

Before House Panel Ford's Appearance May Be Postponed

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President Ford's scheduled testimony before a House subcommittee Thursday probably will be postponed unless, as now seems unlikely, a jury for the Watergate cover-up trial has been selected and locked up.

The reason: if prospective jurors watched on television or read Mr. Ford's testimony about facts underlying his pardon of former President Nixon for any crimes he may have committed as President, this could prejudice the right to a fair trial of such defendants as H. R. (Bob) Haldeman, who was described as Mr. Nixon's alter ego during their White House days.

Rep. William L. Hungate (D-Mo.), before whose Judiciary subcommittee Mr. Ford has offered to testify, called a meeting of his panel yesterday to discuss this situation, but no final decision was reached.

It was learned, however, that while most members favored a one-week postponement if the jury has not been sequestered, Rep. Wiley Mayne (R-Iowa) strongly opposed any postponement. Apparently unwilling to show a subcommittee split, Hungate said afterward that while the question of a postponement had been discussed, the hearing "is still on" for Thursday.

Mayne told reporters he felt the American people were entitled to as much information as possible about the pardon as speedily as they can get it. He said subcommittee mem-

bers, all lawyers, should be able to phrase their questions in a manner that would not prejudice anyone's right to a fair trial.

Watergate Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski talked with Hungate last week and asked for a postponement if a jury has not been selected.

Hungate can simply wait until Wednesday and then postpone the hearing if the jury selection has not been completed.

District Court Judge John J. Sirica, who will preside at the trial of the five defendants, told reporters yesterday that chances were good that a jury could be picked before the end of this week. But one lawyer involved in the case was privately skeptical.

Sirica refused to say how many prospective jurors have been accepted by the court but expressed satisfaction with the closed door questioning. The trial passed its fifth day with Sirica holding sessions until 6:30 p.m. each day until a jury has been chosen and locked up.



Associated Press
Cameramen track John Ehrlichman, as he arrives for trial at U.S. courthouse.