

What He Said Then

Editor — It is more than simply ironic that President Nixon, the vehement advocate of executive privilege, confidentiality, and the withholding of documents in the name of national security, has in 1974 abandoned entirely the position staked out on the subject with such fervor by Senator Nixon in 1951.

In 1951 the Korean war raged and American casualties mounted with no end in sight. Republican politicians, including most prominently Senators Knowland, Jenner, McCarthy, and Nixon, demanded a full-scale congressional investigation of the Truman Administration's conduct of affairs in Korea and the Far East.

They repeatedly accused President Truman of a pattern of editing, selecting and omitting of the documentary record so that the heroic General MacArthur was made to look bad and the Truman Administration good. Truman's claims that considerations of national security required the President to be the judge of what information might be disclosed were brushed aside by Mr. Nixon who, on April 22, 1951, said: "Certainly if classified documents are now to be made public the committees of Congress and the American people should be entitled to see not only those documents which might reflect against MacArthur, but also those which might reflect in his favor."

With considerable indignation Mr. Nixon concluded: "The new test for classifying secret documents now seems to be not whether the publication of a document would affect the security of the nation, but whether it would affect the political security of the Administration."

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