

The President and the Tapes

by William Raspberry

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So why has the President made such a fuss about protecting the recordings? There are at least three possibilities, none of them mutually exclusive, maybe all three accurate to some degree. [First, protection of confidentiality; second, that there is on the tapes such offensive language about so many important people that they can't be released even if they contain no adverse implications on Watergate.]

Third, there is the reason nobody is mentioning: that Richard Nixon may be having a little fun, baiting the opposition, focusing their attack on a position he had no interest in maintaining anyway.

Considering how much grief Watergate has meant for his administration, it may be hard to believe that Mr. Nixon would fool around having fun. But this isn't ha-ha fun - it's the fun that comes from knowing that you've planted a time bomb that will both vindicate you (to some extent at least) and make your dedicated enemies appear ridiculous.

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He'll release the tapes (or perhaps hand them over to Judge Sirica); the tapes will fail to confirm our darker suspicions, and a lot of us will forget that there was basis for those suspicions long before we knew the tapes existed.
