

Congress Passes Nixon Tape Bill

Washington

A bill giving the federal government permanent custody and control over all of former President Nixon's White House tapes and documents cleared the House and Senate yesterday.

The bill wipes out the September 8 agreement between the White House and Mr. Nixon, which gave the former President control over the tapes and memoranda and other historical documents. The agreement had aroused angry charges that Mr. Nixon would have such close control over the materials that he could thwart or obstruct their use in future criminal trials of defendants in Watergate-related cases.

The bill covers millions of documents of the Nixon presidency plus hundreds of hours of recorded tapes of White House conversations during Mr. Nixon's term in office. It would hand them all over to the jurisdiction and custody of the General Services Administration, to be kept in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.

They would be "immediately available for use in judicial proceedings either by subpoena or other legal process," according to Representative John Brademas (Dem-Ind.), the chief House sponsor, and might also later be made available for

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public inspection.

The final bill also retains a House provision, setting up a national study commission to recommend permanent legislation on rules for handling the documents of all other public officials.

Both Brademas and Senator Gaylord Nelson (Dem-Wis.), one of the chief Senate sponsors, said there weren't any assurances that President Ford would sign the bill. In fact, Brademas said "I had cause for appre-

hension" that he might pocket veto it if Congress is out of session when the ten-day period for the President to sign or reject expired. For that reason, the bill was rushed to the White House last night.

The ten-day period would thus begin running immediately and, with Congress still in session when it expired, Mr. Ford would be forced to send it back to Congress for a possible override if he wished to veto. If Congress were out of session when the ten-day period expired, he could kill it simply by failing to sign it and an override attempt wouldn't be possible.

The bill doesn't take any direct position on whether tapes and documents legally belong to Mr. Nixon; it leaves that up to the courts to decide if Mr. Nixon should choose to bring suit declaring that Congress has deprived him of his property.

However, the bill does provide, Nelson said on the floor, that if a court finds that any provision deprives a person of private property rights, appropriation of funds for compensation is authorized.

A second bill affecting President Nixon won partial Senate clearance yesterday, when the Senate gave tentative 80-to-9 approval to an \$8.7 billion appropriations conference report carrying \$200,000 in pensions and staff aid for the former President, in place of the \$850,000 sought by the Ford administration. The \$200,000 consists of \$100,000 for staff aid on transition expenses, \$55,000 for the first 11 months of Mr. Nixon's special presidential pension and \$45,000 for staff aid for the next six months.

The measure also provides that salaries of federal personnel temporarily assigned directly to Mr. Nixon to help him in transition out of the presidency which he resigned August 9 shall not exceed \$70,000.

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