

DEC 20 1974

Nixon Denied Custody

Ford Signs Tapes Bill

Washington

President Ford signed legislation yesterday denying Richard M. Nixon custody of his presidential documents, including the famous Watergate tapes, and making most of the material available for public inspection.

White House press secretary Ron Nessen said during a Christmas party that Mr. Ford has signed the bill. The President had faced a deadline of midnight tonight for acting.

In a statement, Mr. Ford said the General Services Administration will move promptly to get complete possession and control of the tapes and materials.

The legislation gives the GSA custody of all tapes and documents covering Mr. Nixon's 5½ years in office. It makes all of the material, except for those dealing with national security, available for public inspection.

The law still permits Mr. Nixon access to the documents and allows him to sue

the government for whatever financial loss he feels he suffered in giving up possession of the material.

The new law directs the GSA to take complete possession and control of the tapes and documents and to draft regulations to meet the following needs:

- To tell the "full truth" about the abuses of government power related to Watergate.
- To make the tapes and papers available for judicial proceedings.

- To guarantee that national security information will not be compromised.

- To protect individual rights to a fair trial.

- To provide public access to materials of historical significance.

- To give Mr. Nixon the tapes or materials in which the public has no interest.

Earlier yesterday, Mr. Nixon's lawyers asked U.S. District Court judge Gerard A. Gesell to make it easier for them to challenge his or-

der permitting broadcasters to copy those tapes which were used as evidence in the Watergate coverup trial.

They argued that allowing the tapes to be broadcast would mean that they would turn up in cocktail parties and comedy acts, a situation that would prove "embarrassing."

United Press

Airport Open

Montreal

Montreal airport was open yesterday despite a strike by airport maintenance men.

United Press

San Francisco Chronicle 9
★★ Fri., Dec. 20, 1974