

Saxbe Denies Urging Tape Destruction

Sen. William B. Saxbe (R-Ohio), President Nixon's nominee to be Attorney General, denied yesterday that he had advocated "any illegal activity" regarding the White House Watergate tapes.

The Washington Post revealed yesterday that Saxbe was quoted in the Hong Kong Standard last Aug. 23 as commenting on President Nixon and the tapes:

"I think the President is right on standing on his rights not to disclose the tapes. I personally wish I had never heard of the tapes, and unless they're incriminating, I think he should give them up. If they're incriminating, they should be destroyed, and I'm sure he will."

Asked about the tape destruction comment, Saxbe said through an aide on Saturday, "I don't think I said that. I don't recall saying it." The remark was said to be made before the American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, and four chamber members said they remembered it.

Yesterday Saxbe issued a statement saying, "If the question is, was I advocating any illegal activity in the Hong Kong speech, the answer obviously is no. In response to a question after the Hong Kong speech, I indicated that if there was illegal activity recorded on the tapes, I questioned whether such tapes would ever be forthcoming."

He also said he recalled doubting that "anything embarrassing" would be on the tapes since President Nixon knew that his conversations were being recorded.