

Tapes an Issue

Kennedy View On Gerald Ford

Washington

Senator Edward M. Kennedy (Dem-Mass.) said yesterday Congress should reject Gerald R. Ford's nomination as vice president unless he testifies that President Nixon should obey any Supreme Court order to produce the Watergate tapes.

Kennedy thus joined a small band of House Democratic liberals in linking the House Republican leader's nomination with the Water-

gate tapes issue — a move already spurned by speaker Carl Albert and Senator Howard W. Cannon (Dem-Nev.), chairman of the Senate Rules Committee which will handle Ford's nomination.

Cannon and Representative Peter Rodino (Dem-N.J.), chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, have promised thorough hearings without unreasonable delays, although Rodino has said his committee's investigation might take a month or more.

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Ford has said that politically, Mr. Nixon would be wise to release the tapes, but that he supports the President's legal argument for refusing in the absence of a "definitive order" of the Supreme Court to produce them.

In a Senate speech, Kennedy said Congress has "the right and duty to demand a vice president who unequivocally acknowledges the supremacy of the rule of law."

"However distinguished his career may be, however acceptable his other qualifications may be, if Mr. Ford refuses to acknowledge the obligation of the President to obey the Supreme Court, then Congress has the right and duty to refuse his confirmation."

Kennedy said the House and Senate have a "paramount obligation" to ask Ford how he stands on the

tapes issue. And if Mr. Nixon defies a Supreme Court order to produce the tapes, he predicted, Congress will begin impeachment proceedings.

Senate Republican whip Robert P. Griffin said it would be an "unconscionable frustration of the constitutional process if the Democrats were to hold Gerry Ford hostage."

About a dozen House Democrats, including liberal Representative Jerome Waldie of California, have introduced a resolution calling for withholding Ford's confirmation until Mr. Nixon produces the tapes requested by the Senate Watergate Committee and special prosecutor Archibald Cox.

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