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Scott: Transcript Performance 'Deplorable' and 'Disgusting'



HUGH SCOTT
... strongest criticism

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Senate Minority Leader Hugh Scott (R-Pa.), who has strongly defended President Nixon's Watergate conduct, said yesterday that the recently released transcripts of taped White House conversations reveal a "deplorable, shabby, disgusting and immoral performance . . . by each of those" who took part in the discussions.

Although Scott pleaded with the Senate to maintain a "presumption of innocence" of the President and others involved in the White House discussions, his statement was the strongest criticism he has yet made of White House conduct in the Watergate affair and ap-

peared to represent a backing away from past all-out support of Mr. Nixon.

Scott's remarks were the latest in a new round of unfavorable comment on the contents of the transcripts.

Sen. Lloyd M. Bentsen (D-Tex.) said senators are disturbed by the tone, which appears to indicate that the White House circle considered using national security as a frivolous cover for many of the Watergate abuses. Bentsen called on the White House to deliver the tapes, not just edited transcripts, to the House Judiciary Committee for its impeachment inquiry.

House Minority Leader
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John J. Rhodes (R-Ariz.) told a news conference that "I won't quarrel" with Scott's characterization of the tone of the White House conversations as shabby and disgusting, but he said he had seen nothing in the transcripts that appeared "definitely impeachable."

But Rhodes said some parts of the transcripts raised questions.

"There are areas that might possibly be brought up as impeachable offenses, having to do with obstruction of justice," Rhodes said, identifying them as conversations involving the President and aides John W. Dean III, H. R. (Bob) Halde- man and John D. Ehrlich- man. These "indicated to me some rather high-level plans were being made as to what this person would say and what that person would do."

Rhodes said he still believes there aren't enough votes in the House now to impeach Mr. Nixon.

Backing up Rhodes' position, Senate GOP Policy Committee Chairman John Tower (R-Tex.) told reporters, "Nothing warrants the President being charged with an indictable offense," but said the transcripts did show "a lot of cynicism in the White House, that the President did delegate away a lot of authority, inordinately."

At the White House, as-

sistant press secretary Gerald L. Warren declined to comment directly on Scott's remarks, but he said "nothing in [the transcripts] implicates the President . . . I don't feel it is fair to judge the President on 33 hours [of transcripts]. We believe he will be judged on foreign and domestic initiatives and achievements of his administration."

Scott said he had read 800 of the 1,254 pages of White House transcripts and was "enormously distressed that there was not enough showing of moral indignation" by White House personnel in their discussions of the Watergate events.

Scott declined to say he saw anything in the transcripts that he considered criminal or impeachable, but he told the Senate in a floor speech after his initial statement, "I will not take a position supporting any action which involved any form of immorality or criminality as the transcripts indicate."

"At the same time, I call for a suspension of judgment. I hope that all of us will assume the presumption of innocence and that we will withhold our judgment as to specific individuals, pending the operation of our great constitutional system. It works, it always has, it will this time."

In December, Scott was shown summaries and par-

tial transcripts of various White House conversations by White House chief of staff Alexander M. Haig Jr. Shortly afterward, Scott told a television audience in January, "I have the feeling . . . on specific items the President would be exculpated" if the material were made public.

When reporters pressed him on whether he was sure the materials he had been shown weren't misleading, he said, "I won't be a goddam pasty," and promised to make his anger known if he found the materials had been doctored.

Scott's initial reaction to the transcript release last week was that the fuller documents now available were "consistent" with the material he had seen earlier.

In the House, meanwhile, Rep. John Conyers Jr. (D-Mich.), an all-out critic of Mr. Nixon for some time, said he views portions of the transcripts of March 21, 1973, conversations, involving possible "hush money" payments to convicted Watergate defendant E. Howard Hunt, Jr. as clear evidence of obstruction of justice.

"There is no question in my mind that is evidence of a commission of a federal crime," he said.

In Nashville, according to press reports, Republican Governors Conference Chairman Winfield Dunn of Tennessee said he was "disappointed in much of the dialogue" disclosed by the transcripts and "my reaction was not a happy one" but the transcripts don't show any "indication that the President has violated the law. They're going to have to show me some more." He called on Mr. Nixon to "make everything public, the tapes and everything."