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Byrd Criticizes Nixon

Sen. Robert C. Byrd said yesterday President Nixon could speed the end of the Watergate inquiry by making available relevant tapes of White House conversations.

"I do think the people are tired of Watergate," the assistant Senate Democratic leader told reporters. "I'm sure the President is tired of it."

"He could help us all to get rid of it," the West Virginia Democrat went on, by cooperating with the Senate and special prosecutor's investigations.

"We could get it all behind us," Byrd said. "That's whether we all want to see it, behind us."

"I am one who hopes that the evidence, when it is all in, will exonerate the President," the senator said, adding that regardless "we're

going to have to get the truth."

Byrd said "I don't think there is any doubt" that Nixon has weakened his legal case on withholding the tapes by permitting former White House chief of staff H.R. Haldeman to listen to several tapes, one of them at his home.

"As a private citizen," he said in reference to Haldeman, "I don't see why he should have access to the tapes, any more than any other citizen can."

The tapes heard by Haldeman were those in which Nixon held conversations with ousted counsel John W. Dean III, which Dean said show the President was aware of the Watergate cover-up. Nixon said they would uphold his version, that he was unaware of the cover-up.