

## *Administration of Richard Nixon*

# PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

*Week Ending Saturday, July 28, 1973*

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### Recordings of Presidential Conversations

*The President's Letter to Senator Sam J. Ervin, Jr., Chairman, Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities. July 23, 1973*

*Dear Mr. Chairman:*

I have considered your request that I permit the Committee to have access to tapes of my private conversations with a number of my closest aides. I have concluded that the principles stated in my letter to you of July 6th preclude me from complying with that request, and I shall not do so. Indeed the special nature of tape recordings of private conversations is such that these principles apply with even greater force to tapes of private Presidential conversations than to Presidential papers.

If release of the tapes would settle the central questions at issue in the Watergate inquiries, then their disclosure might serve a substantial public interest that would have to be weighed very heavily against the negatives of disclosure.

The fact is that the tapes would not finally settle the central issues before your Committee. Before their existence became publicly known, I personally listened to a number of them. The tapes are entirely consistent with what I know to be the truth and what I have stated to be the truth. However, as in any verbatim recording of informal conversations, they contain comments that persons with different perspectives and motivations would inevitably interpret in different ways. Furthermore, there are inseparably interspersed in them a great many very frank and very private comments, on a wide range of issues and individuals, wholly extraneous to the Committee's inquiry. Even more important, the tapes could be accurately understood or interpreted only by reference to an enormous number of other documents and tapes, so that to open them at all would begin an endless process

of disclosure and explanation of private Presidential records totally unrelated to Watergate, and highly confidential in nature. They are the clearest possible example of why Presidential documents must be kept confidential.

Accordingly, the tapes, which have been under my sole personal control, will remain so. None has been transcribed or made public and none will be.

On May 22nd I described my knowledge of the Watergate matter and its aftermath in categorical and unambiguous terms that I know to be true. In my letter of July 6th, I informed you that at an appropriate time during the hearings I intend to address publicly the subjects you are considering. I still intend to do so and in a way that preserves the Constitutional principle of separation of powers, and thus serves the interests not just of the Congress or of the President, but of the people.

Sincerely,

RICHARD NIXON

[Honorable Sam J. Ervin, Jr., Chairman, Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities, United States Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510]

### Recordings of Presidential Conversations

*Letter to Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox From Charles Alan Wright, Special Consultant to the Counsel to the President. July 23, 1973*

*Dear Mr. Cox:*

Mr. Buzhardt has asked that I respond to your letters to him of June 20th, July 18th and July 20th in which you make certain requests with regard to tape recordings of or about conversations between the President and various members of the White House staff and others.

The President is today refusing to make available to the Senate Committee material of a similar nature. Enclosed is a copy of his letter of this date to Senator Ervin stating his position about the tapes. I am instructed by the