

Ford Blames Self For Reaction to Nixon's Pardon

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NEW YORK, April 21 (AP)—Former president Gerald Ford says he was surprised by the negative reaction to his pardon of Richard Nixon and blames himself for not explaining better why he granted the pardon.

"I should have emphasized far greater the necessity that I, as president, spend all my time working on the domestic and international problems of the president representing 220 million people," Ford said in a television interview.

Instead, Ford said, he was "devoting 25 percent of my time on the legal matters, the tapes, the documents that were in controversy as far as President Nixon was concerned."

Ford also said Nixon's resignation from the presidency "would have been far, far better accepted" if Nixon had apologized to the American people for the Watergate scandal.

The taped interview with Ford was to be broadcast at 10 p.m. Sunday on NBC-TV's "Weekend" show. A 12,000-word excerpt of Ford's forthcoming book "A Time to Heal," appears in the May issue of Reader's Digest, and was released today.

Ford said it irked him that some people believe a pardon deal was made with Nixon before he stepped down.

"Unfortunately, some people still don't believe it, but as long as my conscience is clear I have to accept what others may feel," he said.

Ford said that he believed that Nixon's stated reason for resigning — that he had lost necessary support in Congress — was "a highly technical argument."

"I believe . . . his decision would have been far, far better accepted if he had been contrite, admitted mistakes, errors, and had apologized to the American people," he said.

Ford said he had no second thoughts about granting the pardon, and that bad economic news probably contributed to his defeat by Jimmy Carter as much as dissatisfaction over the pardon.

However, he said he was "a little ashamed" of his treatment of the late Nelson Rockefeller, who stepped aside as Ford's vice president prior to the 1976 primaries.

Ford said the decision not to run was Rockefeller's, but that he had accepted the opinion of "others" who thought "that I couldn't get the nomination if Nelson was to be my running mate."

Said Ford: "I should have said, 'Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead. Rockefeller and Ford will make a good team.'"

Ford has said that he does not intend to run for president in 1980.

But if circumstances did develop where there was no consensus say in the spring of 1980, and I felt that I could be constructive to the party and to the country, I would not duck the responsibility," he said.