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White House Ordered to Yield Tapes

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A federal judge ruled yesterday against Richard M. Nixon and ordered the White House to produce any tapes concerning its handling of the May Day demonstrations here in 1971.

White House tapes for the period from April 16 through May 10, 1971, were requested by plaintiffs in a suit involving the illegal arrest of 1,200 demonstrators on the Capitol steps on May 5, 1971.

Mr. Nixon opposed the request, saying that disclosure of a President's private conversations on government matters is impermissible in a civil suit. He also contended that disclosure would be an invasion of his personal privacy.

"The court finds none of Nixon's objections persuasive," U.S. District Judge William B. Bryant said in an opinion filed yesterday.

Bryant ordered Philip Buchen, counsel to President Ford, to inform him within 10 days how long it will take to go through the tapes and sift out any conversations that bear on the Nixon administration's plans to deal with the May Day demonstrators. Buchen is temporary legal custodian of the tapes.

The case in which Bryant ruled is a class action on behalf of the 1200 arrested at the Capitol. Among the plaintiffs is Rep. Ronald V. Dellums (D-Calif.), one of several members of Congress who were addressing the group at the time.

In January, 1975, a jury awarded the plaintiffs \$12 million in damages to be paid by the District of Columbia, Jerry V. Wilson, then police chief, and Chief James Powell of the U.S. Capitol Police. That award is being appealed.