

Capitol
Punishment

All the
People,
All of
The
Time

By Art Buchwald

"Ron, have you see my tapes?"

"You're sitting on them, Mr. President."

"Oh yes, I forgot. No one is going to get these tapes, Ron. I want to make that perfectly clear."

"I know that, Mr. President. But you've been sitting on them for three days. Don't you think you ought to get some sleep? We could put the tapes in a safe."

"I'm not going to let them out of my sight. They would love to have me go to bed and leave my tapes in my safe."

"They?"

"All of *them* out there who are trying to get me. Ron, do you know they're trying to hang me with my own tapes? Well, I have a big surprise for them. I've heard these tapes and I'm innocent. But they'll never hear them. For the rest of their lives they'll always wonder what was on them."

"That's true, sir. But you can't keep sitting on the tapes for the rest of your administration. Why don't you give them to someone you trust to safeguard them for you?"

"Ron, I learned a long, long time ago that you can't trust *anybody*. That's why I made all these tapes. Now they can't say they told me one thing when they told me another. I've got them, Ron, and they know I've got them."

"But most of the people you bugged, Mr. President, were those who worked for you."

"What about the March of Dimes child? The Maid of Cotton? What about the Boy Scouts of America when they came to the White House? I'm sitting on it all, Ron. That's what driving *them* nuts."

"Aren't you uncomfortable sitting on them day and night?"

"No, Ron, and do you know why? Because I'm sitting on history. When future Presidents sit on

JUL 31 1973

these tapes they're going to say, 'God bless Richard Nixon for not giving them to the Senate Watergate Committee.'"

"All the same, sir, the Secret Service has assured me any time you want to give up the tapes, they will make certain that no one gets them."

"Ron, I have only 903 days as President of the United States, and do you know what I'm going to do with that time?"

"No, sir."

"I'm going to sit on these tapes."

"That's wonderful, Mr. President."

"They can threaten me—they can subpoena me—they can even impeach me, but they're not going to get one spool."

"You're a real Profile in Courage, Mr. President."

"Now I know there are some people who are going to say, 'Tricky Dick is up to his dirty tricks'—and I know there are some people who are going to ask, 'If he's innocent why doesn't he turn the tapes over to Cox?'—and I know others are going to say I doctored the tapes."

"But when I took this office in 1968 I vowed I would never do the easy thing, the popular thing, the political thing. Ron, the toughest decision I ever had to make was whether I would tape some of the people all of the time, or all of the people some of the time. It was only when I talked with Butterfield that I found out I could tape all of the people all of the time. It was probably the greatest day of my life."

"You sure you don't want to go to bed, Mr. President?"

"No, Ron, I think I'll stay here and relax with this tape of the John Connally Concerto in F Sharp Minor.