

ORAL HISTORY 01-76-12 PT. 1

Senator Sam Ervin

University of Alaska campus

Fairbanks, Alaska

April 14, 1976

Bartlett Lecture Program

An unidentified person from the audience asked about his opinion on President Ford granting President Nixon amnesty. Sam Ervin said it was an unfortunate thing. He believes all men should stand equal before the law. It is a bad thing for people to be involved in a conspiracy which is what the Watergate affair was. Some went to prison and some were not punished. He thinks the pardon did violence to that not because he had a desire to see a former president go to prison. When Ford was nominated for Vice president Senator Cameron asked Ford if he would be confirmed to Vice president and then succeeded to the presidency would he grant Nixon a pardon. Mr. Ford said the American people wouldn't stand for that. After granting the pardon Ford went before the House Judiciary Committee. Ford said the pardon question had been a hypothetical question at his confirmation hearings. Ervin said Ford went into the president's office with good will and hurt himself when he granted the pardon. The president has absolute power to pardon at any time. Ervin thinks this type of pardon is greater than the Almighty and talked about forgiveness through repentance.

An unidentified person asked a question about the Fourth Amendment and the CIA going through personal mail. Ervin said those violations will not be tolerated. As the chairman of the Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights he heard charges to that effect. They contacted the post office department about this as well as the CIA. They denied that this thing had occurred. He talked about the object of intelligence interest. That meant that investigatory bodies could investigate anybody in the United States that they had any curiosity about. J. Edgar Hoover said these things were illegal and could not be tolerated. National security was used as the reason some of the illegal activity took place.

An unidentified person asked about Ervin's comment on the Alaska statehood bill. Ervin said he thought the bill was unconstitutional and unjust and Alaska should have been allowed to enter the union on the same terms as every other state. He never thought that the government after admitting a state could take away part of the state's territory.

Question from the audience can't be understood. Ervin said he is personally not campaigning for anybody. He voted for Senator Scoop Jackson in the South Carolina presidential primary. He knows him better than the other candidates and feels he has the experience to make a good president.

Someone from the audience asked him about Jerry Brown (governor of California). Ervin said he didn't know much about Jerry Brown and doesn't understand him. He knows his father.

An unidentified person asked about the Constitution and the taking of property in Alaska. Ervin said the courts have upheld them, but he said they are beyond constitutional.

Dr. William Wood thanked the Bartlett Lecture Program and Senator Ervin.