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Ervin Plans New Try to See President

By Lawrence Meyer

Washington Post Staff Writer

The Senate select Watergate committee has decided to renew its attempts to try to interview President Nixon about the Watergate affair, committee chairman Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr. said yesterday.

The committee, prompted by a proposal by Sen. Lowell P. Weicker Jr. (R-Conn.), instructed its chief counsel, Samuel Dash, and its minority counsel, Fred Thompson, to contact White House lawyers "to try to get a statement" from Mr. Nixon. Ervin made it clear that by a "statement," he meant that the committee would question Mr. Nixon.

A spokesman said the White House had no immediate reaction to the committee's decision.

Weicker had proposed that the committee question President Nixon at the White House in a closed session without putting him under oath but with a full transcript being made of the session. Under Weicker's proposal, the transcript would be made public after the session.

Ervin said the committee took no "official" action on Weicker's proposal but rather reached its decision by "consensus." Under the approach briefly outlined by Ervin, the committee would meet President Nixon "anywhere," not only in the White House, and did not confine itself to seeking a closed session with him as Weicker had proposed.

At the height of the hearings last summer, Ervin expressed the desire of the committee to interview President Nixon about his role in the Watergate matter.

Ervin said then and again yesterday that he did not

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think a written statement from Mr. Nixon would be an acceptable alternative because "you can't cross-examine a piece of paper." Ervin has been supported publicly by committee vice chairman Sen. Howard H. Baker Jr. (R-Tenn.) in his stated desire to have the committee interview Mr. Nixon.

Dash declined to tell reporters how he planned to proceed in contacting White House counsel—presumably Leonard Garment and J. Fred Buzhardt—to see whether Mr. Nixon now would be interested in meeting with the committee.

The committee's action came as Sen. Barry M. Goldwater (R-Ariz.) repeated his plea that President Nixon go before the Senate committee and answer its questions.

"I think the only way he has out now would be to show up some morning at the Ervin committee . . . and say, 'Here I am, Sam. What do you want to know?'" Goldwater said in Logan, Utah.

In a related development, the House passed by a vote of 377 to 1 a bill extending the life of the federal Watergate grand jury for another six months and permitting another six-month extension after that. The grand jury which by law has a life of 18 months, must be disbanded next month unless the legislation extending it becomes law. The bill now goes to the Senate.