

9 Sep 75

Nixon tapes and documents (suit) - From comment by James Reston:

"Former President Richard Nixon is said by his friends to have recovered his health, but there is very little evidence that he has recovered his judgment or his sense of history.... His suit to compel the Government to hand over to him and his family ownership and control of the Presidential papers of his Administration is only the latest evidence of his historical and moral blindness.

"For this has merely compelled the Ford Administration, which has pardoned and defended him more than almost anybody else, to insist that in looking for a protector of documents, it would surely not be Mr. Nixon; to reject his claim of 'ownership' on the ground that he had 'a propensity to distort the historical record,' and 'would not be a trustworthy custodian even temporarily.' Despite all the proved evidence that he knowingly distorted the Watergate record, he now presents himself to the court as a reliable protector of that record....

"Mr. Nixon charges that [the Presidential Recordings and Materials Preservation Act] violated his constitutional rights, and deprived him of his 'ownership' of these materials. What it clearly did, of course, was to deny him the possibility of altering or destroying the historical record and of continuing his cover-up into the next generation....

"This case is limited to Mr. Nixon's special case and will not settle the question of future Presidential papers, but at least it has disclosed the fallacy and dangers of Mr. Nixon's preposterous arguments, and reminded us of this strange mentality that decided to bring the question up."

NYT 10 Sep 75, James Reston