

Release Of Tapes Is Urged

6 Governors Warn Nixon On Refusal

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SEATTLE, June 2—A bipartisan group of leading governors urged President Nixon today to submit all White House tape recordings and other impeachment evidence the Supreme Court and Congress order him to turn over—or face the consequences.

In a joint interview preceding Monday's opening of the annual governors' conference, four Democratic and two Republican state executives agreed that any refusal on Mr. Nixon's part might cost him his office.

With one exception—Oregon's maverick Republican Tom McCall—they said that impeachment would leave fewer questions and doubts in the public mind than a Nixon resignation.

McCall, who disclosed that he has been discussing a possible 1976 "third-force" presidential movement with such diverse figures as Eugene J. McCarthy and George Romney, argued that impeachment is "a ludicrous procedure" which "will prove nothing at all definitive." He called impeachment the "least awful" of the "terrible alternatives."

While impeachment questions dominated the questioning of the six governors on "Meet the Press" (NBC, WRC) today, the state executives of both parties are making a deliberate effort to demonstrate during their session here that the state capitals have escaped the taint of Washington's scandals.

For the first time in many years, neither the President nor the Vice President is appearing on the conference program, and the chairman and host, Washington Republican Gov. Daniel J. Evans, argued today that "in a period of national turmoil, the states and their leaders may very well be sort of the bedrock of the political system."

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Departing from the custom of focusing on the problems in their relationship with the national government, Evans has designed the conference to showcase "the state of the states"—a condition which he said today is characterized by both fiscal prosperity and political stability. The conference has published a thick book of "innovative programs," designed to show that state government is out front on everything from energy conservation to standards of public ethics.

Partisan politics is being subordinated at the conference to discussions of directions in state government with such visitor as the President's assistant for domestic affairs, Kenneth R. Cole Jr., former Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson and Common Cause chairman John Gardner.

On Monday, the governors will take part in a discussion of health insurance alternatives with Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.); Education and Welfare Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger; and Dr. Russell B. Roth, president of the American Medical Association.

Today, however, the six state executives let reporters lead them into the Watergate questions and found quick agreement on the proposition that Mr. Nixon must reverse his stated intention to refuse to comply with any further requests from Congress or the courts for evidence.

Asked if Mr. Nixon should comply with subpoenas or court orders for tapes and documents, Evans, McCall and the four Democrats on the panel—Wendell Anderson of Minnesota, Jimmy Carter of Georgia, Wendell Ford of Kentucky and Daniel Walker of Illinois—gave a unanimous "yes."

predicted that that stand would cost the President the support of "most of the Southern senators who are conservative and who are quite naturally inclined to support Mr. Nixon's policies." Refusal to obey a court order or Senate subpoena will "draw the line" for those senators, Carter said.

All of the governors but McCall agreed that the impeachment process was preferable to a presidential resignation. "I don't think the people in the long run would accept resignation," Anderson said. "I think they would feel the President is entitled to a fair trial."

Ford, who is opposing Sen. Marlow Cook (R-Ky.) in November, said he had originally favored resignation, but switched his stand when many Republicans—including Cook—started calling for the President to step down.

He conceded that there might be a political advantage for Democrat like himself in having Mr. Nixon in office through November, but said the sudden Republican demand for a resignation made people think "that they were trying to hide something, to sweep it under the rug. I think the sentiment of the people is

and "completely cynical" for the Democrats to nominate a ticket of Kennedy and Alabama Gov. George C. Wallace. Anderson called such a combination "unrealistic," but he, Walker and Carter all argued that Wallace has a legitimate place in Democratic leadership ranks.

The Alabamian, recently renominated for a third term as governor, is one of a half-dozen governors skipping this conference.