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Probers' View of Verdict

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The guilty verdict handed down in the Watergate cover-up trial against four of President Nixon's closest aides appeared to come as no surprise to the lawmakers who had explored the Watergate case themselves.

Those who served on the Senate Watergate committee and the House Judiciary Committee generally echoed Sam J. Ervin Jr., the now-retired chairman of the Senate committee, who said the evidence was "overwhelming" — "I don't think the jury could have done anything else."

In Vail, Colo., reporters were told an hour and a half after the verdict had been

announced that President Ford, who was vacationing there, would have no comment.

When asked why it had taken so long for the statement, Ron Nessen, the White House press secretary, said that the President had been taking a shower.

Like many New Year's Day sports enthusiasts President Ford learned of the verdict when the football game he was watching on television was interrupted for the news.

Many leading figures in the Watergate case could not be reached on the afternoon of the holiday.

Many others declined to comment, including former Attorney General Richard

Kleinienst; L. Patrick Gray, the former acting FBI Director; Charles A. Wright, a former counsel to the Nixon White House; Archibald Cox, the special Watergate prosecutor who was dismissed by Mr. Nixon, and his successor, Leon Jaworski.

From his North Carolina home, Ervin, before whose committee the leading players in the Watergate drama first testified in public, said he had expected the jury to reach an early verdict.

"They've been living with this for 13 weeks," he said. "The verdict was required by the testimony."

Several legislators praised the jury for careful deliberations in acquitting one defendant, Kenneth W. Parkin-

son, while finding the four others guilty.

Members of both major political parties joined in applauding the verdicts as an indication that "the system" of American justice is working.

A few, such as Republican Senators Howard H. Baker Jr. of Tennessee and Lowell P. Weicker Jr. of Connecticut, saw the outcome differently.

Saying that he felt sad for the men and their families, Baker expressed hope that "this moves us closer to ^{creating that important change} in American political history."

Weicker, on the other hand, warned that the verdict is "not a panacea for

the repeated trampling of constitutional democracy." He added that the trial "has only obscured the flouting of democratic processes by spy shops and law enforcement agencies."

Both he and Representative Bella S. Abzug (Dem.-N.Y.) took the opportunity to call for further investigations of government intelligence operations.

Representative David W. Dennis (Rep.-Ind.), the member of the House Judiciary Committee who cried last August when President Nixon released the tape recording implicating himself in the cover-up, commented, "I'm inclined to think the system is working much the way it was supposed to. I never held any particular brief for these individuals."