

Impeachment Views Detailed by Kennedy

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If President Nixon defied a Supreme Court order to surrender his Watergate tapes, it would be an intolerable exercise in "raw, naked power" leaving Congress no choice but to impeach him, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) said yesterday.

"If this country stands for anything, it stands for the principle that no man is above the law," Kennedy said in a speech to a nearly empty Senate chamber.

"If President Nixon defied a Supreme Court order to turn over the tapes, a responsible Congress would be left with no recourse but to exercise its power of impeachment . . .

"The President has no argument from history for such a defiance. The only argument from law he has is the law of the jungle, the law of raw and naked power, which the country will never tolerate."

Kennedy told reporters later that if Congress did not act to impeach under such circumstances, Mr. Nixon would in effect have achieved "a bloodless coup."

"It would be Chile, really, without the bloodshed," he said.

Sens. Barry Goldwater (R-Arz.) and John G. Tower (R-Tex.) were on the Senate floor as Kennedy delivered the speech, but made no comment. Later, Tower disagreed with Kennedy, saying:

"We get into the shadowy area of separation of powers but so far the refusal to obey a court order has never been grounds for impeachment. There is no precedent."

But Sen. Edward W. Brooke (R-Mass.) told a reporter: "I have said before that if the Supreme Court ordered the President to turn over the tapes (and he refused) then I feel that would certainly be sufficient ground to commence impeachment proceedings."

Mr. Nixon is fighting a subpoena by Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox for the recordings of nine Watergate-related conversations the President had with top aides.