

The Times Of London Chides Nixon

London

President Nixon's refusal to release the tape recordings of his conversations about the Watergate case has been criticized by the Times of London, which had been one of his most sympathetic supporters in the controversy.

In an editorial, the Times said the President had an "inescapable duty" to assist in the investigation of criminal activity and urged him to make the tapes available to Archibald Cox, the special prosecutor in the affair.

The newspaper said the President had decided on "an astonishingly dangerous gamble with the presidency of the United States at stake."

The new coolness toward Mr. Nixon came seven weeks after William Rees-Mogg, editor of the newspaper, touched off a controversy with an editorial charging that the Washington Post and the New York Times were interfering with the course of justice by publishing "vast quantities of prejudicial matter."

In effect, the newspaper now is accusing the President of interfering with the course of justice. It said the tapes "plainly provide highly relevant information which could be used as evidence in the court."

"When an accused man refuses to produce evidence which would decide the matter," the Times said, "the natural inference is that he does not do it because he dare not do it. It is like an accused man refusing to give evidence in his own behalf."

Other British newspapers have joined in rising criticism of the President's decision. The conservative Financial Times rejected Mr. Nixon's contention that the tapes contain comments that people could interpret in different ways and said that the presumption of guilt "is becoming more difficult to resist."

"The matter is easily settled," the newspaper said in an editorial.

"It seems wrong that where the English language is concerned the President should be the sole judge of interpretation."

New York Times