

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



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IN THE NAME OF HISTORY?

WASHINGTON -- Senator Robert Dole (R.-Kan.) today made the following statement on the recent media coverage of the Kennedy tape recordings:

"Just nine short years ago, expressions of shock filled the airwaves and dominated the headlines with the revelation that President Richard Nixon had secretly tape recorded conversations in the Oval Office. An outraged national news media was quick to condemn this covert invasion of privacy--after all, this was the White House! Yet only a few years later, there seems to be a new consciousness among the Fourth Estate.

"We know that President John Kennedy also surreptitiously tape recorded Oval Office dialogue. But instead of moral outrage, there is now only historical curiosity. Instead of the noise of a constitutional crisis, there is now only the silence of a press corps awed by the opportunity to eavesdrop on history.

"President Kennedy's place in American history is secure. And the national affection for him endures. But his memory is ill-served by those who raise a double standard in defense of his secret tapes.

"In the wake of the so-called Nixon tape scandal, everyone in politics was placed on shaky ground. Careers built upon years of honest work were suddenly in jeopardy after being unfairly tainted by the broad brush of suspicion. Righteous editorials called for new standards of conduct in the nation's capitol. It was the time of punishment.

"For the survivors, 1982 brings astonishment. Not that JFK, LBJ and FDR all made secret tape recordings. But that the once indignant media somehow no longer care about Oval Office ethics. Where are the editorials, the commentaries, the half-hour specials?

"It was unacceptable, indeed, when President Nixon did it. It was equally unacceptable for another President to do it. This country will survive without Presidential memoirs. We can hardly expect to survive leaders who mislead, and a press corps that protects the chosen few.

"This week, the watchdogs were asleep at the switch--the one that activates the Presidential tap recorder. How soon they forget."