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Delay Likely on Airing Nixon Data

The public has the mistaken impression that Jimmy Carter, once he's installed in the White House, will be able to release Richard Nixon's tapes and records. They contain many dark secrets, which still hang over the Nixon years.

But our sources say it will take at least five years, even with favorable court rulings, to break loose the controversial tapes and letters. Jimmy Carter will have little, if anything, to say about it.

Some 900 rolls of tapes, containing the conversations of Nixon and his aides inside the Oval Office, remain under court seal. Another 36 million to 42 million pieces of paper are also locked up awaiting court action.

Congress has already enacted special legislation, giving the government control of the Nixon material. But the former President has successfully tied up their release in the courts.

The most sensitive papers and all the tapes, meanwhile, are stored in the Executive Office Building, adjoining the White House. The bulk of the material is kept under guard in the General Services Administration's warehouse in Suitland, Md.

The Supreme Court, if it agrees with a lower court ruling, could uphold Congress in a few weeks. Or, the Supreme Court may ask for oral arguments and hold off a ruling until next year.

Even if the Supreme Court rules against Nixon, he can file a second suit on constitutional grounds and start the whole process over. This would extend the secrecy at least until the fall of 1978.

Once the courts clear the way, GSA is drafting regulations that would permit the release of almost everything contained in the tapes and papers. The Archives plans to assign 100 workers to do the cataloging. But this exhaustive chore would take until about 1981.

Eventually, the Nixon papers and tapes will be open to the public, the courts willing, in 11 different cities. The only material that would be withheld would be Nixon's personal papers such as letters to his wife, military secrets, information that might interfere with a fair trial, documents that violate the privacy act, and perhaps a few other categories.

But nothing is likely to be available during Carter's first term.

Bathroom Hazards—Of 396 danger areas where Americans should venture with caution, the bathroom ranks 14th. It is positively dangerous, according to government studies, to take a bath or shower.

At least 110,000 casualties occur each year in the bathrooms of America. And of all the bathroom hazards, the common tub is the most menacing. Bathers are constantly slipping, falling and bumping their heads in the bathtub.

Unless safety measures are adopted, it will cost Americans \$1.6 billion for bathroom injuries and deaths over the next 40 years. Yet until a few weeks ago, neither the bathroom industry, the government nor consumer groups had done much to improve bathroom safety.

The fear of mandatory standards, however, has now forced the bathroom equipment manufacturers to

prepare voluntary safety standards. These have been submitted to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, which will decide whether to let the industry police itself.

The minutes of a dozen meetings offer a rare, behind-the-scenes glimpse of an industry struggling to regulate itself.

First the manufacturers had to overcome government suspicion. Some of them had been slapped by the Justice Department for alleged price fixing, and they feared the federal lawyers might regard their meetings as a dark conspiracy. In a confidential exchange of letters, the Justice Department finally gave them a guarded go-ahead.

The manufacturers also had to convince the Consumer Product Safety Commission that they are making a serious effort to come up with substantial safety standards. They finally allayed the commission's suspicions by confessing abjectly that their tubs were too slippery, that they needed standards for "grab bars" and that they had neglected to install anti-scalding devices.

The tub and shower makers haggled over the fine points of anti-slip surfaces, grab bars, towel racks, soap dishes and anti-scalding devices. Standards were finally agreed upon, plus these recommendations for the future:

Telephones or intercoms in bathrooms were proposed so that mothers won't have to leave babies alone in the bath. That is the most frequent cause of bathroom deaths. Padded tub edges, non-shatterable shower enclosures and flexible shower hoses were also suggested.

PRODUCTS