

20 Tapes Promised By Tuesday

Washington

Presidential attorney James St. Clair agreed yesterday to surrender by Tuesday tapes of 20 White House conversations subpoenaed in the Watergate coverup trial and to turn over all others as soon as possible.

The timetable was part of a compromise worked out between St. Clair and Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski at the prodding of U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica.

The agreement calls for the 20 tapes to be turned over to the court by 4 p.m. Tuesday and for St. Clair to report by next Friday on progress in preparing the tapes and documents relating to the remaining 44 conversations.

St. Clair said he could not estimate how long it might be before the final tape is surrendered, in part because President Nixon "feels quite strongly he should know what he is turning over" and plans to listen to all of the conversations.

The judge said prompt production of the material, which the Supreme Court ordered Mr. Nixon to surrender on Wednesday, will enable the Watergate coverup trial of six former presidential and campaign aides to begin as scheduled September 9.

The President has promised to comply with the high court's ruling "in all respects."

The first 20 tapes include conversations that have already been partially disclosed in White House-edited transcripts released in late April.

All but one of the tapes have also been subpoenaed by the House Judiciary Committee in its impeachment probe, but St. Clair said the Supreme Court's decision made clear they were to be turned over only to the court.

Asked by newsmen if the White House would voluntarily surrender the tapes and documents to the committee if approved by Sirica, Mr. Nixon's lawyer said that was a hypothetical question and has not been considered.

In San Clemente Deputy Press Secretary Gerald L. Warren declined to answer specifically a direct question about surrendering the tapes, but other sources indicated that the tapes would not be given to the committee, at least not immediately.

Sirica is to review the tapes to determine whether any of the material is relevant to the coverup trial. Any relevant material will be turned over to Jaworski.

The conversations range from June 20, 1972, a few days after the Watergate break-in, to June 4, 1973, the day Mr. Nixon listened to several previous tapes.

St. Clair and Jaworski agreed to the compromise timetable after the judge made clear he would not accept a promise by Mr. Nixon's lawyer to "move as quickly as possible" but without a specific date.

Associated Press