

3 Feb 74

Yes, that's why we sent the memo. The addition of the paragraph on the Supreme Court decision was because of the closeness of that date to the ones given by Nixon and Butterfield, and wondering if it had anything to do with the correction of their dates.

Nixon and Butterfield agree on the year, but not on the month; Nixon: June 1970, Butterfield: April, May, end of summer, early fall 1970 (testimony, Book 5, p. 2074). The one thing Butterfield does seem sure of is the year, agreeing when 1970 is used in a question by Thompson (p. 2079) and by Weicker (p. 2087). Later Butterfield says (p. 2088), "It was roughly January or February of 1970 when we began that procedure." Perhaps he means here discussion of and preparation for installing the system, the actual installation being in April, May, etc.

So in four places in his testimony, 1970 is the year. As the one who was instructed "on the President's authority by way of Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Higby" (p. 2077) to tell the Secret Service to install the system - something so important no one else was to know about it - it does seem odd that his recollection is so "fuzzy" (his word) as to be "off by a full year" (p. 2090).

Incidentally, in checking Butterfield's testimony, I came across another interesting statement:

Montoya: And you state that the tapes were primarily to record conversations within these particular offices so that we could preserve history for posterity?

Butterfield: Yes; there really is no question in my mind about it, Senator Montoya. That was often on the President's mind and, as I said, he was very conscious of our having a good system for collecting the things which transpired with regard to the affairs of state. (p. 2085)

Nixon's own description of the system (APME convention, Orlando, 17 Nov 73): it was "not a sophisticated system," and consisted of "a little Sony" recorder and "lapel mikes in my desks."