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NYTimes Nixon, Calling Ford, Expressed Hope Kissinger Would Remain

By DIANE HENRY

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 23 — Former President Richard M. Nixon telephoned President Ford last week and expressed the hope that Henry A. Kissinger would remain as Secretary of State in the new Administration, the White House disclosed today. 17 Sept

The call from Mr. Nixon was made last Tuesday and lasted for about 10 minutes, according to John W. Hushen, President Ford's deputy press secretary.

Mr. Hushen said that it was the first and only time that Mr. Nixon had initiated a telephone conversation with President Ford since leaving office on Aug. 9. He added that President Ford had called Mr. Nixon three times.

The disclosure by the White House came in response to questions prompted by comments to reporters today by Betty Ford, the President's wife. Mrs. Ford said that her husband had talked to Mr. Nixon on several occasions in telephone conversations that in aide to Mrs. Ford later said had been initiated by the former President.

Termed Only Call

However, Mr. Hushen said today he had spoken to the President about the matter and could report that last Tuesday's call was the only one initiated by Mr. Nixon.

That conversation, Mr. Hushen said, was primarily about foreign policy. Mr. Nixon inquired about the progress of the strategic arms limitation talks, according to Mr. Hushen. He also "strongly endorsed" the job Mr. Kissinger had done for him and said he hoped that the Secretary of State would remain in the new Administration, Mr. Hushen said.

President Ford replied that he, too, hoped that Secretary of State Kissinger would remain, according to Mr. Hushen.

Mr. Nixon also informed the President he expected to be going into the hospital soon. Mr. Nixon entered a hospital in Long Beach, Calif., today.

Mr. Hushen also reported that at the beginning of the conversation, Mr. Nixon had made a "passing reference" to the public reaction that followed President Ford's decision to give him an unconditional pardon. He did not say what the reference was.

Previously President Ford had called Mr. Nixon shortly after he took office, to thank

him for a message of congratulations after Mr. Ford's first speech to Congress. Mr. Ford made the call just before announcing his selection of Nelson A. Rockefeller as his Vice-presidential nominee.

In a brief chat with reporters aboard an Air Force plane today, Mrs. Ford said that Mr. Nixon had telephoned on several occasions. "Oh yes," they have talked, she said, "but not on any regular basis."

"They have had discussions on what's going on," she said. "After all, you don't just leave Washington and go out to California and be left without any word."

Mrs. Ford, who will speak tomorrow at a fund-raising luncheon for 16 Republican women candidates for state office in Illinois, did not give any further details of the conversations between President Ford and Mr. Nixon.

She would not say how often they had spoken but added only: "It is not a regular type thing, just on occasion."

Her press secretary, Helen Smith, said later, after checking with Mrs. Ford, that the "only calls Mrs. Ford is aware of have been initiated by President Nixon."

Mrs. Ford also said that she was "quite embarrassed" that her youngest son, Steven, had been two months late in registering with his draft board.

"I thought it was more or less my fault because I hadn't reminded him," Mrs. Ford said. It slipped my mind." It was reported last week that Steven, who is 18 years old, had not reported to the Selective Service until after Mr. Ford had become President.

Mrs. Ford also said that she was not disappointed at the somewhat slow response by draft evaders and military deserters to the President's offer of conditional amnesty to Vietnam-war resisters.

President Ford "pretty much expected the reaction," Mrs. Ford said. "He didn't think it would be a popular one [decision] but he thought it was right."

Recreation Funds Approved

WASHINGTON, Sept. 23 (AP) — A House subcommittee on national parks approved today legislation that would more than double Federal funds available for the development of outdoor recreation areas and the preservation of historic sites.