

TAPE COMPROMISE FAVORED BY FORD

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He Says White House Clash With House Panel Might Aid Impeachment Move

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DENVER, April 5 — Vice President Ford expressed concern today that a "head-to-head confrontation" between the White House and the House Judiciary Committee over requested tape recordings might increase the chances of impeachment of President Nixon.

The Vice President said that he hoped a compromise might be reached on the tapes issue "so that the facts could be the determining factor and not an institutional conflict."

Mr. Ford's remarks, in answers to questions at a Denver news conference, appeared to signal a warning to the President that continued refusal to supply tapes sought by the Judiciary Committee could lead to House votes for impeachment.

Just yesterday, the Judiciary Committee issued an ultimatum demanding that the White House make known by next Tuesday whether it would provide the forty-two recordings that the committee requested Feb. 25.

Representative Peter W. Rodino Jr., Democrat of New Jersey, chairman of the committee, said that the panel would subpoena the tapes if it had to so it could make a "fair and thorough" inquiry into possible impeachment of the President.

'Relevant' Is Key Word

Mr. Ford has said repeatedly in recent weeks that he has urged the President to release all material "relevant to the impeachment process." But he has stressed that the key word is "relevant."

Just two weeks ago, in a news conference at Charleston, S.C., the Vice President accused the staff of the Judiciary Committee of conducting a "fishing expedition," seeking material that might not be relevant to the proceedings.

The committee's chief counsel, John M. Doar, said yesterday that the requested tapes covered conversations that President Nixon had in February through April, 1973, with several top aides, including John V. Dean 3d, H. R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman, and with former Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst.

Today, the Vice President avoided any mention of his earlier charges that the material sought by the committee might be irrelevant or that the

committee staff was attempting to dictate the proceedings.

Instead, Mr. Ford said in reply to questions, "If the request for the tapes or parts thereof is relevant, I will certainly advise, if asked, that the White House turn over those tapes or parts thereof that are relevant."

He said that since he had not seen the committee's letter to the White House, "I can't verify whether the request is specific in asking for relevant material."

However, he added: "But on the assumption that the request is for relevant information, I would hope that the White House would cooperate. If there is a head-to-head confrontation, not over the facts but between the House of Representatives and the White House, there could be a greater possibility of an affirmative action (on impeachment) by the committee and the House."

While the Vice President's comments on the tapes issue seemed to indicate a somewhat more critical attitude toward White House delays, Mr. Ford continued to express full confidence in President Nixon.

In response to questions, he said that he felt that the President had shown his "good faith and trust" in agreeing to pay about \$467,000 in back taxes and interest.

"It's a tribute to him, not a liability," Mr. Ford said.

Asked how he felt the American public would view the President's tax problems, he said that he thought some people would think the President did the right thing, while others would raise serious questions.

"It's hard for me to analyze just what the public reaction will be," he continued. "I'm sure we'll have some polls taken, and we'll get a better appraisal of that."

Disagrees With Javits

The Vice President also said, in response to another question, that he did not agree with the suggestion by Senator Jacob K. Javits, Republican of New York, that Mr. Nixon might consider stepping aside temporarily during the impeachment inquiry and allow Mr. Ford to become acting head of state.

The Vice President's news conference came in the midst of a 14-hour day that started with a prayer breakfast at 8 A.M. and ended with a Republican rally.

In between the two, Mr. Ford met with various Republican fund raisers, consulted with a group of Mexican-Americans, attended several receptions and addressed a conference on distribution of health manpower in rural areas.

He told the health manpower gathering that there was a strong possibility of early en-

actment of comprehensive health insurance legislation.

"The Administration's health plan took a giant step forward this week with the introduction of similar—and probably reasonably compatible—proposals by Senator Kennedy and Chairman Wilbur Mills of the House Ways and Means Committee," the Vice President said.

He suggested that differences between the versions might be reconciled to produce "an acceptable Nixon-Kennedy-Mills bill, if I may call it that."