

Nixon vs. Constitution

RICHARD Nixon, the former president who would be king, has given us in his involuntary retirement a useful — if frightening — history lesson.

Writing in reply to questions about his intelligence policies posed by the Senate Intelligence Committee, Nixon likened the president of the United States to a king who is above and beyond the law.

Perhaps Mr. Nixon has forgotten in this Bicentennial year that the excesses of George III, a monarch and ruler if not a dictator, led directly to the Declaration of Independence.

We should not forget.

Perhaps Mr. Nixon has let slip from memory the Declaration's bedrock premise — "that

governments are instituted among men deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

We should not.

If Mr. Nixon truly believes the president to be a monarch above the law, perhaps he needs to reread the Constitution he must have studied as a law student.

Were he to do so, he would find this unambiguous imperative in an enumeration of the duties of a president: "He shall take care that the laws be faithfully executed."

Perhaps that, too, has slipped Mr. Nixon's mind. It should not slip ours. Or the minds of those who would be president.