

Senate delays new hearings on Watergate

Examiner News Services

WASHINGTON— The Senate Watergate Committee has abruptly postponed a new round of hearings scheduled to begin next week to avoid prejudicing the trial of two former Nixon cabinet members, Chairman Sam Ervin Jr. (D-N.C.) said yesterday. He did not say when they would be rescheduled.

Ervin announced the postponement in a one-sentence statement read by an aide and offered no explanation for the action beyond the reference to the impending trial of former Attorney General John Mitchell and former Commerce Secretary Maurice Stans.

The two are accused of exerting influence on behalf of Robert L. Vesco, a financier facing a federal suit, in exchange for a \$200,000 contribution to the President's re-election campaign.

The trial was to have begun Jan. 9 in New York but defense lawyers have obtained three postponements.

The new target date for the start of the Mitchell-Stans trial is Feb. 19, but sources at the U.S. District Court in Manhattan doubt it will begin then.

The new round of Watergate committee hearings was to have begun next Tuesday, focusing on a \$100,000 contribution from billionaire recluse Howard

Hughes to the Nixon campaign.

Sources have said the donation, held and later returned to Hughes by the President's friend C. G. "Bebe" Rebozo, came as Hughes sought to purchase the Dunes Hotel and casino in Las Vegas.

The Justice Department's antitrust division had blocked the purchase, but sources said Mitchell, then attorney general, overruled the decision after meeting with Hughes aide Richard G. Danner.

• A majority of California congressmen would vote to impeach the President. Page 7.