

Kennedy's View of U.S. -- 'Leadership Wreckage'

Washington

Watergate is a "traumatic national tragedy" and the task ahead is to "salvage the country's honor from the wreckage of leadership," Senator Edward M. Kennedy said last night.

"Whatever trials the future may bring, the one that matters most is the trial of America herself in the eyes of our country and the world," Kennedy said in a

major address on the Watergate affair.

He spoke to the final session of the American Society of Newspaper Editors convention here.

"The Watergate mentality is at the core of the fight between Congress and President Nixon," he said. "The same arrogance, the same imperialism, the same blind judgment that led to Watergate is also the attitude that led to other controversies in foreign and domestic policy.

"The bombing of Cambodia, the doctrines of impoundment and unlimited executive privilege, the harassment of the press, the imprisonment of news reporters — you know the abuses as well as I. They are legion, and their name is Watergate," he said.

Kennedy said he hopes that Watergate will lead to a comprehensive overhaul of the federal election code.

"If we seize the moment, we can shut off forever the

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underground flow of cash in political campaigns. We can ring down the curtain on the insidious role of big campaign contributors.

"For too long, these men and women have been allowed to exercise the power of their own self-interest at the center of the American political stage. If Watergate means anything, it means their role must end," Kennedy said.

Kennedy also said Watergate showed the awesome "cleansing power of the press."

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