Nos. 73-1766, 73-1834

In the Supreme Court of the United States

OCTOBER TERM, 1973

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, PETITIONER

v.

RICHARD M. NIXON, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, ET AL., RESPONDENTS

RICHARD M. NIXON, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, PETITIONER

v.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

ON WRITS OF CERTIORARI TO THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA CIRCUIT

BRIEF FOR THE UNITED STATES

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BRIEF FOR THE UNITED STATES

OPINION AND ORDERS BELOW

The district court's order of April 18, 1974 (Pet. App. 47[1]) issuing the subpoena *duces tecum* in question is unreported. The district court's opinion and

[1] "Pet. App." refers to the Appendix to the Petition in No. 73–1766. "A." refers to the printed joint Appendix.

order of May 20, 1974, denying the motion to quash the subpoena, enforcing compliance therewith, and denying the motion to expunge (Pet. App. 15) is not yet officially reported.

JURISDICTION

The order of the district court (Pet. App. 23) was entered on May 20, 1974. On May 24, 1974, Richard M. Nixon, President of the United States, filed a timely notice of appeal from that order in the district court, and the certified record was docketed in the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit that same day (D.C. Cir. No. 74–1534). Also on May 24, 1974, the President filed a petition for a writ of mandamus in the court below seeking review of the district court's order (D.C. Cir. No. 74–1532).[2]

On May 24, 1974, the Special Prosecutor filed a petition for a writ of certiorari before judgment on behalf of the United States (No. 73–1766),[3] and certiorari was granted on May 31, 1974. On June 6, 1974, President Nixon filed a cross-petition for a writ of certiorari before judgment (No. 73–1834), which was granted on June 15, 1974. The jurisdiction of this Court rests on 28 U.S.C. 1254(1), 1651, and 2101(e).

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[2] In *Nixon* v. *Sirica*, 487 F. 2d 700, 707 n. 21 (D.C. Cir. 1973), the court of appeals stated that an order of this type directed to the President is appealable under 28 U.S.C. 1291. In any event, the court also asserted jurisdiction pursuant to the All Writs Act, 28 U.S.C. 1651. See 487 F. 2d at 706–707.

[3] Under 28 U.S.C. 510, 517, and 518, and Department of Justice Order No. 551–73, 28 C.F.R. § 0.37 *et seq.* (Appendix pp. 143–50, *infra*), the Special Prosecutor has authority, in lieu of the Solicitor General, to conduct litigation before this Court on behalf of the United States in cases within his jurisdiction.

In response to the Court's order of June 15, 1974, two jurisdictional questions are being discussed in our Supplemental Brief.

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

In No. 73–1766:

1. Whether a federal court must determine itself if executive privilege is properly invoked in a criminal proceeding or whether it is bound by the President's assertion of an absolute "executive privilege" to withhold demonstrably material evidence from the trial of charges of conspiracy to defraud the United States and obstruct justice by his own White House aides and party leaders, upon the ground that he deems production to be against the public interest.

2. Whether the President is subject to a judicial order directing compliance with a subpoena *duces tecum* calling for production of evidence, under his sole personal control, that is demonstrably material to a pending federal criminal prosecution.

3. Whether the President's claim of executive privilege based on the generalized interest in the confidentiality of government deliberations can block the prosecution's access to material evidence for the trial of criminal charges against the former officials who participated in those deliberations, particularly where there is a *prima facie* showing that the President is a co-conspirator and that the deliberations occurred in the course of and in furtherance of the conspiracy.

4. Whether any executive privilege that otherwise might have been applicable to discussions between the President and alleged co-conspirators concerning the Watergate matter has been waived by previous testi-

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mony given pursuant to the President's approval and by the President's public release of edited transcripts of forty-three such conversations.

5. Whether the district court properly determined that the subpoena *duces tecum* issued to the President satisfied the standards of Rule 17(c) of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure because an adequate showing had been made that the subpoenaed items are relevant to issues to be tried and will be admissible in evidence.

In No. 73–1834:

6. Whether the district court acted within its discretion in declining to expunge the federal grand jury's naming of the President as an unindicted co-conspirator in offenses for which the grand jury returned an indictment.

The two questions the parties were requested to brief and argue by the Court's order of June 15, 1974, are discussed in our Supplemental Brief.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS, STATUTES, RULE, AND REGULATIONS INVOLVED

The constitutional provisions, statutes, rule, and regulations involved, which are set forth in the Appendix, *infra,* pp. 141–53, are:

Constitution of the United States:

- Article II, Section 1
- Article II, Section 2
- Article II, Section 3
- Article III, Section 2

Statutes of the United States:

- 5 U.S.C. 301
- 28 U.S.C. 509, 510, 515–519

Rule:

Rule 17(c), Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure

Regulations:

Department of Justice Order No. 551–73 (November 2, 1973), 38 Fed. Reg. 30,738, adding 28 C.F.R. §§ 0.37, 0.38, and Appendix to Subpart G–1

Department of Justice Order No. 554–73 (November 19, 1973), 38 Fed. Reg. 32,805, amending 28 C.F.R. Appendix to Subpart G–1

STATEMENT

This case presents for review the denial of a motion filed on behalf of respondent Richard M. Nixon, President of the United States, pursuant to Rule 17(c) of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, seeking to quash a subpoena *duces tecum* issued in a criminal case, directing the President to produce tape recordings and documents relating to sixty-four specifically described Presidential conversations. This subpoena (Pet. App. 39) issued on behalf of the United States at the request of the Special Prosecutor covers evidence which is demonstrably material to the trial of charges of conspiracy to defraud the United States and obstruct justice by former aides and associates of the President.

1. APPOINTMENT OF A SPECIAL PROSECUTOR

On May 25, 1973, Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson established the Office of the Watergate Special Prosecution Force, to be headed by Special Prosecu-

tor Archibald Cox, with "full authority for investigating and prosecuting offenses against the United States arising out of the unauthorized entry into Democratic National Committee headquarters at the Watergate."[4] The appointment of the Special Prosecutor, together with his specific duties and responsibilities, including full authority for determining whether or not to contest the assertion of "executive privilege," was settled in connection with the hearings of the Senate Judiciary Committee on the nomination of Mr. Richardson to be Attorney General.[5]

2. ENFORCEMENT OF THE 1973 GRAND JURY SUBPOENA DUCES TECUM

On July 16, 1973, Alexander Butterfield, formerly chief administrative officer at the White House, testified before the Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities that at the President's direction the Secret Service as a matter of course had been recording automatically all conversations in the President's offices in the White House and Old Executive Office Building.[6] Because there had been sharply contradictory testimony regarding the relationship between several Presidential meetings and telephone conversations and an alleged conspiracy to conceal the identity of the persons responsible for the Watergate

[4] Department of Justice Order No. 517–73, 38 Fed. Reg. 14,688, adding 28 C.F.R. § 0.37 and Appendix to Subpart G–1.

[5] See *Hearings Before the Senate Judiciary Committee on the Nomination of Elliot L. Richardson to be Attorney General*, 93d Cong., 1st Sess. 144–46 (1973).

[6] *Hearings Before the Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities*, 93d Cong., 1st Sess., Book 5, at 2074–81 (1973).

break-in, the Special Prosecutor issued a grand jury subpoena *duces tecum* to the President, who had assumed sole personal control over the recordings,[7] requiring him to produce the recordings of these meetings.

When the President refused to comply with the subpoena, the grand jury unanimously instructed the Special Prosecutor to apply for a court order requiring production. After a hearing, the court ordered the President to produce the subpoenaed items for *in camera* inspection, rejecting the President's contentions that he is immune from compulsory process and that he has absolute, unreviewable discretion to withhold evidence from the courts on the ground of executive privilege. *In re Grand Jury Subpoena Duces Tecum Issued to Richard M. Nixon,* 360 F. Supp. 1 (D.D.C. 1973). The Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit upheld this order, with modifications, in an *en banc* decision denying the President's petition for a writ of mandamus. *Nixon* v. *Sirica,* 487 F. 2d 700 (1973). The court of appeals *sua sponte* then stayed its order to permit the President to seek review by this Court.

3. DISMISSAL OF THE SPECIAL PROSECUTOR

The President decided, however, not to seek review by this Court, and instead proposed a "compromise" to the Special Prosecutor which would have supplied edited transcripts of the subpoenaed recordings for use before the grand jury and at any subsequent trial.

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[7] Letter from Richard M. Nixon to Senator Sam J. Ervin, Chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities, July 23, 1973, *id.*, Book 6, at 2479.

At the same time the President issued an order to Special Prosecutor Cox forbidding him ever again to resort to the judicial process to seek evidence from the President. The Special Prosecutor refused to accept this compromise or to accede to the order that would have barred him from exercising his discretion to seek evidence necessary for prosecutions within his jurisdiction. When the President then ordered Attorney General Richardson to dismiss the Special Prosecutor, the Attorney General resigned rather than obey, and Deputy Attorney General William Ruckelshaus was fired when he too refused to carry out the President's order.[8] On the night of October 20, 1973, Solicitor General Robert H. Bork, upon whom the responsibilities of Acting Attorney General devolved, elected to obey the President's instruction and peremptorily discharged Special Prosecutor Cox and abolished the Watergate Special Prosecution Force.[9]

On October 23, 1973, after considerable congressional and public reaction, counsel for the President announced to the district court that the President would comply with the district court's order as modi-

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[8] See generally Congressional Quarterly, Inc., *Historic Documents 1973*, at 859–78.

[9] The United States District Court for the District of Columbia later ruled that the Special Prosecutor's firing was illegal because Acting Attorney General Bork had relied simply upon instructions from the President and had not purported to find any "extraordinary impropriety," as had been specified by the regulations establishing the Office of the Watergate Special Prosecutor as the sole ground for dismissal. *Nader* v. *Bork*, 366 F. Supp. 104 (1973), appeal pending.

fied by the court of appeals.[10] Counsel for the President subsequently disclosed for the first time that two of the subpoenaed conversations were not recorded, and that eighteen and one-half minutes of the subpoenaed recording of the meeting between the President and H. R. Haldeman on June 20, 1972, had been obliterated.[11]

4. APPOINTMENT OF A NEW SPECIAL PROSECUTOR

In response to the discharge of Special Prosecutor Cox, both the Senate Judiciary Committee and the House of Representatives Judiciary Subcommittee on Criminal Justice began hearings on legislation to establish a court-appointed Special Prosecutor independent of control by the President.[12] Both commit-

[10] Hearing on October 23, 1973, *In re Grand Jury Subpoena Duces Tecum Issued to Richard M. Nixon*, D.D.C. Misc. No. 47–73.

[11] An Advisory Panel of experts, nominated jointly by the Special Prosecutor and counsel for the President, and appointed by the district court, has concluded that the only "completely plausible explanation" of the 18½ minute "buzz" section is a set of from five to nine erasures caused by manual operation of a recording machine. "Report on a Technical Investigation Conducted for the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia by the Advisory Panel on White House Tapes," filed June 4, 1974. *In re Grand Jury Subpoena Duces Tecum Issued to Richard M. Nixon*, D.D.C. Misc. No. 47–73.

[12] See *Hearings Before the Senate Judiciary Committee on the Special Prosecutor*, 93d Cong., 1st Sess. (1973); *Hearings Before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Criminal Justice*, 93rd Cong., 1st Sess. (1973).

tees reported out such bills for action by the House and Senate.[13]

Neither House considered the legislation on the floor, however, because on October 26, 1973, the President announced that Acting Attorney General Bork would appoint a new Special Prosecutor. The President explained that he had no greater interest than seeing that the Special Prosecutor has "the independence that he needs" to prosecute the guilty and clear the innocent.[14]

On November 2, 1973, the Acting Attorney General re-established the Watergate Special Prosecution Force and appointed Leon Jaworski as Special Prosecutor, vesting in him the same powers and authority possessed by his predecessor, including "full authority" to "contest the assertion of 'Executive Privilege' or any other testimonial privilege" (Appendix pp. 146–51, *infra*).[15] The only change in the regulations relevant to this Court's consideration was the addition of a provision, in "accordance with assurances given by the President to the Attorney General," that the

[13] The Senate Committee on the Judiciary reported out S. 2611 (S. Rep. 93–595) and S. 2642 (S. Rep. 93–596). See 119 Cong. Rec. D 1324 (daily ed. Nov. 21, 1973). The House Committee on the Judiciary reported out H.R. 11401 (H. Rep. 93–660), which was rewritten as H.R. 11555 by the House Rules Committee. See 119 Cong. Rec. D 1371 (daily ed. Dec. 3, 1973). All three bills remain on the calendars of each House, subject to being called up on the floor without further hearings or committee action. See House Calendar, 93d Cong., 2d Sess., for June 5, 1974, at 138, 139 (Senate bills), 92 (House bill).

[14] 9 Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents 1289 (October 29, 1973).

[15] Department of Justice Order No. 551–73, 38 Fed. Reg. 30,738.

President would not limit the jurisdiction of the Special Prosecutor or effect his dismissal without first consulting with the Majority and Minority Leaders of both Houses of Congress and their respective Committees on the Judiciary (Appendix pp. 151–52, *infra*).[16] Thereafter both Houses tabled the legislation for court appointment of an independent Special Prosecutor, but the bills remain on their respective calendars.

5. THE INDICTMENT IN THIS CASE AND THE NAMING OF THE PRESIDENT AS A CO-CONSPIRATOR

On March 1, 1974, a grand jury of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia returned an indictment (A. 5A) charging respondents John N. Mitchell, H. R. Haldeman, John D. Ehrlichman, Charles W. Colson, Robert C. Mardian, Kenneth W. Parkinson and Gordon Strachan with various offenses relating to the Watergate matter, including a conspiracy to defraud the United States and to obstruct justice. *United States* v. *Mitchell, et al.,* D.D.C. Crim. No. 74–110. At some or all of the times in question, respondent Mitchell, a former Attorney General of the United States, was Chairman of the Committee for the Re-Election of the President; respondent Haldeman was Assistant to the President and his chief of staff; respondent Ehrlichman was Assistant to the President for Domestic Affairs; respondent Colson was Special Counsel to the President; re-

[16] See also letter from the Acting Attorney General to the Special Prosecutor explaining this amendment (Appendix pp. 152–53, *infra*).

spondent Mardian, a former Assistant Attorney General, was an official of the President's re-election campaign; respondent Parkinson was an attorney for the re-election committee; and respondent Strachan was Staff Assistant to the President.

In the course of its consideration of the indictment, the grand jury, by a vote of 19–0, determined that there is probable cause to believe that respondent Richard M. Nixon (among others) was a member of the conspiracy to defraud the United States and to obstruct justice as charged in the indictment, and the grand jury authorized the Special Prosecutor to identify President Nixon (among others) as an unindicted co-conspirator in connection with subsequent legal proceedings.

6. ISSUANCE OF THE TRIAL SUBPOENA TO THE PRESIDENT

In order to obtain additional evidence which the Special Prosecutor has reason to believe is in the custody of the President and which would be important to the government's proof at the trial in *United States* v. *Mitchell, et al.*, the Special Prosecutor, on behalf of the United States, moved on April 16, 1974, for the issuance of the subpoena *duces tecum* in question (Pet. App. 39). On April 18, 1974, the district court ordered the subpoena to issue, returnable on May 2, 1974 (Pet. App. 47). The subpoena called for production of the evidence in advance of the September 9, 1974, trial date in order to allow time for any litigation over the subpoena and for transcription and authentication of any tape recordings produced.

On April 30, 1974, the President released to the public and submitted to the House Judiciary Committee conducting an impeachment inquiry 1,216 pages of edited transcripts of forty-three conversations dealing with Watergate. Portions of twenty subpoenaed conversations were included. On May 1, 1974, President Nixon, through his White House counsel, filed in the district court a "special appearance," a "formal claim of privilege," and a motion to quash the subpoena (A. 47A). At the suggestion of counsel for the President and the Special Prosecutor and with the approval of counsel for the defendants, subsequent proceedings were held *in camera* because of the sensitive nature of the grand jury's finding with respect to the President, which was submitted to the district court by the Special Prosecutor as a ground for denying the motion to quash. Defendants Colson, Mardian, and Strachan formally joined in the Special Prosecutor's motion for issuance of the subpoena, and all seven defendants (respondents herein) argued in opposition to the motion to quash at the hearing in the district court. At that hearing, counsel for the President also moved to expunge the grand jury's finding and to enjoin all persons, except for the President and his counsel, from ever disclosing the grand jury's action.

7. THE DECISION BELOW

In its opinion and order of May 20, 1974 (Pet. App. 15), the district court denied the motion to quash and the motion to expunge and for protective orders.

It further ordered "the President or any subordinate officer, official or employee with custody or control of the documents or objects subpoenaed" to deliver to the court the originals of all subpoenaed items as well as an index and analysis of those items, together with tape copies of those portions of the subpoenaed recordings for which transcripts had been released to the public by the President on April 30, 1974. The district court stayed its order pending prompt application for appellate review and further provided that matters filed under seal remain under seal when transmitted as part of the record (Pet. App. 22–23).[17]

In requiring compliance with the subpoena *duces tecum,* the district court rejected the contention by counsel for the President that it had no jurisdiction because the proceeding allegedly involved solely an "intra-executive" dispute (Pet. App. 18). The court ruled that this argument lacked substance in light of jurisdictional responsibilities and independence with which the Special Prosecutor had been vested by regulations that have the force and effect of law and that had received the explicit concurrence of the President. The court noted the "unique guarantee of unfettered operation" given to the Special Prosecutor and emphasized that under these regulations the Special Prosecutor's jurisdiction, which includes express authority to contest claims of executive privilege, cannot be limited without the President's first consulting

[17] By order entered on June 7, 1974, the district court rescinded its orders sealing portions of the record. On June 15, 1974, this Court denied a motion to unseal the record except as it related to an extract concerning the grand jury's finding with respect to the President.

with the leaders of both Houses of Congress and the respective Committees on the Judiciary and securing their consensus (Pet. App. 18–19). In these circumstances, the court found that there exists sufficient independence to provide the court with a concrete legal controversy between adverse parties and not simply an intra-agency dispute over policy. Moreover, the court later noted that as a recipient of a subpoena in this criminal case, the President "as a practical matter, is a third party" (Pet. App. 19).

On the merits, and relying on the *en banc* decision in *Nixon* v. *Sirica, supra,* the district court held that in the circumstances of this case, the courts, and not the President, are the final arbiter of the applicability of a claim of executive privilege for the subpoenaed items (Pet. App. 17). Here, the court ruled, the presumptive privilege for documents and materials reflecting executive deliberations was overcome by the Special Prosecutor's *prima facie* showing that the items are relevant and important to the issues to be tried in the Watergate cover-up case and that they will be admissible in evidence (Pet. App. 20–21).[18]

Finally, the district court held that the Special Prosecutor, in his memorandum and appendix submitted to the court, satisfied the requirements of Rule 17(c) that the subpoenaed items be relevant and evidentiary (Pet. App. 19–20).

[18] As to claims by defendants that they are entitled to the subpoenaed items under Rule 17(c), the court withheld ruling, stating that defendants' requests for access will be more appropriately considered in conjunction with their pre-trial discovery motions (Pet. App. 21–22). Accordingly, the court refused to decide whether *Brady* v. *Maryland*, 373 U.S. 83, applies to "privileged" evidence not in the possession of the prosecutor.

The President has sought review of this decision in the court of appeals, and the case is now before this court on writs of certiorari before judgment granted on May 31, 1974, and June 15, 1974, on the petition of the United States and the cross-petition of the President, respectively.

SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

The narrow issue presented to this Court is whether the President, in a pending prosecution against his former aides and associates being conducted in the name of the United States by a Special Prosecutor not subject to Presidential directions, may withhold material evidence from the court merely on his assertion that the evidence involves confidential governmental deliberations. The Court clearly has jurisdiction to decide this issue. The pending criminal prosecution in which the subpoena *duces tecum* was issued constitutes a "case or controversy," and the federal courts naturally have the duty and, therefore, the power to determine what evidence is admissible in that prosecution and to require that that evidence be produced. This is only a specific application of the general but fundamental principle of our constitutional system of government that the courts, as the "neutral" branch of government, have been allocated the responsibility to resolve all issues in a controversy properly before them, even though this requires them to determine authoritatively the powers and responsibilities of the other branches.

Any notion that this controversy, arising as it does from the issuance of a subpoena *duces tecum* to the

President at the request of the Special Prosecutor, is not justiciable is wholly illusory. In the context of the most concrete and vital kind of case—the federal criminal prosecution of former White House officials—the Special Prosecutor, as the attorney for the United States, has resorted to a traditional mechanism to procure evidence for the government's case at trial. In objecting to the enforcement of the subpoena, the President has raised a classic question of law—a claim of privilege—and the United States, through its counsel and in its sovereign capacity, is opposing that claim. Thus, viewed in practical terms, it would be hard to imagine a controversy more appropriate for judicial resolution.

The fact that this concrete controversy is presented in the context of a dispute between the President and the Special Prosecutor does not deprive this Court of jurisdiction. Congress has vested in the Attorney General, as the head of the Department of Justice, the exclusive authority to conduct the government's civil and criminal litigation, including the exclusive authority for securing evidence. The Attorney General, with the explicit concurrence of the President, has vested that authority with respect to Watergate matters in the Special Prosecutor. These regulations have the force and effect of law and establish the functional independence of the Special Prosecutor. Accordingly, the Special Prosecutor, representing the sovereign authority of the United States, and the President appear before the Court as adverse parties in the truest sense. The President himself has ceded any

power that he might have had to control the course of the pending prosecution, and it would stand the Constitution on its head to say that this arrangement, if respected and given effect by the courts, violates the "separation of powers."

I

Throughout our constitutional history the courts, in cases or controversies before them, consistently have exercised final authority to determine whether even the highest executive officials are acting in accordance with the Constitution. In fulfilling this basic constitutional function, they have issued appropriate decrees to implement those judicial decisions. The courts have not abjured this responsibility even when the most pressing needs of the Nation were at issue.

In applying this fundamental principle, the courts have determined for themselves not only what evidence is admissible in a pending case, but also what evidence must be produced, including whether particular materials are appropriately subject to a claim of executive privilege. Indeed, this Court has squarely rejected the claim that the Executive has absolute, unreviewable discretion to withhold documents from the courts.

The unbroken line of precedent establishing that the courts have the final authority for determining the applicability and scope of claims of executive privilege is supported by compelling arguments of policy. The Executive's legitimate interests in secrecy are more than adequately protected by the qualified privilege defined and applied by the courts. But as

this Court has recognized, an absolute privilege which permitted the Executive to make a binding determination would lead to intolerable abuse. This case highlights the inherent conflict of interest that is presented when the Executive is called upon to produce evidence in a case which calls into question the Executive's own action. The President cannot be a proper judge of whether the greater public interest lies in disclosing evidence subpoenaed for trial, when that evidence may have a material bearing on whether he is impeached and will bear heavily on the guilt or innocence of close aides and trusted advisors.

In the framework of this case, where the privilege holder is effectively a third party, the interests of justice as well as the interests of the parties to the pending prosecution require that the courts enter a decree requiring that relevant and unprivileged evidence be produced. The "produce or dismiss" option that is sometimes allowed to the Executive when a claim of executive privilege is overruled merely reflects a remedial accommodation of the requirements of substantive justice and thus has never been available to the Executive where the option could not satisfy these requirements. This is particularly true where the option would make a travesty out of the independent institution of the Special Prosecutor by allowing the President to accomplish indirectly what he cannot do directly—secure the abandonment of the Watergate prosecution.

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II

There is nothing in the status of the President that deprives the courts of their constitutional power to resolve this dispute. The power to issue and enforce a subpoena *duces tecum* against the President was first recognized by Chief Justice Marshall in the *Burr* case in 1807, in accordance with two fundamental principles of our constitutional system: First, the President, like all executive officials as well as the humblest private citizens, is subject to the rule of law. Indeed, this follows inexorably from his constitutional duty to "take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed." Second, in the full and impartial administration of justice, the public has a right to every man's evidence. The persistent refusal of the courts to afford the President an absolute immunity from judicial process is fully supported by the deliberate decision of the Framers to deny him such a privilege.

Although it would be improper for the courts to control the exercise of the President's constitutional discretion, there can be no doubt that the President is subject to a judicial order requiring compliance with a clearly defined legal duty. The crucial jurisdictional factor is not the President's office, or the physical power to secure compliance with judicial orders, but the Court's ability to resolve authoritatively, within the context of a justiciable controversy, the conflicting claims of legal rights and obligations. The Court is called upon here to adjudicate the obligation of the President, as a citizen of the United States, to cooperate with a criminal prosecution by

performing the solely ministerial task of producing specified, unprivileged evidence that he has taken within his sole personal custody.

III

The qualified executive privilege for confidential intra-governmental deliberations, designed to promote the candid interchange between officials and their aides, exists only to protect the legitimate functioning of government. Thus, the privilege must give way where, as here, it has been abused. There has been a *prima facie* showing that each of the participants in the subpoenaed conversations, including the President, was a member of the conspiracy to defraud the United States and to obstruct justice charged in the indictment in the present case, and a further showing that each of the conversations occurred in the course of and in furtherance of the conspiracy. The public purpose underlying the executive privilege for governmental deliberations precludes its application to shield alleged criminality.

But even if a presumptive privilege were to be recognized in this case, the privilege cannot be sustained in the face of the compelling public interest in disclosure. The responsibility of the courts in passing on a claim of executive privilege is, in the first instance, to determine whether the party demanding the evidence has made a *prima facie* showing of a sufficient need to offset the presumptive validity of the Executive's claim. The cases have held that the balance should be struck in favor of disclosure only if the showing of need is strong and clear, leaving the courts

with a firm conviction that the public interest requires disclosure.

It is difficult to imagine any case where the balance could be clearer than it is on the special facts of this proceeding. The recordings sought are specifically identified, and the relevance of each conversation to the needs of trial has been established at length. The conversations are demonstrably important to defining the extent of the conspiracy in terms of time, membership and objectives. On the other hand, since the President has authorized each participant to discuss what he and the others have said, and since he repeatedly has summarized his views of the conversations, while releasing partial transcripts of a number of them, the public interest in continued confidentiality is vastly diminished.

The district court's ruling is exceedingly narrow and, thus, almost no incremental damage will be done to the valid interests in assuring future Presidential aides that legitimate advice on matters of policy will be kept secret. The unusual circumstances of this case—where high government officials are under indictment for conspiracy to defraud the United States and obstruct justice—at once make it imperative that the trial be conducted on the basis of all relevant evidence and at the same time make it highly unlikely that there will soon be a similar occasion to intrude on the confidentiality of the Executive Branch.

IV

Even if the subpoenaed conversations might once have been covered by a privilege, the privilege has been waived by the President's decision to authorize volu-

minous testimony and other statements concerning Watergate-related discussion and his recent release of 1,216 pages of transcript from forty-three Presidential conversations dealing with Watergate. A privilege holder may not make extensive disclosures concerning a subject and then selectively withhold portions that are essential to a complete and impartial record. Here, the President repeatedly has referred to the conversations in support of his own position and even allowed defendant Haldeman access to the recordings after he left public office to aid him in preparing his public testimony. In the unique circumstances of this case, where there is no longer any substantial confidentiality on the subject of Watergate because the President has made far-reaching, but expurgated disclosures, the court may use its process to acquire all relevant evidence to lay before the jury.

V

The district court, correctly applying the standards established by this Court, found that the government's showing satisfied the requirements of Rule 17(c) of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure that items subpoenaed for use at trial be relevant and evidentiary. The enforcement of a trial subpoena *duces tecum* is a question for the trial court and is committed to the court's sound discretion. Absent a showing that the finding by the court is arbitrary and had no support in the record, the finding must not be disturbed by an appellete court. Here, the Special Prosecutor's analysis of each of the sixty-four conversations, sub-

mitted to the district court, amply supports that court's finding.

ARGUMENT

INTRODUCTION: THE ISSUES BEFORE THE COURT PRESENT A LIVE, CONCRETE JUSTICIABLE CONTROVERSY

In the district court, counsel for the President, in a sealed reply to the government's papers opposing the motion to quash, raised for the first time the contention that the court lacked "jurisdiction to consider the Special Prosecutor's request of April 16, 1974, relating to the disclosure of certain presidential documents." Counsel was referring to the trial subpoena applied for by the Special Prosecutor on behalf of the United States (Pet. App. 39) and issued by the district court on April 18, 1974 (Pet. App. 47). It was that subpoena that the President moved to quash. The basis for the President's contention that the court lacked jurisdiction to "consider" that "request" for evidence was the assertion that the subpoena involved merely a "dispute between two entities within the Executive Branch."

The district court rejected this contention, ruling that under the circumstances established by applicable statutes and regulations, the President's "attempt to abridge the Special Prosecutor's independence with the argument that he cannot seek evidence from the President by court process is a nullity and does not defeat the Court's jurisdiction" (Pet. App. 19). Before addressing the issues before this Court on the merits, we pause to express the reasons why this litigation

between the United States, represented by the Special Prosecutor, and the President presents a live, concrete, justiciable controversy.

A. THIS CASE COMES WITHIN THE JUDICIAL POWER OF THE FEDERAL COURTS

This litigation is not merely a dispute between two executive officers over preferred policy, or even over an interpretation of a statute. The courts have not been called upon to render an advisory opinion upon some abstract or theoretical question. Rather, in the context of the most concrete and vital kind of case—the federal criminal prosecution of former White House officials, styled *United States* v. *Mitchell, et al.*—the Special Prosecutor as the attorney for the United States has resorted to a traditional mechanism to procure evidence for the government's case at trial—a subpoena—in the face of the unwillingness of a distinct party or entity—the President—to furnish the evidence voluntarily. In objecting to the enforcement of the subpoena, the President has raised a classic question of law—a claim of privilege—and the United States, through its counsel, is opposing that claim. Thus, viewed in practical terms, it would be hard to imagine a controversy more appropriate for judicial resolution and more squarely within the jurisdiction of the federal courts. This Court is called upon to review questions that are well "within the traditional role accorded courts to interpret the law." *Powell* v. *McCormack,* 395 U.S. 486, 548; see, *e.g., Roviaro* v. *United States,* 353 U.S. 53; *United States* v. *Reynolds,* 345 U.S. 1.

Ever since *Marbury* v. *Madison,* 1 Cranch (5 U.S.) 137, it has been settled that, as long as a federal court is properly vested with subject-matter jurisdiction,[19] it has the judicial power to render an authoritative, binding decision on the rights, powers, and duties of the other two branches of government. See, *e.g., Youngstown Sheet & Tube Co.* v. *Sawyer,* 343 U.S. 579; *United States* v. *United States District Court,* 407 U.S. 297; *Kendall* v. *United States ex rel. Stokes,* 12 Pet. (37 U.S.) 524; *Kilbourn* v. *Thompson,* 103 U.S. 168; *Doe* v. *McMillan,* 412 U.S. 306. This judicial power extends fully to disputes between representatives of the other two branches, *e.g., United States* v. *Brewster,* 408 U.S. 501; *Gravel* v. *United States,* 408 U.S. 606; *Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities* v. *Nixon,* —— F. 2d —— (D.C. Cir. No. 74–1258) (May 23, 1974), as well as to disputes within one of those other branches, *e.g., Powell* v. *McCormack, supra; Service* v. *Dulles,* 354 U.S. 363; *Sampson* v. *Murray,* —— U.S. —— (42 U.S.L.W. 4221, February 19, 1974).

As we shall discuss below, the fact that the President and the Special Prosecutor (on behalf of the United States) are the legal adversaries in this phase of the controversy in no way undermines the existence of the judicial power to adjudicate the legal rights and duties at issue—namely, the existence *vel non* of

[19] The district court's subject-matter jurisdiction over the pending criminal case and over the trial subpoena *duces tecum* issued in this case is clear. See 18 U.S.C. 3231; Rule 17, Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure.

a privilege to withhold evidence from a criminal trial pending in the federal court.

B. THE UNITED STATES, REPRESENTED BY THE SPECIAL PROSECUTOR, IS A PARTY DISTINCT FROM THE PRESIDENT

We begin by making the fundamental point, overlooked by counsel for the President, that federal criminal prosecutions are brought in the name of the United States of America as a sovereign nation. Despite his extensive powers and even his status as Chief Executive and Chief of State, the President, whether in his personal capacity or his official capacity, is distinct from the United States and is decidedly *not* the sovereign. Although the Constitution vests the executive power generally in the President (Art. II, Sec. 1), it expressly contemplates the establishment of executive departments which will actually discharge the executive power, with the President's function necessarily limited to "take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed" by other officers of the government (Art. II, Sec. 3). Thus, Article II, Section 2 expressly provides that, instead of giving the President power to appoint (and, perhaps, remove) "inferior Officers" of the Executive Branch, "Congress may by Law vest the Appointment of such inferior Officers, as they think proper, * * * in the Courts of Law, or in the Heads of Departments."

Congress has organized the Department of Justice and provided that the Attorney General is its head. 28 U.S.C. 501, 503. Under Article II, Section 2, Congress has vested in him alone the power to appoint subordinate officers to discharge his powers. 28 U.S.C.

509, 510, 515, 533. Among the responsibilities given by Congress to the Attorney General is the authority to conduct the government's civil and criminal litigation (28 U.S.C. 516):

> Except as otherwise authorized by law, the conduct of litigation *in which the United States,* an agency, or officer thereof *is a party,* or is interested, *and securing evidence therefor,* is reserved to officers of the Department of Justice, under the direction of the Attorney General. (Emphasis added.)

As this Court has recognized, this section and companion provisions, see 28 U.S.C. 515–519, "impose on the Attorney General the authority and the duty to protect the Government's interests through the courts." *United States* v. *California,* 332 U.S. 19, 27–28. Under this framework it is not the President who has personal charge of the conduct of the government's affairs in court but, rather, it is the Attorney General acting through the officers of the Department of Justice appointed by him. This Court underscored the special status of the officers of the Department of Justice before the courts in *Berger* v. *United States,* 295 U.S. 78, 88, explaining that the federal prosecutor "is the representative not of an ordinary party to a controversy, but of a sovereignty. * * * As such, he is in a peculiar and a very definite sense the servant of the law, the twofold aim of which is that guilt shall not escape or innocence suffer."

Thus, as the district judge below pointedly recognized (Pet. App. 19), the subpoena *duces tecum* issued

by the prosecution to the President is directed to a person who "as a practical matter, is a third party." [20]

It was in the capacity as attorney for the United States that the Special Prosecutor invoked the judicial process. Exercising his exclusive authority under 28 U.S.C. 516 to secure evidence for a pending criminal prosecution within his jurisdiction, the Special Prosecutor is seeking evidence from an adverse party—evidence which the Special Prosecutor has reason to believe is highly material to the trial. Under the law, the Special Prosecutor speaks for the United States in conducting this criminal trial, and under the applicable statutes and regulations he has authority, which can be enforced by the courts, to seek evidence even from the President. Not only is this authority expressly included in the Department of Justice regulations defining his powers (Appendix pp. 146–50, *infra*), but the record shows that the President personally acceded to the arrangement whereby his asser-

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[20] District Judge Gesell, who is presiding over the trial in *United States* v. *Ehrlichman, et al.* (D.D.C. Crim. No. 74–116), which involves charges against former White House officials growing out of the break-in at the offices of Dr. Louis Fielding, Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist, has recognized the independent status of the Special Prosecutor and the peculiar and unique circumstances that surround prosecutions within his jurisdiction:

"In one view of the matter, one portion of the Government is prosecuting another portion of the Government. Thus perhaps very unique circumstances are presented that require trial judges to use common sense to adapt criminal procedures and rules developed under more routine circumstances to the peculiar necessities of this special situation."

Transcript of Hearing on June 3, 1974, at 7–8, *United States* v. *Ehrlichman, et al, supra.*

tion of privilege would not preclude the Special Prosecutor, in a proper case, from invoking the judicial process to litigate the validity of the claim.

Before agreeing to accept appointment as the new Special Prosecutor, Mr. Jaworski obtained an assurance from the President's chief of staff, General Alexander Haig, who had conferred with the President, that there would be no bar to his resorting to judicial process, if necessary, to fulfill his responsibilities as he viewed them.[21] The Acting Attorney General, who appointed the Special Prosecutor, was fully apprised

[21] Mr. Jaworski testified as follows, under oath, before the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, which was considering legislation concerning establishment of an independent Special Prosecutor's office:

"* * * And when I came to Washington I first met with General Haig for probably an hour or an hour and a half, during which time this matter was discussed in detail. And as a result of that discussion, there eventuated the arrangement that we have mentioned.

"General Haig assured me that he would go and talk with the President, place the matter before him. And he came back and told me after a while, after maybe a lapse of 30 minutes or so, that it had been done, and that the President had agreed.

"The CHAIRMAN. You are absolutely free to prosecute anyone; is that correct?

"Mr. JAWORSKI. That is correct. And that is my intention.

"The CHAIRMAN. And that includes the President of the United States?

"Mr. JAWORSKI. It includes the President of the United States.

* * * * *

"Senator MCCLELLAN. May I ask you now, do you feel that with your understanding with the White House that you do have the right, irrespective of the legal issues that may be involved—that you have an understanding with them that gives you the right to go to court if you determine that they have documents you want or materials that you feel are essential and necessary in the performance of your duties, and in con-

of the understanding. He testified as follows before the Senate Judiciary Committee:

> Although it is anticipated that Mr. Jaworski will receive cooperation from the White House in getting any evidence he feels he needs to conduct investigations and prosecutions, it is clear and understood on all sides that *he has the power to use judicial processes to pursue evidence if disagreement should develop.* (Emphasis added.) [22]

He also assured the House Subcommittee on Criminal Justice: "I understand and it is clear to me that Mr. Jaworski can go to court and test out" any refusal to produce documents on the ground of confidentiality.[23]

Similarly, the President's nominee to be Attorney General, William Saxbe, testified that the Special Prosecutor would have "sole discretion" in deciding whether to contest an assertion of executive privilege by the President and stated "he can go to court at any time to determine that." [24] Significantly, neither the

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ducting a thorough investigation and following up with prosecution thereon, *you have the right to go to court to raise the issue against the President and against any of his staff with respect to such documents or materials and to contest the question of privilege.*

"Mr. JAWORSKI. *I have been assured that right.* And I intend to exercise it if necessary." (Emphasis added.)
Hearings Before the Senate Judiciary Committee on the Special Prosecutor, 93d Cong., 1st Sess., pt. 2, at 571, 573 (1973).

[22] *Id.*, at 450. See also *id.*, at 470.

[23] *Hearings Before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Criminal Justice on H.J. Res. 784 and H.R. 10937*, 93d Cong., 1st Sess. 266 (1973).

[24] *Hearings Before the Senate Judiciary Committee on the Nomination of William B. Saxbe to be Attorney General*, 93d Cong., 1st Sess. 9 (1973).

President, nor his counsel, nor Acting Attorney General Bork has ever disavowed the assurances given. In fact, in announcing the appointment of a new Special Prosecutor on October 26, 1973, President Nixon stated (9 Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents (Oct. 29, 1973)):

> And I can assure you ladies and gentlemen, and all our listeners tonight, that I have no greater interest than to see that the new special prosecutor has the cooperation from the executive branch *and the independence that he needs to* bring about that conclusion [of the Watergate investigation]. (Emphasis added.)

The regulations governing the Special Prosecutor's jurisdiction and independence, together with the Presidential assurances given to the public directly and to the Special Prosecutor through General Haig, reflect the public demand for an independent prosecutor not subject to the direct or indirect control of the President and not dependent upon the discretion of the President for access to information upon which to base investigations and prosecutions.[25] From the first, the regulations establishing and then reestablishing the Office of the Watergate Special Prosecution Force[26] have had the force and effect of law, *e.g.*,

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[25] After the appointment of the new Special Prosecutor with these assurances of independent authority, *inter alia*, to contest in court any Presidential claims of executive privilege, both Houses of Congress tabled bills that would have provided for court appointment of a Special Prosecutor pursuant to Article II, Section 2. See note 13, *supra*.

[26] The authority of the Attorney General to issue the regulations is conferred by 28 U.S.C. §§ 509, 510 and 5 U.S.C. § 301. The legality of these regulations delegating the authority of the

Vitarelli v. *Seaton,* 359 U.S. 535; *Service* v. *Dulles, supra; Accardi* v. *Shaughnessy,* 347 U.S. 260; *Nader* v. *Bork, supra,* and empower the Special Prosecutor to contest the assertion of executive privilege in any case within his jurisdiction when he, not the President, concludes the assertion is unwarranted. See *Accardi* v. *Shaughnessy, supra,* 347 U.S. at 266–67.

This Court has held that, by virtue of their office, public officials necessarily have a sufficient "personal stake in the outcome" of any litigation that challenges the performance of their duties on constitutional grounds. See, *e.g., Board of Education* v. *Allen,* 392 U.S. 236, 241 n. 5; *Coleman* v. *Miller,* 307 U.S. 433, 437–45. It follows, therefore, that under applicable statutes and regulations the Special Prosecutor has standing to take all necessary steps in court to promote the conduct of the cases under his jurisdiction, including the litigation of claims of "executive privilege" advanced as a reason for withholding evidence considered important to one of those prosecutions.

C. THE SPECIAL PROSECUTOR HAS AUTHORITY TO SEEK, AND THE FEDERAL COURTS HAVE POWER TO GRANT, A PRODUCTION ORDER ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT EVEN THOUGH THE SPECIAL PROSECUTOR IS A MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

What has been shown above makes clear the authority of the Special Prosecutor to bring such prosecutions as are within his jurisdiction and to seek court

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Attorney General has been sustained in *Nader* v. *Bork, supra*; *United States* v. *Andreas,* — F. Supp. — (D. Minn. No. 4–73–Cr. 201) (March 12, 1974); *United States* v. *Ehrlichman,* — F. Supp. — (D.D.C. Crim. No. 74–116) (May 21, 1974).

orders for the production of such evidence as is necessary to the litigation. We have shown that, in so discharging his duties, the Special Prosecutor does not act as the mere agent-at-will of the President. He enjoys an independent authority derived from constitutional delegations of authority by the Congress to the Attorney General and from the Attorney General to him under valid regulations that reflect the solemn commitments of the President himself.

Since the Special Prosecutor has authority to bring prosecutions and to seek production of evidence and does not take such actions in the President's name or at his behest, and since, as we show in Part II of our argument below, the President can, in an appropriate case, be ordered to produce evidence, there would seem to be no obstacle to the Special Prosecutor's seeking an order that the President produce evidence. The proceedings surrounding such an order constitute a justiciable controversy whether or not the President could, through a complicated series of steps, lawfully replace the Special Prosecutor and despite the somewhat unusual appearance on opposite sides of two parties both of whom are members of the Executive Branch.

1. Whatever power the President may have to circumvent an adverse ruling by taking steps to abrogate the Special Prosecutor's independence cannot serve to render the controversy nonjusticiable

The mere fact that the President is Chief Executive, with ultimate responsibility to "take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed," does not destroy the Special Prosecutor's independence or standing to sue.

Whatever might be the situation in a proceeding conducted by a mere agent of the President, the Special Prosecutor's functional and legal independence empowers him, on behalf of the United States, to seek a subpoena against the President for evidence.

Congress frequently confers powers and duties upon subordinate executive officials, and in such situations the President's function as Chief Executive does not authorize him to displace the designated officer and to act directly in the matter himself. As long as the officer holds his position, the power to act under the law is his alone. A familiar example of this basic principle was illustrated by President Andrew Jackson's legendary battle over the Bank of the United States. Two Secretaries of the Treasury refused to obey the President's command to withdraw deposits from the Bank, a function entrusted to the Secretary by law. The President's only recourse was to seek a third, who complied with Jackson's wish. See generally Van Deusen, *The Jacksonian Era,* 1828–1848, pp. 80–82 (1959). Attorney General Roger Taney gave a similar opinion to President Jackson, advising him that as long as a particular United States Attorney remained in office, he was empowered to conduct a particular litigation as he saw fit, despite the wishes of the President. See 2 Op. Att'y Gen. 482 (1831).

More recently, President Nixon apparently recognized a similar limitation on his powers as Chief Executive when, in order to effect the discharge of the former Special Prosecutor over the refusal of Attorney General Richardson and Deputy Attorney General Ruckelshaus to dismiss him, the President had to pro-

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cure the removal of those officials and rest upon Acting Attorney General Bork's exercise of their power.

These principles, considered in light of the authority of the Special Prosecutor reviewed above, establish that, short of finding some way to accomplish the removal of the Special Prosecutor, the President has no legal right or power to limit or direct his actions in bringing prosecutions or in seeking the evidence needed for these prosecutions. Any effort to interefere in the Special Prosecutor's decisions is inadmissible and any order would be without legal effect so long as the Attorney General has not effectively rescinded the regulations creating and guaranteeing the Special Prosecutor's independence—a course he may be legally barred from taking without the Special Prosecutor's consent, see *Nader* v. *Bork, supra,* 366 F. Supp. at 108. Even then any order would have to come from the Attorney General to satisfy statutory requirements.

The President is bound by duly promulgated regulations even where he has power to amend them for the future. *Accardi* v. *Shaughnessy,* 347 U.S. at 266–67. It is even clearer in the present situation that regulations and statutes which he has no power to modify prevent him from assuming direction of the Watergate prosecutions. Thus, there can be no argument that a case or controversy is lacking because the President could dismiss the prosecution or withdraw the subpoena even if he so desired.

Nor is any valid objection to the concrete reality of this dispute furnished by the hypothesis, *arguendo,* that the President could nullify any adverse ruling by

procuring the dismissal of the Special Prosecutor and finding another prosecutor who would not enforce the Court's decision. A similar argument was rejected well over a century ago. In *Kendall* v. *United States ex rel. Stokes,* 12 Pet. (37 U.S.) 524, it was argued that the Judiciary lacked power to issue a mandamus requiring the Postmaster General to credit a sum of money to a contractor on the ground that the President would frustrate performance of the decree by discharging the respondent and appointing a new Postmaster General. The Court rejected the argument and granted mandamus. The federal courts have continued to resolve legal controversies despite the theoretical power of one of the parties to avoid the impact of the judgment by lawful means. See, *e.g., Glidden Co.* v. *Zdanok,* 370 U.S. 530.

The same argument against jurisdiction fails in the present case, not only on the basis of precedent, but for three other reasons as well.

First, in the present situation, the President does not have the power to remove the Special Prosecutor and to appoint a replacement more to his liking. Under Article II, Section 2 of the Constitution, Congress has vested appointment of officers of the Department of Justice, like the Special Prosecutor, in the Attorney General, not the President.[27] And the

[27] The locus of the appointment power may also fix the authority to remove, *United States* v. *Perkins*, 116 U.S. 483, although the removal power itself is not absolute. *Humphrey's Executor* v. *United States*, 295 U.S. 602; *Wiener* v. *United States*, 357 U.S. 349; *Myers* v. *United States*, 272 U.S. 52.

President explicitly has ceded any right and power he may have to restrict the independence of the Special Prosecutor or effect his discharge by agreeing to the issuance of regulations precluding such action unless the "consensus" of eight specified Congressional officials concurs in that course. The regulations establishing this condition precedent to any action by the President have the force of law, and the Special Prosecutor thus stands before the Court independent of any direct control by the Attorney General or the President. In short, the present regulations governing the Special Prosecutor's tenure and independence are even more restrictive of the residual authority of the President and the Attorney General than were the regulations that were held in *Nader* v. *Bork, supra,* to have been violated by the dismissal of Special Prosecutor Cox.[28]

Second, even the dismissal of the Special Prosecutor would not nullify a ruling that the evidence must be produced, since the Attorney General and the Solicitor General, as officers of this Court, would be legally

[28] The regulations also provide that the Special Prosecutor's office will not be abolished without the consent of the Special Prosecutor and that the Attorney General will not countermand any decisions of the Special Prosecutor (see Appendix pp. 149, 151, *infra*). Judge Gesell in *Nader* v. *Bork*, *supra*, 336 F. Supp. at 108, indicated that those guarantees are legally binding and not unilaterally revocable.

This Court has recognized, of course, that the President's power to remove subordinate officers of the government, even those in the Executive Branch, is not unlimited, and may be non-existent when the executive official exercises some "duties of a quasi-judicial character." *Myers* v. *United States*, *supra*, 272 U.S. at 135. See also *Humphrey's Executor* v. *United States*, *supra; Wiener* v. *United States*, *supra.*

obliged to attend to the proper enforcement of a decree by the Court, particularly one in favor of the United States. See *United States* v. *Shipp,* 203 U.S. 563; *United States* v. *Shipp,* 214 U.S. 386 (proceedings for criminal contempt initiated and conducted before this Court by Attorney General for defiance of Court's order); 28 U.S.C. 518(a).

Third, the speculative possibility that something might occur in the future cannot render a presently live controversy moot, when it is hardly inevitable that the Court's decision will be ineffective. Compare *DeFunis* v. *Odegaard,* —— U.S. —— (42 U.S.L.W. 4578, April 23, 1974). Just as "voluntary cessation of allegedly illegal conduct does not deprive the tribunal of power to hear and determine the case, *i.e.,* does not make the case moot," *United States* v. *W.T. Grant Co.,* 345 U.S. 629, 632, it follows *a fortiori* that the hypothetical—and possibly illegal—dismissal of the Special Prosecutor after a decision in his favor by this Court cannot render the present case moot. As this Court noted earlier this Term in rejecting a mootness claim involving a challenge to state welfare benefits to striking workers where the particular strike had ended: "The judiciary must not close the door to the resolution of the important questions these concrete disputes present." *Super Tire Engineering Co.* v. *McCorkle,* —— U.S. ——(42 U.S.L.W. 4507, 4511, April 16, 1974). In the present case, the precise controversy is still very much alive, and the President has not even threatened to attempt to defeat an adverse ruling by effecting the dismissal of the Special Prosecutor.

2. There is no lack of a true case or controversy because the opposing parties are both members of the Executive Branch

In the present matter, there can be no serious contention that this is a feigned or collusive suit or an abstract or speculative debate; the issues are sharply drawn over the production or nonproduction of specific evidence for a pending criminal trial, and the litigants—the United States and President Nixon—have manifestly concrete but antagonistic interests in the outcome, for if the subpoenaed materials are ordered produced the United States can proceed to trial in a major criminal case armed with important evidence, while a contrary decision would leave President Nixon in absolute control over those materials and thereby weaken the government's case against his former aides, whom he has publicly supported in this criminal investigation (see pp. 59–60, *infra*).

Thus, we submit that it is clear beyond peradventure that the Special Prosecutor, as the exclusively authorized attorney for the United States—the prosecuting sovereign in the pending criminal case of *United States* v. *Mitchell, et al.,* for which the instant trial subpoena was issued—has standing to seek enforcement of the subpoena, for the prosecution has "such a personal stake in the outcome of the controversy as to assure that concrete adverseness which sharpens the presentation of issues upon which the court so largely depends for illumination of difficult constitutional questions." *Baker* v. *Carr,* 369 U.S. 186, 204. See also *Flast* v. *Cohen,* 392 U.S. 83, 98–100.

Framing this controversy as a mere "intra-executive branch" dispute, as counsel for the President did

below, seems to invoke the sterile conceptualism, long ago discarded, that since "no person may sue himself," suits between government officials cannot be maintained. As this Court said when it rejected such an argument in *United States* v. *ICC,* 337 U.S. 426, 430, "courts must look behind names that symbolize the parties to determine whether a justiciable case or controversy is presented."[29] See also *Secretary of Agriculture* v. *United States,* 350 U.S. 162. This practical approach was underscored only this Term, when the Court noted probable jurisdiction and heard argument in two cases in which the United States, represented by the Justice Department, was appealing from two separate district court decisions dismissing the government's complaints attacking bank mergers under Section 7 of the Clayton Act. *United States* v. *Marine Bancorporation, Inc.,* No. 73–38; *United States* v. *Connecticut National Bank,* No. 73–767. The Comptroller of the Currency has responsibility for administering the Bank Merger Act and the National Bank Act, and in each case the Comptroller had approved a merger challenged by the Department of Justice under the Clayton Act. In each case the Comptroller of the Currency, an official of the Treasury Department, 12 U.S.C. § 1, 2, was named as an appellee and filed a brief in opposition to the position

[29] Judge Holtzoff had held that the suit there had to be dismissed because "the United States of America always acts in a sovereign capacity. It does not have separate governmental and proprietary capacities." *United States* v. *ICC*, 78 F. Supp. 580, 583 (D.D.C. 1948). This Court reversed.

taken by the Solicitor General on behalf of the Department of Justice. Although such litigation is relatively rare and typically involves disputes between an executive department and a "quasi-independent" regulatory agency, there is nothing in the "case or controversy" requirement of Article III that denies the federal courts the power to adjudicate concrete controversies between government officials over their respective legal powers and duties, see *e.g., Powell* v. *McCormack, supra,* particularly when—as in the present case—the resolution of the legal controversy has direct consequences upon them and private parties.

We do not suggest, of course, that the President or the Department of Justice could confer jurisdiction on the courts where such jurisdiction is constitutionally impermissible. What we do argue, however, is that the Court must look beyond the President's formalistic objections to the Court's jurisdiction, based as they are on a talismanic incantation of the "intra-executive" nature of the proceeding. By pointing to the mere formality of the Special Prosecutor's status as an executive officer, counsel to the President ignores the substantive concern underlying the "case or controversy" requirement of Article III. A proceeding is justiciable if it presents live, concrete issues between adverse parties that are susceptible of adjudication. See, *e.g., O'Shea* v. *Littleton,* —— U.S. —— (42 U.S.L.W. 4139, January 15, 1974); *United States* v. *SCRAP,* 412 U.S. 669, 687; *Flast* v. *Cohen,* 392 U.S. 83, 94–101; *Baker* v. *Carr,* 369 U.S. 186, 204. And it is against these standards that the Court must resolve the objections to its jurisdiction.

Although counsel for the President has argued that somehow the "separation of powers" principle denies to the federal courts the power to decide this controversy between the President and the prosecution in *United States* v. *Mitchell,* this argument will not withstand analysis. The inescapable irony of the President's position can only be appreciated by focusing on the fact that the regulations creating a Special Prosecutor's office armed with functional independence and with explicit authority to litigate against Presidential claims of privilege do not reflect a statutory regime imposed by the Legislative Branch; these regulations were promulgated with the President's approval by his Attorney General. This, then, is the President's position—not that Congress has unconstitutionally invaded his sphere, but rather that the doctrine of separation of powers forecloses *him* from the ability to control his "own" Executive Branch in such a way as to safeguard public confidence in the integrity of the law enforcement process. The Office of the Watergate Special Prosecution Force was established with the approval of the President as an independent entity within the Department of Justice in response to the public demand for an impartial investigation of charges of criminal misconduct by officials in the Executive Office of the President. After Special Prosecutor Cox's dismissal, the Office was re-established amid a public reaction so severe that it has generated the first serious possibility of a Presidential impeachment in more than a century and made enactment of legislation for a court-appointed

Special Prosecutor almost certain.[30] Perhaps the most important assurance of independence built into the proposed role of the Special Prosecutor, as reflected in congressional testimony [31] as well as public statements by the President and the Attorney General, was his authority to invoke the judicial process to obtain necessary evidence from the President. It simply stands the doctrine of separation of powers on its head to suggest that it precludes the Judiciary from giving full force and effect to the allocation of authority within the Executive Branch under an arrangement that was designed by the Attorney General and approved by the President as indispensible to forestall a further erosion of faith in the Executive Branch.

D. THE SPECULATIVE POSSIBILITY THAT THE PRESIDENT MAY DISREGARD A VALID COURT ORDER DOES NOT DEPRIVE THE COURT OF JURISDICTION

A theme advanced earlier by counsel for the President in opposition to enforcement of a grand jury subpoena *duces tecum* in *Nixon* v. *Sirica* was that the President has "the power and thus the privilege to withhold information." [32] This raw assertion in no way undermines the justiciability of this controversy. The naked power of the Chief Executive, despite a court order, to withhold evidence from a judicial proceeding does not deprive the courts of jurisdiction to

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[30] See note 13, *supra*.

[31] *Hearings Before the Senate Judiciary Committee on the Special Prosecutor*, 93d Cong., 1st Sess., pt. 2, at 571, 573 (1973).

[32] Brief in Opposition p. 3, *In re Grand Jury Subpoena Duces Tecum Issued to Richard M. Nixon*, 360 F. Supp. 1 (D.D.C. 1973).

order its production. To link physical power with legal privilege runs contrary to our entire constitutional tradition. As this Court stated in *Kendall* v. *United States ex rel. Stokes, supra,* 12 Pet. at 613, "[t]o contend that the obligation imposed on the President to see the laws are faithfully executed implies a power to forbid their execution, is a novel construction of the Constitution, and entirely inadmissible." It might as well be said that a Secretary of State, acting upon orders of the President, would have had "the power and thus the privilege" to withhold the signed commission at issue in *Marbury* v. *Madison, supra;* or that a Postmaster General, acting upon instructions of the President, would have had "the power and thus the privilege" to refuse to pay money owed pursuant to a contract, contrary to the decision in *Kendall, supra;* or that the President has "the power and thus the privilege" to seize industrial property in a wartime labor dispute, contrary to *Youngstown Sheet & Tube Co.* v. *Sawyer, supra;* or to conduct warrantless electronic surveillance in domestic security investigations, contrary to the Fourth Amendment as interpreted in *United States* v. *United States District Court, supra.*

This Court has never allowed doubt about its physical power to enforce its commands to deter the issuance of appropriate orders. In *Worcester* v. *Georgia,* 6 Pet. (31 U.S.) 515, counsel strenuously argued that the Court should not order Georgia to surrender jurisdiction over a prisoner seized in Cherokee Indian territory because the President would not and the Court could not force Georgia to obey the judicial command,

but the Court did not abdicate its responsibility to decide the issues. In *McPherson* v. *Blackmer,* 146 U.S. 1, 24, the Court ruled upon the constitutionality of a Michigan statute providing for the choice of Presidential electors by congressional districts despite the argument that the State's political agencies might frustrate the decision, saying:

> The question of the validity of this act, as presented to us by this record, is a judicial question, and we cannot decline the exercise of our jurisdiction upon the inadmissible suggestion that action might be taken by political agencies in disregard of the judgment of the highest tribunal of the state as revised by our own.

Most recently in *Glidden Co.* v. *Zdanok, supra,* the Court rejected the argument that a money claim against the United States did not present a justiciable issue because the courts were without power to force execution of a judgment against the United States: "If this Court may rely on the good faith of state governments or other public bodies to respond to its judgments, there seems to be no sound reason why the Court of Claims may not rely on the good faith of the United States." 370 U.S. at 571.[33] In conformity with this principle, the court of appeals in *Nixon* v. *Sirica* rejected the attempt to equate physical power to disobey with legal immunity from the judicial process itself: "The legality of judicial orders should not be

[33] See also *Powell* v. *McCormack*, *supra*, 395 U.S. at 517–18; *Baker* v. *Carr*, *supra*, 369 U.S. at 208–37; *South Dakota* v. *North Carolina*, 192 U.S. 286, 318–21; *La Abra Silver Mining Co.* v. *United States*, 175 U.S. 423, 461–62.

confused with the legal consequences of their breach; for the courts of this country always assume that their orders will be obeyed, especially when addressed to responsible government officials." *Nixon* v. *Sirica, supra,* 487 F. 2d at 711–12.

The effect of a President's physical power to disobey a court order is wholly speculative at this juncture and undoubtedly will remain so. There is no reason to believe that President Nixon would disregard a decision of this Court fixing legal responsibilities, any more than he did the order of the district court, as modified by the court of appeals in *Nixon* v. *Sirica, supra,* requiring him to submit for *in camera* inspection recordings subpoenaed by the grand jury. In announcing that President Nixon would comply with the mandate in *Nixon* v. *Sirica,* counsel for the President stated in open court: "This President does not defy the law, and he has authorized me to say he will comply in full with the orders of the court." [34]

The Court, therefore, can cast aside as wholly illusory any of the obstacles that may be suggested as barring its exercise of the judicial power of the United States to decide the evidentiary privilege issue interposed in this criminal case. The case is within the jurisdiction of the federal courts and is fully justiciable.

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[34] Transcript of Hearing on October 23, 1973, *In re Grand Jury Subpoena Duces Tecum Issued to Richard M. Nixon, supra,* D.D.C. Misc. No. 47–73.

I. THE COURTS HAVE BOTH THE POWER AND THE DUTY TO DETERMINE THE VALIDITY OF A CLAIM OF EXECUTIVE PRIVILEGE WHEN IT IS ASSERTED IN A JUDICIAL PROCEEDING AS A GROUND FOR REFUSING TO PRODUCE EVIDENCE

A. THE COURTS HAVE THE POWER TO RESOLVE ALL ISSUES IN A CONTROVERSY PROPERLY BEFORE THEM, EVEN THOUGH THIS REQUIRES DETERMINING, AUTHORITATIVELY, THE POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE OTHER BRANCHES

Our basic submission, and the one we suggest controls this case, is a simple one—the courts, in the exercise of their jurisdiction under Article III of the Constitution, have the duty and, therefore, the power to determine all issues necessary to a lawful resolution of controversies properly before them. The duty includes resolving issues as to the admissibility of evidence in a criminal prosecution as well as the obligation to produce such evidence under subpoena. This allocation of responsibility is inherent in the constitutional duty of the federal courts, as the "neutral" branch of government, to decide cases in accordance with the rule of law, and it supports rather than undermines the basic separation of powers conceived by the Constitution.

The principle was clear at the very outset of our constitutional history. Since 1803 there has been no question that in resolving any case or controversy within the jurisdiction of a federal court, "[i]t is emphatically the province and the duty of the judicial department to say what the law is." *Marbury* v. *Madison, supra,* 1 Cranch at 177. See *Powell* v. *McCormack, supra,* 395 U.S. at 521. As *Marbury* v. *Madison* firmly establishes, this is true even though the controversy

before the courts implicates the powers and responsibilities of a co-ordinate branch. In conformity with this principle the courts consistently have exercised final authority to determine whether even the highest executive officials are acting in accordance with the Constitution and have issued appropriate decrees to implement those judicial decisions. *E. g., Youngstown Sheet & Tube Co.* v. *Sawyer, supra* (alleged right of President to authorize the Secretary of Commerce to seize steel mills); *United States* v. *United States District Court, supra* (alleged power of the President, acting through the Attorney General, to authorize electronic surveillance in internal security matters without prior judicial approval); *Kendall* v. *United States ex rel. Stokes, supra* (alleged power of the President, acting through the Postmaster General, to withhold money owed pursuant to a contract); *Land* v. *Dollar,* 190 F. 2d 623 (D.C. Cir. 1951), vacated as moot, 344 U.S. 806 (alleged right of Secretary of Commerce and Acting Attorney General to obey order of President inconsistent with judicial decree; officials adjudicated in civil contempt).

The courts have not retreated from this responsibility even when the most pressing and immediate needs of the Nation were at issue. President Truman directed the Secretary of Commerce to seize and operate specified steel facilities because of his judgment that a threatened work stoppage at the Nation's steel mills during the Korean War "would immediately jeopardize and imperil our national defense." Executive Order No. 10340 (April 8, 1952). Nevertheless, this

Court ruled that the President had exceeded his constitutional powers and upheld a preliminary injunction enjoining the seizure. Justice Jackson's concurring opinion expresses the fundamental principle underlying the Court's decision (343 U.S. at 655):

> With all its defects, delays and inconveniences, men have discovered no technique for long preserving free government except that the Executive be under the law.

Even Justice Frankfurter, one of the most ardent exponents of the separation of powers, who expressed "every desire to avoid judicial inquiry into the powers and duties of the other two branches of government," concurred in the judgment of the Court, albeit "with the utmost unwillingness." He recognized: "To deny inquiry into the President's power in a case like this, because of the damage to the public interest to be feared from upsetting its exercise by him, would in effect always preclude inquiry into challenged power * * *." 343 U.S. at 596.

It is too late in our history to contend that this duty and competence of the Judiciary is inconsistent with the separation of powers, either in general or as applied to questions of evidentiary privilege. As the court of appeals held in *Nixon* v. *Sirica, supra,* 487 F. 2d at 715, such a claim, premised on the contention that the separation of powers prevents the courts from compelling particular action from the President or from reviewing his determinations, mistakes the true nature of our constitutional system. Focusing on the "separation" of functions in our tri-partite sys-

tem of government obscures a crucial point: the exercise by one branch of constitutional powers within its own competence frequently requires action by another branch within its field of powers. Thus, the Legislative Branch has the power to make the laws. Its enactments bind the Judiciary—unless unconstitutional—not only in the decision of cases and controversies, but in the very procedures through which the Judiciary transacts its business.[35] Congress, in scores of statutes, regularly imposes legal duties upon the President.[36] The very essence of his constitutional function is the legal duty to carry out congressional mandates by taking "Care that the Laws be faithfully executed." Finally, the President may require action by the courts. The courts, for example, have a legal duty to give—and do give—effect to valid executive orders.[37] Where the President or an appropriate official institutes a legal action in his own name or that of the United States, a judge is compelled to grant the relief requested if in accordance with law.

We enjoy a well-functioning constitutional government because each branch is independent and yet acknowledges its duties in response to the functioning of others. "Checks and balances were established in order

[35] See, *e.g.*, 28 U.S.C. 2, 44(c), 45, 47, 48, 134(b), 144, 331, 332, 333, 455, 1731–1745, 1826(b), 1863, 2102, 2254(b), 2284(4), 2403; 18 U.S.C. 2519, 3006A, 3331(a), 6003(a), 6005(a).

[36] See, *e.g.*, *National Treasury Employees Union* v. *Nixon*, 492 F. 2d 587, 603 (D.C. Cir. 1974) (holding the President was obliged to submit a federal employee pay increase as required by Congress).

[37] See, *e.g.*, *Environmental Protection Agency* v. *Mink*, 410 U.S. 73 (security classification).

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that this should be a 'government of laws and not of men.' * * * The doctrine of separation of powers was adopted by the Convention of 1787, not to promote efficiency but to preclude the exercise of arbitrary power." *Myers* v. *United States*, 272 U.S. 52, 292–93 (Brandeis, J., dissenting). At the same time, as Mr. Justice Jackson explained in *Youngstown Sheet & Tube Co.* v. *Sawyer, supra*, 343 U.S. at 635 (concurring opinion):

> While the Constitution diffuses power the better to secure liberty, it also contemplates that practice will integrate the dispersed powers into a workable government. It enjoins upon its branches separateness but interdependence, autonomy but reciprocity.

Thus, there is no room to argue that the separation of powers makes each branch an island, alone unto itself. Despite the "separation of powers implications, the separation of powers doctrine has not previously prevented this Court from reviewing the acts" of a coordinate branch of the government when placed in issue in a case within the jurisdiction of the federal courts. *Doe* v. *McMillan, supra,* 412 U.S. at 318 n. 12.

B. THE JUDICIAL POWER TO DETERMINE THE LIMITS OF EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY WHEN NECESSARY TO RESOLVE A JUSTICIABLE CONTROVERSY INCLUDES THE POWER TO RESOLVE CLAIMS OF EXECUTIVE PRIVILEGE MADE WITH REGARD TO EVIDENCE SOUGHT BY THE PROSECUTOR FOR USE IN A PENDING CRIMINAL CASE

In applying the fundamental principle that the Judiciary, and not the Executive, has the ultimate responsibility for interpreting and applying the law in any justiciable case or controversy, the courts con-

sistently have determined for themselves not only what evidence is admissible, but also what evidence must be produced, including whether particular materials are appropriately subject to a claim of executive privilege. This issue, like questions of the constitutionality and meaning of statutes or executive orders, is one of the matters that a court has a duty to resolve authoritatively whenever their resolution is an integral part of the outcome of a case or controversy within the court's jurisdiction.[38]

[38] Because there is no legislative analogy to the historic judicial duty to determine all questions of law necessarily raised by a case or controversy, rejection of the claim of executive privilege in the present case does not necessarily suggest any answer to the distinct questions of the scope of the President's right to stand on a claim of executive privilege *vis-a-vis* the Congress or of the role, if any, of the courts in such a confrontation. History provides a great variety of opinions on the relative rights of the Executive and the Congress in such a situation. See generally Berger, *Executive Privilege v. Congressional Inquiry*, 12 U.C.L.A. L. Rev. 1043, 1078–98 (1965).

The Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit recently affirmed a decision of the district court refusing a declaratory judgment that a subpoena issued to the President by the Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities was valid and enforceable. *Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities* v. *Nixon*, —— F. 2d —— (No. 74–1258) (D.C. Cir. May 23, 1974). By deciding that the Committee's "need" for the subpoenaed recordings was "too attenuated and too tangential to its functions to permit a judicial judgment that the President is required to comply with the Committee's subpoena," thereby reaching the merits of the claim of executive privilege, the court held implicitly that the Committee's action presented a justiciable controversy. Cf. *Powell* v. *McCormack*, *supra*.

At one time it was generally assumed that a claim of executive privilege *vis-a-vis* the Congress presented a nonjusticiable political question. See, *e.g.*, L. Hand, The Bill of Rights 17–18

The question was decided squarely in *United States* v. *Reynolds,* 345 U.S. 1, where the Executive Branch argued that "department heads have power to withhold any documents in their custody from judicial view if they deem it to be in the public interest," 345 U.S. at 6 (footnote omitted)—a position strikingly similar to the one advanced by counsel for the President. The case involved a Tort Claims Act suit arising out of the crash of a B–29 bomber testing secret electronic equipment. The plaintiffs sought discovery of the Air Force's official accident investigation report and the statements of the surviving crew members. Although this Court agreed that an evidentiary privilege covers military secrets, 345 U.S. at 6–7, 11, it held that "[t]he court itself must determine whether the circumstances are appropriate for the claim of privilege * * *. Judicial control over the evidence in a case cannot be abdicated to the caprice of executive officers." 345 U.S. at 8, 9–10 (footnote omitted). See also *Roviaro* v. *United States, supra,* 353 U.S. at 62.

Since the decision in *Reynolds,* every court of appeals that has confronted the question has rejected a claim of absolute executive privilege to withhold evidence merely upon the assertion by the Executive that disclosure would not be in the public interest. The Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, for example, which has had the most frequent occasion to consider and discuss this issue, has noted

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(1958). But no one has ever suggested that an application for an order requiring the Executive Branch to produce evidence in the usual course of judicial or grand jury proceedings presents a non-justiciable "political question."

that "this claim of absolute immunity for documents in the possession of an executive department or agency, upon the bald assertion of its head, is not sound law." *Committee for Nuclear Responsibility, Inc.* v. *Seaborg,* 463 F. 2d 783, 792 (1971). In recently reaffirming the validity of this decision, the court ruled *en banc* that judicial determination "is not only consistent with, but dictated by, separation of powers doctrine." *Nixon* v. *Sirica, supra,* 487 F. 2d at 714.[39]

Even in the first case that firmly recognized a confidentiality privilege for "intra-agency advisory opinions," *Kaiser Aluminum & Chemical Corp.* v. *United States,* 157 F. Supp. 939 (1958),[40] the Court of Claims, in an opinion by Justice Reed, held that documents reflecting executive deliberations "are privileged from inspection as against public interest *but not absolutely.* * * * The power must lie in the courts to determine executive privilege in litigation." 157 F. Supp.

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[39] Accord, *Ethyl Corporation* v. *Environmental Protection Agency*, 478 F. 2d 47, 51 (4th Cir. 1973); *Carr* v. *Monroe Manufacturing Co.*, 431 F. 2d 384, 388 (5th Cir. 1970), cert. denied, 400 U.S. 1000; *Sperandeo* v. *Milk Drivers & Dairy Employees Local 537*, 334 F. 2d 381, 384 (10th Cir. 1964); *N.L.R.B.* v. *Capitol Fish Co.*, 294 F. 2d 868, 875 (5th Cir. 1961); *Halpern* v. *United States*, 258 F. 2d 36, 43 (2d Cir. 1958). See also *Pan American World Airways, Inc.* v. *Aetna Cas. & Sur. Co.*, 368 F. Supp. 1098, 1139–40 (S.D.N.Y. 1973); *United States* v. *Article of Drug, etc.*, 43 F.R.D. 181, 190 (D. Del. 1967); *O'Keefe* v. *Boeing Co.*, 38 F.R.D. 329, 334 (S.D.N.Y. 1965); *Timken Roller Bearing Co.* v. *United States*, 38 F.R.D. 57, 63 (N.D. Ohio 1964); *Morris* v. *Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Ry. Co.*, 21 F.R.D. 155, 157–58 (W.D. Mo. 1957); *Snyder* v. *United States*, 20 F.R.D. 7, 9 (E.D.N.Y. 1956).

[40] See generally R. Berger, *Executive Privilege: A Constitutional Myth* 353–55 (1974).

at 946–47 (emphasis added). Thus, even in the embryonic stages of this relatively recently articulated version of "executive privilege," the courts recognized that the legitimate interests of the Executive do not require unreviewable discretion to shield its decision-making processes from scrutiny by the Judiciary. A similar conclusion has been reached by the courts of almost all other countries following the common law.[41]

In short, the President's assertion in the district court "that it is for the President of the United States, rather than for a court, to decide when the public interest requires that he exercise his constitutional privilege to refuse to produce information" flies in the face of an unbroken line of precedent.[42]

[41] In *Conway* v. *Rimmer*, [1968] 1 All E.R. 874, the House of Lords unanimously overruled the prior English rule that an assertion of executive (or "Crown") privilege is absolute: The House of Lords ruled that the courts may require *in camera* inspection to weigh the competing interests. See generally Cappelletti and Golden, *Crown Privilege and Executive Privilege: A British Response to an American Controversy*, 25 Stanford L. Rev. 836 (1973).

As the court of appeals noted in *Nixon* v. *Sirica*, *supra*, 487 F. 2d at 713–14, n. 60, judicial power to scrutinize claims of privilege has been recognized in nearly every common law jurisdiction. See, *e.g.*, *Robinson* v. *South Australia* (No. 2), [1931] All E.R. 333 (P.C.); *Gagnon* v. *Quebec Securities Comm'n*, [1965] 50 D.L.R. 2d 329 (1964); *Bruce* v. *Waldron*, [1963] Vict. L.R. 3; *Corbett* v. *Social Security Comm'n*, [1962] N.Z.L.R. 878; *Amar Chand Butail* v. *Union of India*, [1965] 1 India S. Ct. 243.

[42] This Court has not even afforded such status to the Speech or Debate Clause, which is an *express* constitutional privilege for congressmen and their aides similar to the privilege claimed by the President. This Court repeatedly has affirmed that the courts must determine the reach of the Clause. See, *e.g.*, *Gravel* v. *United States*, *supra*; *United States* v. *Brewster*, *supra*; *United States* v. *Johnson*, 319 U.S. 503.

The uniform precedent of allocating to the Judiciary the determination of the applicability and scope of executive claims of privilege not to produce necessary evidence is supported by compelling arguments of policy. Certainly, there are legitimate interests in secrecy. But these interests are more than adequately protected by the qualified privilege defined and applied by the courts.[43] This Court, as we have noted, has adverted to the danger of abdicating objective judicial discernment "to the caprice of executive officers," *United States* v. *Reynolds, supra,* 345 U.S. at 9–10, and stated that "complete abandonment of judicial control would lead to intolerable abuses." 345 U.S. at 8. This is necessarily true because the Executive has an inherent conflict of interest when its actions are called into question if it is to decide whether evidence is to remain secret. Thus, in *Committee for Nuclear Responsibility, Inc.* v. *Seaborg, supra,* the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit has emphasized a related rationale for denying absolute executive discretion to assert a binding confidentiality privilege: "executive absolutism cannot override the duty of the court to assure that an official has not exceeded his charter or flouted the legislative

[43] The courts never have decided whether executive privilege derives implicitly from the constitutional separation of powers, or whether it is merely a common law evidentiary privilege. See, *e.g.*, *United States* v. *Reynolds*, 345 U.S. at 6–7; *Committee for Nuclear Responsibility, Inc.* v. *Seaborg*, *supra*, 463 F. 2d at 793–94. Professor Charles Alan Wright has observed that "[t]he commentators * * * have not found much substance in the constitutional argument, based, as it is, on separation of powers." 8 Wright and Miller, Federal Practice and Procedure, § 2019, at 175 n. 44 (1970 ed.).

will." 463 F. 2d at 793. The court presciently stated (463 F. 2d at 794):

> [N]o executive official or agency can be given absolute authority to determine what documents in his possession may be considered by the court in its task. Otherwise the head of any executive department would have the power on his own say so to cover up all evidence of fraud and corruption when a federal court or grand jury was investigating malfeasance in office, and this is not the law.[44]

In a similar vein, the Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit recently noted:

> The granting or withholding of any privilege requires a balancing of competing policies, 8 Wigmore, § 2285 at 527–28. The claim of governmental privilege is no exception; in fact, the potential for misuse of government privilege, and the consequent diminution of information about government available to the public, is one more factor which strongly suggests the need

[44] The rationale is equally well summarized by Wigmore (§ 2379, at 809–10):

"A court which abdicates its inherent function of determining the facts upon which the admissibility of evidence depends will furnish to bureaucratic officials too ample opportunities for abusing the privilege. The lawful limits of the privilege are extensible beyond any control if its applicability is left to the determination of the very official whose interest it may be to shield a wrongdoing under the privilege. Both principle and policy demand that the determination of the privilege shall be for the court."

See also *United States* v. *Cotton Valley Operators Comm.*, 9 F.R.D. 719, 720–21 (W.D. La. 1949), aff'd by an equally divided Court, 339 U.S. 940.

for judicial arbitration of the availability of the privilege.

Carr v. *Monroe Manufacturing Co., supra,* 431 F. 2d at 388.

We do not question the need for a qualified privilege to serve as an encouragement to the candid exchange of ideas necessary for the formulation of executive policy. Indeed, as the court of appeals held in *Nixon* v. *Sirica, supra,* 487 F. 2d at 717, such discussions are "presumptively privileged." But this case brings into high relief the dangers that would be posed by unbridled, absolute discretion to invoke executive privilege and underscores the wisdom of the rule vesting ultimate power in the courts to rule upon such claims when they are advanced in the context of judicial proceedings. President Nixon cannot be a proper judge of whether the greater public interest lies in disclosing the subpoenaed evidence for use at trial or in withholding it. He is now the subject of an impeachment inquiry by the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives, and the subpoenaed evidence may have a material bearing on whether he is impeached and, if impeached, whether he is convicted and removed from office. This is an issue to which he can hardly be indifferent. In addition, the Special Prosecutor, as prosecuting attorney for the United States, seeks the subpoenaed evidence in prosecuting the President's highest and closest aides and associates. The President is bound to them by the natural emotions of loyalty and gratitude. Thus, in

his Address to the Nation on April 30, 1973, announcing the resignation of defendants Haldeman and Ehrlichman, the President referred to them as "two of the finest public servants it has been my privilege to know." 9 Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents 434 (May 7, 1973). And during a question-and-answer session between President Nixon and participants at the Associated Press Managing Editors Association annual convention on November 17, 1973, the President stated unequivocally: "* * * Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman had been and were dedicated, fine public servants, and I believe, it is my belief based on what I know now, that when these proceedings are completed that they will come out all right." 9 Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents 1349 (November 26, 1973).

We call attention to these facts without disrespect to the President or his Office. But even if by extraordinary act of conscience, he could judge impartially the relative public advantages of secrecy and disclosure without regard to the consequences for himself or his associates, confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the legal system as between the high and the lowly still would be impaired through violation of the ancient precept that no man shall be a judge in his own cause. Compare *Ward* v. *Village of Monroeville,* 409 U.S. 57; *Mayberry* v. *Pennsylvania,* 400 U.S. 455; *Offutt* v. *United States,* 348 U.S. 11; 28 U.S.C. 455.

C. COURTS HAVE THE POWER TO ORDER THE PRODUCTION OF EVIDENCE FROM THE EXECUTIVE WHEN JUSTICE SO REQUIRES

When the court's duty to decide a case or controversy requires the court to determine the validity of a claim of executive privilege, the court has the concomitant power to order the production of the evidence from the Executive Branch when justice so requires. This Court's decision last Term in *Environmental Protection Agency* v. *Mink,* 410 U.S. 73, clearly establishes the proposition that the constitutional separation of powers does not give the Executive any constitutional immunity from judicial orders for the production of evidence. The plaintiffs there had sought access under the Freedom of Information Act to a report prepared for the President by the Undersecretaries Committee of the National Security Council on the proposed underground nuclear test on Amchitka Island. The government opposed the request partly upon the ground that the documents were exempt from disclosure as "inter-agency memorandums or letters,"[45] arguing that the need to avoid disclosure of communications with the President was "particularly important." Brief for the Petitioners 39–40. Nevertheless, this Court remanded for a judicial determination of the claim of privilege; the opinion states explicitly that in opposing disclosure the government carried the burden of establishing "to

[45] Although the Court dealt within the framework of the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. 552(b)(5), it recognized that Congress simply had incorporated the common law executive privilege. 410 U.S. at 85–89. The exemption was defined with specific reference to the court decisions that had developed the privilege at issue here.

the satisfaction of the District Court" that the documents were exempt from disclosure. 410 U.S. at 93. Significantly, the Freedom of Information Act expressly provides that "[i]n the event of noncompliance with the order of the court" to disclose material found unprivileged, the court may punish the responsible executive officer "for contempt." 5 U.S.C. 552(a)(3). Neither in *Mink* nor in any other decision has any doubt been expressed about the constitutional power of the court to enter a mandatory order for the production of evidence after a claim of executive privilege has been overruled by the court.

Other precedents confirm the existence of judicial power to require the production of evidence by executive officials when the court determines the evidence to be material and unprivileged. *United States* v. *Burr,* 25 Fed. Cas. 30 (No. 14,692d) (C.C.D. Va. 1807), of course, is an early and clear example involving evidence in the possession of the President sought for use in a federal criminal case. In *Bowman Dairy Co.* v. *United States,* 341 U.S. 214, 221, this Court treated contempt as a proper sanction against government counsel if he refused to obey a subpoena for the production of documents after the court rejected a claim of privilege. Similarly, while holding that an FBI agent could not properly be held in contempt for refusing to obey a subpoena to produce information for use in a state prisoner's habeas corpus action without permission from the Attorney General, the Court implicitly assumed, and Justice Frankfurter explicitly stated in his concurring opinion, that the Attorney

General himself could be required to litigate the underlying claim of privilege in court. *United States ex rel. Touhy* v. *Ragen,* 340 U.S. 462, 473. In private litigation the lower courts consistently have assumed the existence of power to enforce a subpoena for documents in the Executive Branch over a claim of privilege.[46]

Thus, Professor Charles Alan Wright, after explaining that—

> The determination whether to allow the claim of [executive] privilege is then for the court * * *

goes on to say that—

> In private litigation refusal of a government officer to comply with a court order overruling a claim of executive privilege and ordering disclosure could lead to conviction for contempt * * *.

8 Wright and Miller, Federal Practice and Procedure § 2019, at 171–72 (1970) (footnotes omitted).

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[46] See, *e.g.*, *Westinghouse Electric Corp.* v. *City of Burlington*, 351 F. 2d 762 (D.C. Cir. 1965); *Machin* v. *Zuckert*, 316 F. 2d 336 (D.C. Cir. 1963), cert. denied, 175 U.S. 896; *Boeing Airplane Co.* v. *Coggeshall*, 280 F. 2d 654 (D.C. Cir. 1960); *Pan American World Airways, Inc.* v. *Aetna Cas. & Sur. Co.*, 368 F. Supp. 1098 (S.D.N.Y. 1973); *Pilar* v. *SS Hess Petrol*, 55 F.R.D. 159 (D. Md. 1972); *Hancock Bros., Inc.* v. *Jones*, 293 F. Supp. 1229 (N.D. Cal. 1968); *Cooney* v. *Sun Shipbuilding & Drydock Co.*, 288 F. Supp. 708 (E.D. Pa. 1968); *McFadden* v. *Avco Corp.*, 278 F. Supp. 57 (M.D. Ala. 1967); *O'Keefe* v. *Boeing Co.*, 38 F.R.D. 329 (S.D.N.Y. 1965); *Rosee* v. *Board of Trade*, 35 F.R.D. 512 (N.D. Cal. 1964); *Morris* v. *Atchison, Topeka & Sante Fe Ry. Co.*, 21 F.R.D. 155 (W.D. Mo. 1957); cf. *Garland* v. *Torre*, 259 F. 2d 545 (2d Cir. 1958) (Stewart, J.), cert. denied, 358 U.S. 910.

In some cases, it is true, the Executive Branch has been left free to decline to produce information if it is willing to suffer the loss of litigation in which it is a party. See, *e.g.*, *Alderman* v. *United States,* 394 U.S. 165, 184; *Jencks* v. *United States,* 353 U.S. 657, 672; *Roviaro* v. *United States, supra,* 353 U.S. at 60–61; cf. *Reynolds* v. *United States, supra,* 345 U.S. at 12. But the existence of this remedial alternative in some cases does not support the proposition that the Executive rather than the courts has the final authority for determining whether, legally, a claim of privilege is well founded or not. Moreover, those decisions do not mark the limits of judicial power, for the underlying rationale in each was that the remedial "choice" fully protected the rights of the opposing party, the interests of the Executive and the integrity of the judicial process. In each case this Court recognized that the courts had the ultimate responsibility for passing upon the claim of privilege; only after the courts made the decisive determination could the government elect whether to sacrifice the case or produce the evidence found unprivileged.

In these "produce or dismiss" cases, the requirements of justice could be satisfied without compelling production of particular evidence sought by an adverse party, after judicial rejection of an executive claim of privilege, if the government preferred to accept the "remedy" of losing the case to which it was a party. See generally Rule 16(g), Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure; Rule 37(b), Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. Where dismissal is not an adequate

or proper remedy for the parties or is not consistent with judicial integrity, however, the "produce or dismiss" choice cannot be available to the Executive following a judicial ruling rejecting the claim of privilege. As the district court recognized in the present case, the subpoena *duces tecum* to the President here issued to a person who, "as a practical matter, is a third party" (App. 98A). The President has personal custody of evidence sought by the United States, through its attorney, for use in a proceeding in which the President is not a party. Clearly, a person who is not a party to the main lawsuit has no lawful "election" other than to comply with a judicial determination overruling his claim of a privilege to refuse to give material evidence. The cases have so held.[47]

Furthermore, there is no such election when the very object of the legal proceeding is to acquire the information. Thus, for example, in the Freedom of Information Act cases, it could not be seriously contended that the government had some option other than to disclose any information the court finally determines was unprivileged. Indeed, as we observed above, the Act itself specifically provides the sanction of contempt for such an attempt to flout the court's decision.

Most basically, the "produce or dismiss" option reflects a realistic accommodation of the requirements of substantive justice in litigation. But any reliance on an alleged Presidential option to cause dismissal of this criminal prosecution by standing on a claim of

[47] See cases cited in note 46, *supra*.

privilege, even if overruled by the courts, must be rejected out of hand as plainly insufficient to satisfy the needs of public justice. The seriousness of the charged offenses and the high offices held by those indicted brand that "solution" as impermissible. The President, himself subject to investigation with respect to the offenses charged in the indictment, is in no position to make the delicate judgment whether the greater public interest lies in producing the evidence and continuing the prosecution or abandoning the prosecution.

As we discussed above (pp. 27–39), under the regulations establishing the Watergate Special Prosecution Force as a quasi-independent office within the Department of Justice, the President has no authority directly—or through the Attorney General—to decide that the Watergate prosecution, *United States* v. *Mitchell, et al.,* should be abandoned. It would make a travesty out of the independent institution of the Special Prosecutor if the President could accomplish this objective by indirection—by claiming that the courts have no power to order the production of evidence in this criminal prosecution and insisting that the courts be content with posing the dilemma of "produce or dismiss."

Counsel for the President previously argued that "[i]n the exercise of his discretion to claim executive privilege the President is answerable to the Nation but not the courts." [48] This assertion merely highlights

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[48] Brief in Opposition 4, *In re Grand Jury Subpoena Duces Tecum Issued to Richard M. Nixon, supra.*

the salutary effect of requiring the Executive to make its choice *after* the courts have adjudicated the relevant rights and obligations. Public responsibility cannot be fixed, however, until the alternatives are defined. Only then can the people, as the ultimate rulers, know who controlled the course of events and who took what decisions. The President cannot have it both ways: he cannot suggest that he could abort this investigation rather than comply with an order overruling his claim of privilege and use that hypothetical course to prevent the Court from ruling on the validity of the privilege claim itself. Unless and until the President attempts to exercise whatever powers he might have under the Constitution as Chief Executive to intervene directly in the conduct of this prosecution by the Department of Justice, as represented by the Special Prosecutor, and to procure the Special Prosecutor's dismissal and the countermanding of his conduct of the case, the President must allow the Special Prosecutor and the courts to conduct the prosecution in accordance with the regular processes of the law and without regard to any *potential* executive power to frustrate the administration of justice.

II. THE PRESIDENT IS NOT IMMUNE FROM JUDICIAL ORDERS REQUIRING THE PRODUCTION OF MATERIAL EVIDENCE FOR A CRIMINAL TRIAL

There is nothing in the position of the President, despite his status as Chief Executive, that deprives the courts of their constitutional power to resolve this dispute. The power to decide this case simply cannot differ because the President elected to take personal

control of the subpoenaed evidence. The Framers of our Constitution, concerned as they were about the abuses of royal prerogative, were very careful to provide for a Presidency with defined and limited constitutional powers and not the prerogatives and immunities of a sovereign. Under our Constitution, the people are sovereign, and the President, though Chief Executive and Chief of State, remains subject to the law.[49] Indeed, it is the very essence of the Presidential Office that it is subject to the commands of the law, for the President's basic governmental function is that of Chief Executive—whose duty it is to "take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed." It follows inexorably that in our system *even the President* is under the law.

No one would deny that every other officer of the executive branch is subject to judicial process,[50] and there is little basis in logic, policy or constitutional his-

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[49] Alexander Hamilton explained the posture of the President in our constitutional system in *The Federalist* Number 69 (B. F. Wright ed. 1961):

"The President of the United States would be an officer elected by the people for *four* years; the king of Great Britain is a perpetual and *hereditary* prince. The one would be amenable to personal punishment and disgrace; the person of the other is sacred and inviolable." (Emphasis in original.)

[50] See, *e.g.*, *Panama Canal Co.* v. *Grace Lines, Inc.*, 356 U.S. 309, 317–18; *Wilbur* v. *United States ex rel. Kadrie*, 281 U.S. 206, 218–22; *Work* v. *United States ex rel. Rives*, 267 U.S. 175, 177–78; *Ballinger* v. *United States ex rel. Frost*, 216 U.S. 240, 249; *Garfield* v. *United States ex rel. Goldsby*, 211 U.S. 249, 262; *Roberts* v. *United States ex rel. Valentine*, 176 U.S. 221, 229–31; *United States ex rel. McBride* v. *Schurz*, 102 U.S. 378; *Kendall* v. *United States ex rel. Stokes*, *supra*, 12 Pet. at 609 *et seq.*; *Marbury* v. *Madison*, *supra*, 1 Cranch at 164–66.

tory for concluding that a matter becomes walled off from judicial authority simply because the President has elected to become personally involved in it. More basically, however, a true regard for the constitutional separation of powers compels the conclusion that the President himself is appropriately subject to judicial orders. It is the function of the courts to determine rights and obligations of public officers within the context of a justiciable controversy, including those of the President, and it is his sworn duty to "execute" those decisions. See *Cooper* v. *Aaron*, 358 U.S. 1, 12. It must follow that the courts have the power in appropriate cases to order even the President to perform a legal duty.

A. THE POWER OF THE COURTS TO ISSUE SUBPOENAS TO THE PRESIDENT, LONG RECOGNIZED BY THE COURTS, FLOWS FROM THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE THAT NO MAN IS ABOVE THE LAW

At the heart of the court's power to issue and enforce a subpoena *duces tecum* directed to the President of the United States lies the "longstanding principle 'that the public * * * has a right to every man's evidence.'" *Branzburg* v. *Hayes,* 408 U.S. 665, 688;[51]

[51] This Court in *Branzburg* quoted Jeremy Bentham's vivid illustration:

"Are men of the first rank and consideration—are men high in office—men whose time is not less valuable to the public than to themselves—are such men to be forced to quit their business, their functions, and what is more than all, their pleasure, at the beck of every idle or malicious adversary, to dance attendance upon every petty cause? Yes, as far as it is necessary, they and everybody . . . Were the Prince of Wales, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Lord High Chancellor, to be passing by in the same coach while a chimneysweeper and a barrow-woman were in dispute about a halfpennyworth of apples, and

cf. Watkins v. *United States,* 354 U.S. 178, 187. This power, which in the context of the Watergate investigation and prosecution has proved essential to the full and impartial administration of justice, was upheld in *Nixon* v. *Sirica, supra,* 487 F. 2d at 708–12, a decision with which President Nixon willingly complied, rather than seek review in this Court. As the court of appeals recognized, "incumbency does not relieve the President of the routine legal obligations that confine all citizens." 487 F. 2d at 711. "The clear implication [of the *Burr* case] is that the President's special interests may warrant a careful judicial screening of subpoenas after the President interposes an objection, but that some subpoenas will nevertheless be properly sustained by judicial orders of compliance." 487 F. 2d at 710.

The holding of the court in *Nixon* v. *Sirica* is hardly a newfound principle wrought from the exigencies of Watergate. The authority to issue a subpoena *duces tecum* to a sitting President was recognized as early as 1807 by Chief Justice Marshall in *United States* v. *Burr,* 25 Fed. Cas. 30 (No. 14,692d) (C.C.D. Va.).[52]

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the chimney-sweeper or the barrow-woman were to think proper to call upon them for their evidence, could they refuse it? No, most certainly."

See 4 The Works of Jeremy Bentham 320–21 (Bowring ed. 1843).

See also *United States* v. *Dionisio*, 410 U.S. 1, 9; *Blackmer* v. *United States*, 284 U.S. 421, 438; *Blair* v. *United States*, 250 U.S. 273, 280–281; 8 Wigmore, Evidence § 2192 (McNaughton rev. 1961) [hereinafter cited as "Wigmore"].

[52] For a complete exposition of the decisions in the *Burr* cases based upon the original record of the Burr trials, see Berger, *The President, Congress, and the Courts*, 83 Yale L.J. 1111–22 (1974).

This landmark decision was noted with approval by this Court in *Branzburg* v. *Hayes, supra,* 408 U.S. at 689 n.26. Although Chief Justice Marshall acknowledged that the power was one to be exercised with attention both to the convenience of the President in performing his arduous duties and to the possibility that the public interest might preclude coercing particular disclosures, he utterly rejected any suggestion that the President, like the King of England, is absolutely immune from judicial process (25 Fed. Cas. at 34):

> Although he [the King] may, perhaps, give testimony, it is said to be incompatible with his dignity to appear under the process of the court. Of the many points of difference which exist between the first magistrate in England and the first magistrate of the United States, in respect to the personal dignity conferred on them by the constitutions of their respective nations, the court will only select and mention two. It is a principle of the English constitution that the king can do no wrong, that no blame can be imputed to him, that he cannot be named in debate. By the constitution of the United States, the president, as well as any other officer of the government, may be impeached, and may be removed from office on high crimes and misdemeanors. By the constitution of Great Britain, the crown is hereditary, and the monarch can never be a subject. By that of the United States, the president is elected from the mass of the people, and, on the expiration of the time for which he is elected, returns to the mass of the people again. How essentially this difference of circumstances must vary the policy of the laws of the two

> countries, in reference to the personal dignity of the executive chief, will be perceived by every person. In this respect the first magistrate of the Union may more properly be likened to the first magistrate of a state; at any rate, under the former Confederation; and it is not known ever to have been doubted, but that the chief magistrate of a state might be served with a subpoena ad testificandum.

The decisions in the *Burr* case and *Nixon* v. *Sirica* are premised on the theory that every citizen, no matter what his station or office, has an enforceable legal duty not to withhold evidence the production of which the courts determine to be in the public interest. Stated more broadly, and in more familiar terms, they flow from the premise that this is a government of laws and not of men. This Court summed up this fundamental precept of our republican form of government nearly a century ago in *United States* v. *Lee*, 106 U.S. 196, 220:

> No man in this country is so high that he is above the law. No officer of the law may set that law at defiance with impunity. All the officers of the government, from the highest to the lowest, are creatures of the law and are bound to obey it. It is the only supreme power in our system of government, and every man who by accepting office participates in its functions is only the more strongly bound to submit to that supremacy, and to observe the limitations which it imposes upon the exercise of the authority which it gives.

The Steel Seizure Case is perhaps the most celebrated instance where this Court has reviewed the assertion of Presidential power. *Youngstown Sheet & Tube Co.* v. *Sawyer, supra.* As we noted above, President Truman concluded that a work stoppage at the Nation's steel mills during the Korean War "would immediately jeopardize and imperil our national defense." In directing the Secretary of Commerce to seize certain of the mills, the President asserted that he "was acting within the aggregate of his constitutional powers as the Nation's Chief Executive and the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the United States." 343 U.S. at 582. District Judge Holtzoff denied a temporary restraining order on the ground that what was involved was the action of the President and that the courts could not enjoin Presidential action. Judge Pine, however, granted a preliminary injunction. This Court, deciding "whether *the President* was acting within his constitutional power" (343 U.S. at 582, emphasis added), upheld the preliminary injunction. In doing so, there was no doubt expressed that the Court could adjudicate the claim that the President had no constitutional power to issue the Executive Order. Nor, after reading the opinions of the Court, can there be any question that the Court would have granted relief against the President if he had directly ordered the seizure of the mills rather than acting through the Secretary of Commerce.[53] See, *e.g.,* 343 U.S. at 585.

[53] It is true that custom dictates that legal process should not be addressed to the President of the United States whenever a Cabinet member or lesser official is available, even though

The Executive's claim of total immunity from judicial decrees is not a new one. In *Land* v. *Dollar*, *supra,* the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit held Secretary of Commerce Sawyer and Acting Attorney General Perlman and subordinate executive officials in civil contempt for failing to comply with a final order requiring them to deliver full and effective possession of certain stock to the prevailing litigant. They attempted to justify their conduct in part on the ground that they were following the directive of the President to Secretary

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the subordinate official is acting upon direct order of the President. *E.g.*, *Youngstown Sheet & Tube Co.* v. *Sawyer*, *supra*, 343 U.S. 579; *cf. United States Servicemen's Fund* v. *Eastland*, 488 F. 2d 1252, 1270 (D.C. Cir. 1973). It became necessary to seek this evidence from the President only because he elected, by deliberate and affirmative actions, to displace the ordinary custodians of the materials and to assume personal control of them. To allow this device to render the tapes immune from ordinary legal process would exalt form over substance and set a President above the law, contrary to our firm constitutional tradition. As the court of appeals stated in *Nixon* v. *Sirica*, *supra*, 487 F. 2d at 709, "[t]he practice of judicial review would be rendered capricious—and very likely impotent—if jurisdiction vanished whenever the President personally denoted an Executive action or omission as his own." See also *National Treasury Employees Union* v. *Nixon*, *supra*, 492 F. 2d at 613.

In addition to the courts below in the present case and in *Nixon* v. *Sirica*, other courts have recognized that compulsory process may issue against the President, when necessary. See *Minnesota Chippewa Tribe* v. *Carlucci*, 358 F. Supp. 973, 975 (D.D.C. 1973) (holding that the President can be sued to compel performance of specific legal duties) (order vacated on grounds of mootness); *Meyers* v. *Nixon*, 339 F. Supp. 1388 (S.D.N.Y. 1972); *Atlee* v. *Nixon*, 336 F. Supp. 790 (E.D. Pa. 1972).

Sawyer "to continue to hold this stock on behalf of the United States" and they further asserted "that, even though the courts determine that a specific action is not within the official capacity of an executive officer, he is immune from compulsion by the courts in respect to that action." 190 F. 2d at 639. The court of appeals rejected the argument in the most emphatic terms (*ibid.*):

> To claim that the executive has such power [to hold the shares despite the decree] is to claim the total independence of the executive from judicial determinations in justiciable cases and controversies. To characterize such judicial determinations as illegal coercion of the executive is to deny one of the fundamental concepts of our government.

Although there have been a few notorious instances in our history in which Presidents have refused to give appropriate force to judicial decrees, or are reputed to have made disdainful statements about the decisions, none involved direct disobedience of a court order. More importantly, it is the judgment of history that those were essentially lawless departures from the constitutional norm.[54] The responsible constitutional

[54] See, *e.g.*, R. Scigliano, *The Supreme Court and the Presidency* 36–37 (1971) and C. Warren, *The Supreme Court in United States History* 759 (rev. ed. 1926) (President Andrew Jackson's failure to take steps to vindicate the Court's decision in the Cherokee Nation case, *Worcester* v. *Georgia*, 6 Pet. (31 U.S.) 515); Scigliano, *supra*, at 37–38 (Jackson's vetoing of the national bank bill on constitutional grounds, despite an earlier decision by this Court tending to sustain its validity); Scigliano, *supra*, at 41–43 (President Lincoln's ignoring of several writs of habeas corpus addressed to military commanders during the Civil War). See generally Scigliano, *supra*, 58–59.

position was expressed by President Truman—a defender of a strong Executive—in announcing that he would comply with an order of this Court in the Steel Seizure Case if it went against him, despite his claim of constitutional power to order the seizure. The President's position was stated through Senator Hubert Humphrey, who quoted the President as saying he would "rest his case with the courts of the land." The President was further quoted as saying:

> I am a constitutional President and my whole record and public life has been one of defense and support of the Constitution.

New York Times, April 29, 1952, p. 1, col. 3. A report of a later press conference with President Truman on this issue stated:

> Asked whether he had been quoted correctly in saying that he would accept the Supreme Court's decision on seizure, the President said certainly—he had no ambition to be a dictator.

New York Times, May 2, 1952, p. 1, col. 5. Of course, when this Court later rejected the constitutional bases for President Truman's action, he complied with the decision, in deference to the principle that even in the gravest matters, the President is under the law.

B. THERE IS NO BASIS EITHER IN THE CONSTITUTION OR IN THE INTENT OF THE FRAMERS FOR CONFERRING ABSOLUTE IMMUNITY ON THE PRESIDENT

The decisions in the *Burr* case and *Nixon* v. *Sirica* are in accord with settled decisions of this Court and others. They establish principles that faithfully reflect what historical evidence shows was the intent of the

Framers. Contrasted with the explicit privileges in Article I for Congress, no comparable privileges or immunities were specified for the President or Executive Branch in Article II, even though they had been commonplace for the King. The Founding Fathers were keenly aware of the dangers of executive power. Even James Wilson, who favored a strong Executive,[55] rejected "the Prerogatives of the British Monarch as a proper guide in defining the Executive powers." [56] He stated at the Pennsylvania Ratification Convention:

> The executive power is better to be trusted when it has no screen. Sir, we have a responsibility in the person of our President; he cannot act improperly, and hide either his negligence or inattention; he cannot roll upon any other person the weight of his criminality * * *. Add to all this, that officer is placed high, and is possessed of power far from being contemptible; yet not a *single privilege* is annexed to his character * * *.[57]

One might infer quite plausibly from the specific grant of official privileges to Congress that no other constitutional immunity from normal legal obligations was intended for government officials or papers. Indeed, Charles Pinckney stated in the Senate on

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[55] See E. Corwin, *The President: Office and Powers* 11 (1948).

[56] 1 Farrand, Records of the Federal Convention of 1787, at 65–66 (1911) (hereinafter "Farrand"). See also 4 Elliot's Debates 108–09 (2d ed. 1836) (remarks of Iredell at the North Carolina Ratification Convention).

[57] 2 Elliot's Debates 480 (2d ed. 1836).

March 5, 1800, speaking of the express congressional privilege from arrest:

> They [the Framers] well knew how oppressively the power of undefined privileges had been exercised in Great Britain, and were determined no such authority should ever be exercised here. * * *
>
> * * * * *
>
> No privilege of this kind was intended for your Executive, nor any except that which I have mentioned for your Legislature.[58]

The teaching of history is thus persuasive against the claim of an absolute Presidential prerogative to be immune from the judicial process. The Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit recognized this in rejecting President Nixon's claim of absolute immunity from a grand jury subpoena *duces tecum* (*Nixon* v. *Sirica, supra,* 487 F. 2d at 711):

> The Constitution makes no mention of special presidential immunities. Indeed, the Executive Branch generally is afforded none. * * * Lacking textual support, counsel for the President nonetheless would have us infer immunity from the President's political mandate, or from his vulnerability to impeachment, or from his broad discretionary powers. These are invitations to refashion the Constitution, and we reject them.

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[58] 3 Farrand at 384–385.

The Founding Fathers were conscious of the "aversion of the people to monarchy." *The Federalist* Number 67 (B. F. Wright ed. 1961). Corwin has explained "that 'the executive magistracy' was the natural enemy, the legislative assembly the natural friend of liberty." E. Corwin, *The President: Office and Powers* 4 (1948).

Similarly, a special panel composed of Senior Circuit Judges Johnsen, Lumbard and Breitenstein, speaking for the Seventh Circuit in connection with the prosecution of Circuit Judge Otto Kerner, recently rejected his argument, similar to the one made by counsel for the President, that the constitutional provision for impeachment (Art. I, Sec. 3, cl. 7) implicitly confers immunity on civil officers from the criminal process prior to impeachment and removal from office, *United States* v. *Isaacs and Kerner,* 493 F. 2d 1124 (7th Cir. 1974), cert. denied, —— U.S. —— (June 17, 1974). The court concluded (493 F. 2d at 1144):

> [W]hatever immunities or privileges the Constitution confers for the purpose of assuring the independence of the co-equal branches of government they do not exempt the members of those branches "from the operation of the ordinary criminal laws." Criminal conduct is not part of the necessary functions performed by public officials. Punishment for that conduct will not interfere with the legitimate operations of a branch of government.

The fact that the President is the *head* of the Executive Branch does not render these principles inapplicable here.[59] "We have no officers in this government from the President down to the most subordinate agent, who does not hold office under the law, with

[59] We are not dealing in this case, of course, with the question whether, even in the absence of any explicit immunity, an incumbent President is entitled to implicit immunity from having to defend himself against criminal charges lodged against him in an indictment.

prescribed duties and limited authority." *The Floyd Acceptances*, 7 Wall. (74 U.S.) 666, 676–77.

C. THE COURTS CAN ISSUE PROCESS TO THE PRESIDENT WHERE, AS HERE, IT DOES NOT INTERFERE WITH HIS EXERCISE OF DISCRETIONARY POWER BUT MERELY REQUIRES MINISTERIAL COMPLIANCE WITH A LEGAL DUTY

The argument that the President is immune from process is sometimes rested upon a misreading of *Mississippi* v. *Johnson,* 4 Wall. (71 U.S.) 475.[60] In that case the State of Mississippi sought leave to file an original bill to enjoin President Johnson from enforcing the Reconstruction Acts, which provided for reconstitution of the governments of the erstwhile Confederacy. Because the President was named as a defendant in the bill, this Court heard argument upon the question of jurisdiction before the bill was filed, instead of reserving the question to a later stage.[61] Attorney General Stanbery argued to the Court that the President is "above the process of any court," asserting that "[h]e represents the majesty of the law and of the people as fully and as essentially, and with the same dignity, as does any absolute monarch or the head of any independent government in the world." 4 Wall. at 484.

[60] Scattered district court opinions seem to have accepted that argument, at least where discretionary executive powers were at issue. See, *e.g.*, *National Ass'n of Internal Revenue Employees* v. *Nixon*, 349 F. Supp. 18, 21 (D.D.C. 1972), rev'd, 492 F. 2d 587 (D.C. Cir. 1974); *Reese* v. *Nixon*, 347 F. Supp. 314, 316–17 (C.D. Cal. 1972).

[61] Fairman, *Reconstruction and Reunion 1864–88*, 6 History of the Supreme Court of the United States 379–80, 436–37 (1971).

Faithful to the tradition that in the United States no man and no office are above the law, this Court refused to accept the Attorney General's claim of royal immunity for the President of the United States (4 Wall at 498). Rather, it held that it had "no jurisdiction of a bill to enjoin the President in the performance of his official duties" (4 Wall. at 501), distinguishing the power of the courts to require the President to perform a simple ministerial act from an attempt to control the exercise of his broad constitutional discretion (4 Wall. at 499):

> In each of these cases [involving ministerial duties] nothing was left to discretion. There was no room for the exercise of judgment. The law required the performance of a single specific act; and that performance, it was held, might be required by mandamus.
>
> Very different is the duty of the President in the exercise of the power to see that the laws are faithfully executed, and among these laws the acts named in the bill. * * * The duty thus imposed on the President is in no just sense ministerial. It is purely executive and political.

Mississippi v. *Johnson* arose shortly after the Civil War, when there was a bitter political conflict over the proper national policy to be followed in dealing with the secessionist States. In declining to exercise its original jurisdiction over an equitable suit brought by a State seeking to enjoin the President from enforcing congressional policy, the Court had no occasion to decide that *no* federal court could ever issue *any* order to the President, and the Court was careful

to leave open the question of the President's amenability to the judicial process where only a clear legal duty, rather than the exercise of discretionary political judgment, is involved, as in the present case.

Shortly after the decision in *Mississippi* v. *Johnson,* the Court also declined jurisdiction of similar bills naming the Secretary of War or a military commander as respondent. *Georgia* v. *Stanton,* 6 Wall. (73 U.S.) 50. Their disposition is further proof that it was the character of the question presented and not the identity of the respondent that determined the issue in *Mississippi* v. *Johnson.* In the words of Chief Justice Marshall, "[i]t is not by the office of the person to whom the writ is directed, but the nature of the thing to be done, that the propriety or impropriety of issuing a mandamus is to be determined." *Marbury* v. *Madison, supra,* 1 Cranch at 170.

Later cases have confirmed that *Mississippi* v. *Johnson* did not turn on the fact that the respondent was the President, but was an early expression of the nonjusticiability of "political questions."[62] This Court has cited the decision as an example of instances where the Court has refused "to entertain * * * original actions * * * that seek to embroil this tribunal in 'political questions.'" *Ohio* v. *Wyandotte Chemicals Corp.,* 401 U.S. 493, 496.

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[62] See also *Colegrove* v. *Green,* 328 U.S. 549, 556; *Louisiana* v. *McAdoo,* 234 U.S. 627, 633–34; *Wisconsin* v. *Pelican Insurance Co.,* 127 U.S. 265, 296; *National Treasury Employees Union* v. *Nixon, supra,* 492 F. 2d at 613–15.

The crucial jurisdictional issue, then, is not the identity of the executive officer or the physical power to secure compliance with judicial orders,[63] but the Court's ability to resolve authoritatively the conflicting claims of legal rights and obligations. See *Baker* v. *Carr, supra,* 369 U.S. at 208–237. The Judiciary, of course, must be circumspect in issuing process against the President to avoid interference with the proper discharge of his executive functions. For example, it might not be proper, in the absence of strong necessity, to require the President to appear personally before a court if that appearance would interfere with his schedule or the performance of his duties. Similarly, the courts should not saddle the Chief Executive with requests that are administratively burdensome. Compare *United States* v. *Burr,* 25 Fed. Cas. 30, 34 (No. 14,692d) (C.C.D. Va. 1807). The court's discretionary power to control its own process and grant protective orders provides adequate safeguard against undue imposition on the President's time. Beyond that, there may be some Presidential acts that are beyond the court's ken entirely, such as his exercise of discretionary constitutional powers that implicate "political questions." See *Mississippi* v. *Johnson, supra,* 4 Wall. at 499–501; *Marbury* v. *Madison, supra,* 1 Cranch at 165–66, 170. See also *National Treasury Employees Union* v. *Nixon,* 492 F. 2d 587, 606 (D.C. Cir. 1974).

But the question here is very different. The Court is called upon to adjudicate the obligation of the Presi-

[63] See pp. 44–47, *supra.*