

Giuliani Defends Removing Papers From City Control

By DAVID M. HERZHENHORN

Rudolph W. Giuliani yesterday defended the removal of his mayoral papers from the custody of the city's Department of Records and Information Services and said private archivists would catalog the documents according to professional standards without influence from him, his aides or his supporters.

Faced with mounting criticism by historians and archival groups over the transfer of the papers to a private nonprofit group that he controls, Mr. Giuliani spoke publicly on the matter yesterday, phoning a reporter to say critics had no reason to fear that he would restrict access or destroy records.

"I'd be happy to assure them that I am not going to go in, take anything out, pick anything out," Mr. Giuliani said. "The whole purpose of this was to bring in a professional archivist. The whole purpose here was to try to make them more accessible rather than less."

Mr. Giuliani also said city officials would decide which docu-

Critics want all mayoral records in the city's hands.

ments were public and which were private. The sharpest criticism in recent weeks has concerned a clause in a contract transferring the papers that seemed to give Mr. Giuliani the authority to make those determinations.

Mr. Giuliani said he would not be involved in such decisions and would be willing to renegotiate the clause to make that clear.

The contract, signed on Dec. 26, transferred custody, though not ownership, of Mr. Giuliani's papers from the city archives to the Rudolph W. Giuliani Center for Urban Affairs, a private nonprofit group that is being organized by a longtime friend of Mr. Giuliani's, Saul S. Cohen, and former Deputy Mayor Anthony P. Coles.

Critics, however, said they were not reassured by Mr. Giuliani's remarks and would proceed with a news conference today on

the steps of City Hall, where local and national archival groups plan to promote a letter to Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg complaining about the handling of the papers.

The historian Michael Wallace, who helped gather 850 signatures on a petition urging the city to cancel the contract with the Giuliani Center, said he and other critics would continue to insist that the papers be returned to the custody of the Municipal Archives and processed under city supervision.

"It's not a question of trust," Mr. Wallace said. "We should not be in the position of being asked to trust any private person with public records. In essence, he is saying, 'Trust me and trust my employees.'"

Under terms of the contract, Mr. Cohen submitted a plan this week to the city's Law Department, detailing how private archivists will index and catalog the mayoral papers, which include files from City Hall and Gracie Mansion, appointment books, photographs, audiocassettes and other items.

These documents are now being stored in a warehouse in Queens. Once they are processed by the private archivists, Mr. Giuliani said, originals will be returned to the city archives and a full set will be available to the public at the new Giuliani Center, after a location is chosen.

Mr. Giuliani also said yesterday that city archivists and any of his critics could go to Queens to check on the private archivists.

"If they want to go look and make sure it's being done right, they can go look," he said, "if anybody would like to go out and make sure the archivist is not burning the records or eating them or hiding them somewhere."

He added: "If the historians have some issue with the archivists, they should raise it. As far as I know, they picked the best people. They are trustworthy."

Mr. Giuliani said he had not gone through the papers in Queens but looked forward to using them for research on his books once the archivists' work is complete. "If there is something in there that's embarrassing, I don't know about it," he said. "I'll find out like everybody else does."