

NYTimes NOV 20 1973
Watergate Unit Suspends
Investigator Over a Leak

By DAVID E. ROSENBAUM
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Nov. 19—An investigator for the Senate Watergate committee was suspended from duty today because Samuel Dash, the committee's chief counsel, believed that he was the source of a newspaper article that was highly critical of the committee staff.

The investigator, Scott Armstrong, was deeply involved in the committee's inquiry into the affairs of Charles G. Rebozo, President Nixon's close friend. One Senator on the committee said today that Mr. Armstrong was "the best investigator on the staff."

A ranking official on the committee described Mr. Armstrong as "a tenacious bugger who ticked off everybody in sight but always got what he was after."

The article appeared in the Nov. 22 issue of Rolling Stone, a biweekly newspaper that concentrates on rock music but regularly contains articles on politics and social affairs.

No New Details

The article, written by Timothy Crouse, contained no details of the committee's investigation that had not previously been reported elsewhere.

But it was savage in its criticism of the committee's top staff. It quoted a "majority staffer" as calling Mr. Dash an "egomaniac" and declared that Fred D. Thompson, the Republican counsel, and David M. Dorsen, an assistant chief counsel, were incompetent.

After an investigation that lasted more than a week, according to one staff member, Mr. Dash this morning ordered Mr. Armstrong suspended from the staff without pay for a month.

Immediately, Senator Lowell P. Weicker Jr., the Connecticut Republican, praised Mr. Armstrong and offered him a job on his personal staff.

Neither Mr. Dash nor Mr. Armstrong could be reached this afternoon. Mr. Dash, in New Orleans for a meeting of a committee of the American Bar Association, confirmed to The Associated Press that he had suspended Mr. Armstrong.

According to that news agency, Mr. Dash said that the article "had a tremendous impact on the morale of the staff" and that Mr. Armstrong had violated "a pretty iron-bound rule that is broken too often."

'We Need Him'

Mr. Dash was reported as saying that Mr. Armstrong was "a very fine staff member who will be welcomed back because

we need him."

The investigatory phase of the committee's work is scheduled to be completed before Mr. Armstrong could return to duty, however.

Since its inception, the committee has been subject to a wide variety of leaks and information to the press. But supporters of Mr. Armstrong in-

sisted today that he had never disclosed any of the committee's investigatory information.

According to several staff members, Mr. Dash and his colleagues first saw the Rolling Stone article on Nov. 8 or 9. Mr. Dash, according to one official, was "outraged," and Mr. Thompson "acted like Vesuvius."

Over the weekend of Nov. 10-11, Mr. Dash reportedly ordered an investigation into the sources of the quotations that were critical of him and others.

On Monday, according to officials, Mr. Dash talked with Mr. Crouse. Throughout last week, there were meetings among top staff members to decide Mr. Armstrong's fate. "The committee expended seven days—eight if you count today—on this drivel when they should have been working their tails off on something of substance," one staff member who supported Mr. Armstrong declared today.

Last Friday there was what this man called a "bloodletting"—a long meeting at which other investigators called for Mr. Armstrong's dismissal and Terry F. Lenzner, an assistant chief counsel, argued that Mr. Armstrong should be retained. Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr., the committee chairman, left the decision on Mr. Armstrong's future up to Mr. Dash, and Mr. Dash said that he would take the weekend to make up his mind.

He reportedly described the one-month suspension as a "compromise" today and told other staff members that many people wanted Mr. Armstrong to be permanently discharged.

But a staff member who sat through many of the meetings had another version: "The minute Sam saw that bit about his being an egomaniac, he went bananas. There was no stopping him. Nobody else who mattered gave a damn but Dash."