

## **With Court Order**

**BY HIS SURPRISING** and obviously reluctant decision to turn over the famous White House tapes to a Federal court, President Nixon has defused one constitutional crisis, has negated allegations of contempt for the rule of law, and has no doubt blunted the edge of moves toward his impeachment.

He has also confirmed a widely held opinion that his untimely discharge of Archibald Cox, the special Watergate prosecutor, was an expensive exercise in misjudgment. It cost him his able and highly esteemed Attorney General and Deputy Attorney General, left his Justice Department in disarray, and created a tidal wave of congressional and public displeasure and concern.

It is ironic that had he offered up the tapes a few hours earlier, all this could have been avoided. It is further ironic that by tardily deciding to do so, he has followed the course which, when insisted upon by Cox, was cited as grounds for his removal.

**AS MATTERS NOW STAND**, the Watergate investigation and prosecution have reverted to Henry E. Petersen, the assistant attorney general from whose hands it had been passed to Cox. Whether he will shepherd it to its conclusion is not at all certain, inasmuch as members of Congress and leaders of the bar are calling for the appointment of yet another special prosecutor.