

GURNEY ACCUSES PANEL ON INQUIRY

Despite Denial He Believes
Committee Investigated Him

WASHINGTON, (AP)—Senator Edward J. Gurney believes that he was investigated by the Senate Watergate committee on which he serves despite denials of such an inquiry by the committee's chief counsel, an aide to the Senator says.

Mr. Gurney's office acknowledged yesterday that the Florida Republican had written a letter calling the committee's work "a travesty" and asserting that he had been the

object of a staff investigation. The letter was written Oct. 5 to Gov. Meldrim Thomson Jr. of New Hampshire but was not intended to be made public, the Gurney aide said. It was published last month by The Manchester (N.H.) Union Leader.

In the letter Senator Gurney wrote: "I have myself been the object of two investigations in Florida by the staff of our very own committee, an action unprecedented in the Senate committees, as far as I know."

Dash Denies Charge

Samuel Dash, the chief committee counsel, said that Mr. Gurney's contention was "completely untrue" even though he added, "My staff members do not have blinders; they are instructed to look into everything."

Mr. Dash said that Senator Gurney's contention might be based on a "local Gurney matter" involving the Senator and a Florida contractor, John J. Priests, also is scheduled to testify before the committee.

But Mr. Dash said that the contractor's appearance had nothing to do with Mr. Gurney.

The Miami Herald quoted sources as saying that Senator Gurney and some aides had set up a secret \$300,000 fund to pay for office and travel expenses and "for other unknown purposes."

The Senator then confirmed that the Justice Department was investigating allegations that the fund was set up to handle unreported contributions from contractors.

'Letting Off Steam'

Mr. Dash said that a member of the Senator's staff had initially denied that Mr. Gurney wrote the letter. Senator Gurney could not be reached for comment, but John Gardner, an aide, said "As it turns out, he just sat down by himself and wrote it. He was letting off steam."

Mr. Gardner said that Senator Gurney would not disavow any of the assertions he had made in the letter, even though the Senator felt it unfortunate that they had been published.

Senator Gurney, who has been President Nixon's staunchest defender on the committee, wrote:

"The only concrete contributions we have made have been to force down the stock market, up the price of gold, devalue the American dollar, hurt the economy and destroy the confidence of people in the American system.

"These are certainly concrete contributions, but about as useful as a block of concrete tied around a swimmer's neck," he wrote. "In my view, the work of the committee has been a travesty."

Denial by Ervin

WASHINGTON, Nov. 6 (UPI)—Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr., Democrat of North Carolina, who is chairman of the Watergate committee, told reporters today:

"The committee has not investigated Senator Gurney. It has no authority to investigate anything except the Presidential campaign of 1972."