

To the Editor:

I should like to call attention to an oversight in the letter from James D. St. Clair, special counsel for the President, to Chief Judge Harold H. Greene. The text of the letter was published in The Times of Feb. 27.

In choosing a 167-year-old letter from Thomas Jefferson as a historical precedent justifying President Nixon's position with regard to the subpoena from a California court, Mr. St. Clair ignored the words "at whatever distance" in that letter.

Travel 167 years ago was time-consuming, and a President who was called from Washington to, say, Georgia (California and Florida were not part of the United States in 1807) would have had to spend several weeks traveling, completely cut off from the executive office. Even a trip from Washington to Richmond, where Jefferson's subpoena originated, would have taken several days of travel under unpleasant and even hazardous conditions.

Today, our chief executive can and does travel between Washington and California or Florida in a matter of hours. Furthermore, he can remain in constant touch with the executive office, and indeed any part of the world, every second of the day or night.

It seems to me, therefore, that Jefferson's letter of 1807 is not a valid precedent under the present circumstances.

SARAH TIETZE

New York, Feb. 27, 1974