

President Hints He Would Weigh Pardoning Nixon

Decision Deferred

8/29/74
By Carroll Kilpatrick
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Ford hinted strongly yesterday at his first White House news conference that he would consider a pardon for former President Nixon if charges are brought against him in the courts.

The President said he believed that the American people think, as he does, that Mr. Nixon has suffered enough.

However, the President said that he will make no decision regarding a pardon before any legal process takes place.

"In this situation, I am the final authority," Mr. Ford said. "There have been no charges made, there has been no action by the courts, there has been no action by any jury, and until any legal process has been undertaken, I think it is unwise and untimely for me to make any commitment."

In reply to the first question asked him at a packed news conference in the East Room, Mr. Ford said he agreed with Vice-President-designate Nelson A. Rockefeller's comment that the former President has been "hung" and should not in addition "be drawn and quartered."

"I subscribe to that point of view," Mr. Ford said, emphasizing that he would reserve his option. He said he believed the American people also agree with Rockefeller's comments.

The President made it clear, however, that he did not intend to interfere with Watergate Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski's course. Jaworski "has an obligation to take whatever action he sees fit in conformity with his oath of office," Mr. Ford said.

Informed sources in Jaworski's office have said that the prosecutor will make no decision regarding action against the former President for several weeks, apparently to allow a "cooling-off" period on

the matter.

Fielding a variety of questions on domestic and foreign problems, Mr. Ford offered no major new economic policies but called for belt-tightening by individuals and the federal government.

He repeated a spokesman's statement that he "probably" would run for a full term in 1976, and he seemed to be saying that he expected the Republican convention to endorse a Ford-Rockefeller ticket.

When asked how he planned to see that there are "no further Watergates," Mr.

See PRESIDENT, A14, Col. 1

For Mints He'd Weigh A Pardon for Nixon

PRESIDENT, From A1

Ford said he would have an open administration and be as "candid and forthright as I possibly can."

Declaring that he would expect all individuals in his administration to act the same, he promised that there would be "no tightly controlled operation of the White House staff."

"I have a policy of seeking advice from a number of top members of my staff," the President said. "There will be no one person, nor any limited number of individuals, who make decisions. I will make the decisions and take the blame for them or whatever benefit might be the case."

When asked if he would have a code of ethics for administration officials, the President said, "The code of ethics that will be followed will be the example that I set."

Mr. Ford defended his proposal for limited amnesty for Vietnam war deserters and draft-dodgers and his nomination of Rockefeller.

The President's comments came when a reporter said some of his conservative allies were grumbling because he seemed to be moving too far left.

"I don't think these are views that fall in the political spectrum right or left," Mr. Ford said. "I intend to make the same kind of judgments in other matters because I think they are right and I think they are good for the country."

As Vice President Rockefeller will work on domestic programs and help prepare legislative proposals, Mr. Ford said. He also can be helpful "in the political arena under certain guidelines and some restrictions," Mr. Ford said in an unusual comment on limitations that are imposed on Vice Presidents.

When a reporter asked how soon it would be proper for

Democrats to hold the President accountable for economic problems, Mr. Ford said he did not believe that "making partisan politics out of a serious domestic problem is good politics."

The Democrats so far have been friendly and cooperative, he said. "I think it is a fair statement that our problems domestically, our economic problems, are the joint responsibility of government," the

President said. "So we are all in this boat together, with labor and management and everybody else."

In reply to a question regarding the pending veterans education bill, Mr. Ford reiterated his conviction that Congress should take action to "keep the price down" because the measure is inflationary in its present form.

In Chicago last week, he told the Veterans of Foreign Wars convention he would not hesitate to veto a measure that is inflationary.

"I hope when the Congress reconvenes within a week or so that they will go back to conference, take a good look and hopefully eliminate any inequities and keep the price down," the President said.

In answer to another question, Mr. Ford made it clear that he does not favor plans to revive the Office of Economic Opportunity.

Noting that some of the programs have been moved to established departments, the President said there is duplication and overlapping in the Community Action Program and the Model Cities program.

Work in these fields can be carried on by local governments under grant aid proposed in the new housing and urban development measure, Mr. Ford said.

When asked what his position would be regarding another federal pay raise, Mr. Ford said he had made no judgment yet and that no recommendation had reached his desk.