

White House Says Indexing of Data To Start Promptly

By Carroll Kilpatrick
Washington Post Staff Writer

7-25-74

SAN CLEMENTE, Calif., July 24—President Nixon pledged today to comply fully with the Supreme Court's landmark decision ordering him to turn over to U.S. District Court Judge John J. Sirica tapes of 64 White House conversations.

The President, who deliberated all day in his home here before issuing his statement through his counsel, James D. St. Clair, expressed disappointment in the ruling but said, "I respect and accept the court's decision."

St. Clair said that he would undertake "the time-consuming process" of reviewing the tapes and preparing them for Judge Sirica, indicating some weeks may be required to complete the process.

Neither St. Clair nor White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler would respond to questions following the reading on television by St. Clair of the President's three-paragraph statement and St. Clair's two-paragraph comment on it.

Despite the brave front attempted by St. Clair, Ziegler and other White House spokesmen, the court ruling was taken here as a severe blow to the President, who, it is known, fully recognizes the momentum for impeachment in the House.

If he had defied the court, he recognized that impeachment would follow quickly, with almost certain conviction in the Senate.

However, according to St. Clair, Mr. Nixon "has always been a firm believer in the rule of law. He intends his decision to comply fully with the court's ruling as an action in furtherance of that belief."

The President said he had directed St. Clair to "take whatever measures are necessary to comply" with the court's ruling "in all respects."

However, the President declared that the "special circumstances of this case" should not be permitted in the future "to cloud the rights of Presidents to maintain the basic confidentiality without which this office cannot function."

The President said he was "gratified" that the court "reaffirmed both the validity and the importance of the principle of executive privilege—the principle I had sought to maintain."

He said that by complying with the ruling, "I hope and trust that I will contribute to strengthening rather than weakening this principle for the future so that this will prove to be not the precedent that destroyed the principle, but the action that preserved it."