

Release Of Tapes Is Urged

6 Governors Warn Nixon On Refusal

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SEATTLE, June 2—A bipartisan group of leading governors urged President Nixon today to submit all White House tape recordings and other impeachment evidence the Supreme Court and Congress order him to turn over—or face the consequences.

In a joint interview preceding Monday's opening of the annual governors' conference, four Democratic and two Republican state executives agreed that any refusal on Mr. Nixon's part might cost him his office.

With one exception—Oregon's maverick Republican Tom McCall—they said that impeachment would leave fewer questions and doubts in the public mind than a Nixon resignation.

McCall, who disclosed that he has been discussing a possible 1976 "third-force" presidential movement with such diverse figures as Eugene J. McCarthy and George Romney, argued that impeachment is "a ludicrous procedure" which "will prove nothing at all definitive." He called impeachment the "least awful" of the "terrible alternatives."

While impeachment questions dominated the questioning of the six governors on "Meet the Press" (NBC, WRC) today, the state executives of both parties are making a deliberate effort to demonstrate during their session here that the state capitals have escaped the taint of Washington's scandals.

For the first time in many years, neither the President nor the Vice President is appearing on the conference program, and the chairman and host, Washington Republican Gov. Daniel J. Evans, argued today that "in a period of national turmoil, the states and their leaders may very well be

sort of the bedrock of the political system."

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Departing from the custom of focusing on the problems in their relationship with the national government, Evans has designed the conference to showcase "the state of the states"—a condition which he said today is characterized by both fiscal prosperity and political stability. The conference has published a thick book of "innovative programs" designed to show that state governments are doing on everything from urban conservation to standards of public safety.

Partisan politics is being subordinated at the conference to discussions of directions in state government with such visitors as the President's assistant for domestic affairs, Kenneth R. Cole Jr., former Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson and Common Cause chairman John Gardner.

On Monday, the governors will take part in a discussion of health insurance alternatives with Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.); Education and Welfare Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger; and Dr. Russell B. Roth, president of the American Medical Association.

Today, however, the six state executives let reporters lead them into the Watergate questions and found quick agreement on the proposition that Mr. Nixon must reverse his stated intention to refuse to comply with any further requests from Congress or the courts for evidence.

Asked if Mr. Nixon should comply with subpoenas or court orders for tapes and documents, Evans, McCall and the four Democrats on the panel—Wendell Anderson of Minnesota, Jimmy Carter of Georgia, Wendell Ford of Kentucky, and Daniel Walker of Illinois—gave unanimous yes.

Carter, however, added that he did not think the President would release any more evidence, because "I personally think that the President is guilty, and I think that the release of evidence will prove it."

Carter, the head of the 1974 Democratic campaign committee, said he believes Mr. Nixon "has made a decision that the best grounds on which to face an impeachment charge is on the failure to release evidence, even if demanded by the Supreme Court or the Senate itself during the impeachment trial."

But the Georgia governor

predicted that that stand would cost the President the support of "most of the Southern senators who are conservative and who are quite naturally inclined to support Mr. Nixon's policies." Refusal to obey a court order or Senate subpoena will "draw the line" for those senators, Carter said.

All of the governors but McCall agreed that the impeachment charge was unresolvable to a large degree, although they would not say whether they would support a resolution that would force the President to comply with the subpoena.

Ford, who has supported Sen. Marlowe's proposed November 1976 election, originally favored resignation but switched his vote when many Republicans, including Cook, started calling for the President to be stepped down.

He conceded that there might be a political advantage for Democrats in himself in having Mr. Nixon in office through November, but said the suggestion "can demand that the resignation made people think that they were going to bite something out of it under the rug. The sentiment of the people is for the constitutional route of impeachment," Ford said, "and I support that."

On the other side, McCall argued that all 100 senators were disqualified from passing judgment on the President because of their prior knowledge of the facts and that, whatever the verdict, there would be great distrust of the decision.

"In the final analysis, it's the mood of the nation, regardless of what the evidence is, that the decision is going to be based on, so it's a completely arbitrary procedure," he said.

McCall, who is barred this year from a third term in Oregon, lashed out at both parties for failing to bring forward new national leaders, and disclosed that he had been contacted in the past two weeks by both former Sen. McCarthy, a maverick Democrat, and former Housing and Urban Development Secretary Romney, an independent Republican, about a conference looking to the creation of a "third force" 1976 presidential movement.

"I think both parties need McCall said it would be 'the height of expediency' a sabbatical," McCall said.