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Editorials

Nixon Enlarges His Cooperation

PRESIDENT NIXON has stepped down from a seemingly fixed position on the pedestal of "executive privilege" derived from the doctrine of separation of powers, and now proposes to cooperate to a considerable degree with the House Judiciary committee which has his possible impeachment under inquiry.

His attorney has told Judge Sirica, and he has told a televised press conference, that he will turn over to the committee not only "the famous subpoenaed tapes", but also eleven others together with some 700 documents, and whatever other information it needs "to bring to a conclusion its Watergate investigation."

What is more, he has volunteered to "respond to any written interrogatories under oath" not adequately covered by such material, and if that is not enough, to meet with selected members of the committee at the White House "to answer any questions they may have."

THIS IS A LARGE ORDER, the result of a wise decision, which doubtless improves the President's image in the public eye. But for all its promise, it fails to satisfy some members who are calling for his appearance before the entire committee for questioning—possibly at a televised hearing.

The President's attorney, James D. St. Clair, has by letter implied a veto of any such hearing, which he termed a "fishing expedition" and, in response, members of the committee have raised again the specter of a presidential subpoena, which the President's offer of disclosure and cooperation might well have exercised.

If indeed the committee finds it necessary or expedient to subpoena the President's files or person, and if the President thereupon refuses to honor its service, the country will have been visited by yet another crisis at a time of too many crises, and the conclusion of the Watergate case will have receded into the far distant future. Such a calamity is assiduously to be avoided.