

# GOP Governors Irked by Tape

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Less than 24 hours after President Nixon assured Republican governors last week that he knew of no more Watergate bombshells the White House dropped another one—and the shrapnel ripped the web of confidence Mr. Nixon had tried to weave in Memphis.

Several GOP governors who praised the President and his candor at a nearly two-hour meeting in Memphis Tuesday with 16 state chief executives were clearly miffed and demanding new explanations before the week was over.

"He had probably the most representative and sympathetic audience of any group in the country and he just didn't square with us, level with us," said Gov. Dan Evans of Washington speaking in Seattle.

The day after Mr. Nixon told them that the crucial



GOV. JAMES HOLSHOUSER GOV. DANIEL EVANS  
... demand new explanations from Nixon on Watergate

Watergate tapes were intact and audible, his special counsel went before U.S. District Court Chief Judge John J. Sirica in Washington to report there was an 18-minute blank on the sub-

poenaed tape of a June 20, 1972, conversation between Mr. Nixon and former White House chief of staff H. R. (Bob) Haldeman.

"I'm very disappointed," Evans said. "It would have

been infinitely better if he had just let us know. We even would have respected his confidence if that's the way he'd wanted to keep it."

At a news conference immediately after the Tuesday meeting with the President, Gov. James Holshouser of North Carolina stressed that Mr. Nixon made the "very important" point that "the key tapes for the key dates are there in audible language. This, it seems to me, was the crux of it."

Another governor commented that Mr. Nixon indicated some of the tapes would have to be monitored with "an ear plug." Holshouser interjected: "But he did say the tapes for the key dates we talked about were audible."

None of the other governors at the news conference—Winfield Dunn of Tennessee, Christopher Bond of Missouri or Robert Ray of

## 'Bomb'

Iowa—took issue with Holshouser's account.

Dunn, the host and newly elected chairman of the Republican Governors Association, complimented Mr. Nixon, telling reporters:

"The President was asked if there were any other bombs waiting in the wings, and the President said if there were, he is not aware of them. If there is any information waiting to be revealed, it is information he does not have. And I think that's about as frank and honest a statement as anyone could give."

After White House lawyer J. Fred Buzhardt's disclosure the next day about the 18-minute gap in the Nixon-Haldeman tape, both Dunn and Ray said they wanted an explanation.

"I came out of there assured that we've bottomed out and now I'm not sure that we've bottomed out because this revelation does call for some further explanation," Dunn said Thursday.

Ray said the blank tape "once again raises serious doubts in the minds of people as to whether or not a full disclosure" of Watergate is going to be made, as Mr. Nixon has promised repeatedly.

"It's discouraged me to a degree," Dunn said. "I simply cannot agree that this is not seriously important. I think if I had been with the governors in the President's position, I might want to tell them about the revelation."

Gov. Tom McCall of Oregon, who said Tuesday he and his colleagues "left with a sense of relief that the President was leveling," confessed he was "sorely perplexed" by the subsequent tape disclosure.

He said Mr. Nixon's "insensitivity to what is a bombshell" made it almost impossible to help him politically. "It saps at his credibility," McCall said.