

# Delay May End Watergate

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Following a decision by the Senate select Watergate committee yesterday to suspend hearings on campaign financing indefinitely, its ranking Republican member, Sen. Howard H. Baker Jr. (R-Tenn.), said it is possible the hearings may never resume.

The committee, acting on a recommendation from its staff, voted 5 to 1 to suspend the hearings subject to a call from the chairman, Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr. (D-N.C.). The lone dissenting vote was cast by Sen. Lowell P. Weicker Jr. (R-Conn.) who reportedly criticized the staff and his fellow senators for failing to work hard enough in the last several months.

Following the committee meeting, Ervin and Baker told reporters they were suspending the hearings to give the staff more time to conduct its investigation. Baker said it was important that the staff have "hard facts" and "hard proof" before testimony in two areas of cam-

aign financing is presented publicly.

Baker, vice chairman of the committee, said that the hearings can resume only when the staff says it is ready to proceed, probably some time in January. Baker said he "fully expects" the staff to come back to the committee and say, "Look, here are the witnesses and here is the proof."

Asked by a reporter if the question is when will the hearings resume, or will they resume at all? Baker replied, "It's a question of when we resume, but I don't exclude the possibility that we might not."

The committee still has two subjects of potentially great interest to take up in public session. One subject is the \$427,500 in contributions by milk producers to the 1972 Nixon re-election campaign. The contributions coincided with an administration decision to raise government milk price supports.

The second area concerns a \$100,000 cash contribution from an emissary of billion-

aire recluse Howard Hughes made in two \$50,000 installments in 1969 and 1970 to Charles G. (Bebe) Rebozo, President Nixon's close friend. The committee has received conflicting versions about the purpose of the contribution.

Rebozo has reportedly told the committee staff that he kept the money in a safe deposit box for three years before returning it to Hughes earlier this year through Hughes lawyer Chester C. Davis.

In addition to these two areas, Baker reportedly told the committee during its morning meeting that he intends to have the staff of the committee's Republican members devote time to investigating whether the CIA was involved in the Watergate break-in and whether Democratic Party officials had "prior knowledge" of the break-in.

The delay in the hearings was seen by persons close to the committee as strengthening Baker's ability to block resumption of the hearings and thus prevent

testimony that could further damage President Nixon on the one hand or demand that the hearings proceed if the minority staff can produce testimony about the CIA or Democratic officials.

Although these sources said Baker had said nothing to indicate that he wanted the hearings stopped, they indicated that it was not unreasonable for him to make the effort.

At the same time, Ervin announced that the committee had given the staff authorization to seek additional tape recordings of presidential conversations from the White House. Ervin said the committee would seek all nine tapes being sought by the special Watergate prosecutor rather than simply the five tapes the committee originally subpoenaed from Mr. Nixon. Ervin said the additional tapes would be sought because, "We think that information is relevant to our investigation also."

Baker and Ervin said the committee's staff also was authorized to prepare a list of other tapes and White House documents it believes are relevant to its investigation so the committee can prepare subpoenas. Referring to documents already requested by the Committee from the White House, Ervin said that if negotiations to produce them fail, the committee will subpoena them also.

Baker said these actions represented a "broadening of the inquiry" as a result of new information gathered by the staff.

Ervin said the committee also was preparing to cite several Hughes employees for contempt of Congress if they fail to respond to subpoenas issued to have them testify in executive session before the committee. The employees have balked at giving testimony except in public session.

Yesterday three Hughes employees, Hughes lawyer

## Hearings

Davis and an employee of Davis filed suit in the U.S. District Court here asking the court to rule that they may not be required to testify except in public session.

The suit, filed by Davis as lawyer for himself and the others, charges that the staff has interviewed the Hughes employees during the last two months. Following these interviews, the suit says, "distorted and speculative accounts of the information obtained" from those interviewed appeared in the press and other media.

Davis said that he notified the committee "that he and his clients stood ready and willing to testify" before the committee "but that any such testimony should be taken at a public hearing as required by law."

According to participants in yesterday's meeting, Weicker was sharply critical of the senators and staff. One source said Weicker said that it appeared to the public that the committee was dragging. This source quoted Weicker as saying, "I'm getting tired of looking like we're sitting around here on our asses."