

Senate Watergate Hearings Put Off Until Early '74 to Seek More Evidence

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 26—No more Senate Watergate hearings are planned until after the first of next year.

Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr., chairman of the Watergate investigating committee, agreed today to postpone further hearings at an unannounced meeting with the committee's top staff members.

Senator Howard H. Baker Jr., the vice chairman, has told the staff that he also favors putting off the hearings until after Congress's Christmas recess.

Samuel Dash, the committee's chief counsel, said after today's meeting that he had recommended a postponement to give investigators time to gather more evidence about the two remaining areas that the committee intends to explore: A contribution by milk producers to President Nixon's re-election campaign and a cash payment

that aides of Howard R. Hughes gave to Charles G. Rebozo.

"A number of important matters require more intense investigation," Mr. Dash said. "We don't want to put anything on in public hearings until we have investigated it thoroughly."

Senator Ervin, a North Carolina Democrat, and Senator Baker, a Tennessee Republican, will seek approval of the delay from other committee members tomorrow morning. But with the chairman, the vice chairman and the entire staff favoring a postponement, approval of the other members is merely a formality.

The committee's hearings, on national television, captured

the attention of much of the country through most of last summer.

But since the hearings resumed in September the witnesses have been less well known and their testimony has been less dramatic. Consequently, public interest in the proceedings has waned, and the Senate panel has been accused of prolonging the hearings unnecessarily.

Nonetheless, throughout the recent weeks of testimony, much of it repetitive, on political dirty tricks and questionable campaign finance practices, there has been the promise of more famous names and exciting revelations to come.

Among those who have been

questioned by investigators and whom the committee staff has said it might call as public witnesses are Mr. Rebozo, President Nixon's friend and frequent companion; John B. Connally, former Secretary of the Treasury, who is alleged to have information about the contribution from the milk producers, and F. Donald Nixon, the President's brother, whose telephone was tapped by the Secret Service.

Mr. Dash said that the investigating staff had been faced with a number of procedural setbacks.

For one, he said, the White House has not turned over a number of documents relating to the milk case that the com-

mittee requested more than two months ago. Mr. Dash said that he had met a number of times with White House lawyers and had been promised access to the documents but that they had not been delivered.

For another, Mr. Dash said, the committee has had difficulty serving subpoenas on several employees of Mr. Hughes, the billionaire recluse. Originally, according to Mr. Dash, Chester C. Davis, chief counsel of the Hughes Tool Company, was expected to accept the subpoenas. But he refused to do so, and the committee has had to employ Federal marshals to find prospec-

tive witnesses and serve them with subpoenas.

In addition, the Government has delayed the committee's granting of limited immunity from prosecution to some key witnesses who have refused to testify unless they get immunity.

Under the law, the Government can delay the granting of immunity for 30 days if the Attorney General believes it would interfere with criminal proceedings.

Among the possible witnesses in this category is John Meier, a friend of Donald Nixon and a one-time Hughes employe, who is now under indictment for tax evasion and who is being sued for \$9-million by Mr. Hughes.

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