

Senate Watergate Panel Postpones Its Hearings

Washington

The Senate Watergate committee acknowledged yesterday that its investigations of the milk fund and the Hughes - Rebozo money aren't going well and postponed further hearings at least until January.

Chairman Sam J. Ervin Jr. (Dem - N.C.) and vice chairman Howard H. Baker Jr. (Rep-Tenn.) attributed the delay to witnesses who have failed to appear under committee subpoena, White House refusal to turn over some documents and an admission by the staff that it simply isn't ready to proceed.

The two senators left open the possibility that the panel would go out of existence on Feb. 28, 1974, without holding further hearings.

Committee chief counsel Samuel Dash said, however, there will be further hearings before the panel is phased out. But Dash also said the staff soon will begin trimming both clerical and investigative personnel in preparation for the February 28 shutdown.

"We agreed with the staff

that you get your ducks in a row before you start swimming in the pond," Baker told reporters after the committee met for nearly two hours in executive session.

Senator Lowell P. Weicker Jr. (Rep - Conn.) cast the lone vote against a resolution to adjourn the panel subject to the call of the chair, which Ervin indicated would come in mid - January. Weicker said he urged the committee to resume its public hearings the day after New Year's. It has been in adjournment since before Thanksgiving.

Committee sources said Weicker "raised hell" with the staff and his fellow committee members for permitting the probe to lose momentum at a time when some of its most important work has yet to be done.

Senator Edward J. Gurney (Rep - Fla.) was the only senator on the seven - member panel who did not attend yesterday's closed - door session. He was reported to be in Florida.

Ervin said the committee will summon several associates of billionaire Howard

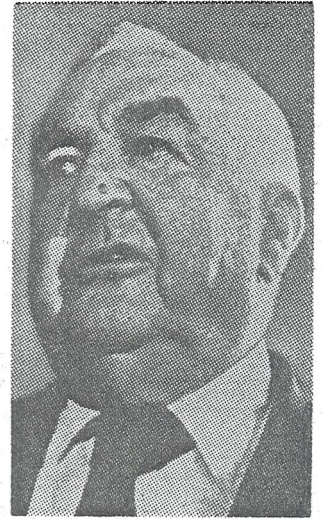
R. Hughes to show cause why they should not be held in contempt of the Senate for defying subpoenas to testify before the committee.

Meanwhile, the Hughes organization and five employees filed suit against the Watergate committee, alleging that they are willing to testify in public but not in private.

The employees include Richard G. Danner, manager of the Hughes-owned Sands Casino in Las Vegas, who delivered two secret \$50,000 cash gifts to C.B. (Bebe) Rebozo in 1969 and 1970. Also included is Chester C. Davis, a Hughes lawyer to whom Rebozo says he returned the money earlier this year.

The White House has said the cash was intended as a campaign gift, and that Rebozo, President Nixon's closest friend, kept it in a safe deposit box in his bank for three years. The committee is seeking to find whether the money was put to some other use, and whether administration favors were given in return.

In the lawsuit against the



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SEN. SAM ERVIN
January resumption

committee, Davis said he and the others have provided much information to the committee in private, but they object to any more closed-door testimony because news media have been given "incomplete, distorted and speculative accounts" of what was said in private.

The Watergate committee also authorized the staff to subpoena more White House tapes and documents if the President refuses to drop his claim that they are protected by "executive privilege" and the doctrine of separation of powers.

Associated Press