hearings on Ford Selection Begin Thursday

Washington

The Senate Rules Committee decided yesterday to begin public hearings Thursday on the nomination of Representative Gerald R. Ford of Michigan to be Vice President.

Senator Howard W. Cannon (Dem - Nev.), chairman of the committee, said Ford will be the first witness. He added that the committee hopes to send the nomination to the Senate floor "well before Thanksgiving."

At the same time, Cannon disclosed that the Justice Department had "changed somewhat" the procedures for making available to the committee FBI information on Ford's background.

DATA

Initially, Cannon said, he had been told by an assistant attorney general, whom he did not identify, that the FBI's raw data on Ford would be made available to him and to Senator Marlow W. Cook of Kentucky, the ranking Republican on the committee, and that FBI summaries of the results of the investigation would be given to the other seven members of the committee.

Instead, Cannon said, acting Attorney General Robert H. Bork wrote him last Wednesday to say that the raw data would be made available as planned to Cannon and to Cook but that the FBI summaries would not be provided to the other senators on the committee.

Cannon said that he and Cook would make their own summaries of the data for

the other senators. He added that the other committee members had approved the change in procedures, although he had preferred the initial arrangement.

AIM

Bork told the senator that the aim was to limit access to the FBI information to protect persons named in the raw data from unsubstantiated allegations.

Cannon said he already

had seen about 900 pages of the 1400 pages of the FBI data and had "asked for additional information on some points." He declined to say what additional information he had requested and said that what he had seen so far had been "very, very thorough."

HEARINGS

Cannon said he does not know how long the hearings would continue or how many other witnesses will appear. The House Judiciary Committee has not yet announced when it will begin hearings on Ford's nomination, which must be confirmed by a majority vote of the Senate and the House.

Earlier yesterday, Democratic congressional leaders headed by Senate majority leader Mike Mansfield of Montana and House Speaker Carl Albert of Oklahoma, issued a joint statement saying that both houses should proceed "with all due deliberateness" to consider Ford's nomination.

"Barring objections of substance, the leadership was hopeful that the nomination would be considered for confirmation by both houses during the current session," the statement said.

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