

# ABA Chief's View On Nixon Refusal

Miami

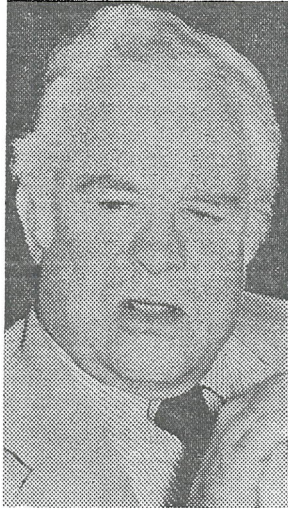
American Bar Association President Chesterfield Smith says President Nixon's refusal to hand over all Watergate evidence to those considering his impeachment amounts to obstruction of justice.

"I completely and wholly disagree with Mr. Nixon's contention that dragging out Watergate drags down America," Smith said. "The American people want wrongdoing uncovered and the wrongdoers punished, no matter how high the office they hold."

In an interview, Smith said the president was on shaky constitutional ground in not releasing all requested documents and tapes.

"The Constitution provides for overriding authority for one of the three branches of government in particular instances. In this case, it's the legislative branch," he said.

"The president should furnish all information requested by the House Judiciary Committee, and I don't feel any evidence is subject to



AP Wirephoto

CHESTERFIELD SMITH  
Watergate issue

presidential privilege, presidential privacy or even national security."

White House lawyers have said the House committee should first define an impeachable offense. Smith, a Lakeland, Fla., trial lawyer said, "the question of what is an impeachable offense is not an issue" in the evi-

dence-gathering process.

The lawyers' association has refrained from taking a stand on impeachment, calling it a political rather than a legal undertaking. Smith has maintained a separate stance, stressing the need for speedy impeachment proceedings.

"By claiming executive privilege, the president is obstructing justice, whether legally or illegally," Smith said.

Smith said he did not support the idea of a presidential resignation.

Asked if he thought the evidence surrounding Watergate disputed Mr. Nixon's assertion that "I am not a crook," Smith said:

"I think you'd have to define what a crook is. The president has not displayed the high principles expected of him. If a crook is one who bends and shapes things to his own purposes . . . well I think the president has bent and shaped things to his own purposes. He has not aided in uncovering Watergate."

Associated Press