

Watergate Pardons Draw Many Protests

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WASHINGTON (AP) — President Ford's consideration of pardons for all Watergate figures drew a barrage of protests Tuesday from Congress, with one Senate leader declaring that such a step would "complete the cover-up of the cover-up."

Ford's rapport with his for-

mer colleagues already had been strained with his pardon Sunday of former President Richard M. Nixon. An aide's announcement Tuesday that he was pondering similar action for all others tied to the scandal drew a new — and even more negative — shock wave.

"I hope this will get no further than a study," said Senate Democratic Whip Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia. "Making a second mistake won't help matters. Pardoning all those connected with Watergate would complete the cover-up of the cover-up."

House Republican Leader John J. Rhodes of Arizona said he supports Ford's pardon of Nixon but "it does not necessarily follow that a similar pardon should be issued to those individuals under the former president who participated in criminal activity."

The others, Rhodes said, "were not presidents of the United States and have not been forced to suffer the special consequences that a fallen president must bear. Also, their fates are not directly connected with the well-being of the Republic."

Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr., D-N.C., declared that "I can't imagine that he could possibly make such a mockery of the principle of equal justice under law by pardoning these men who undertook to steal from the American people their right to a free election and to undermine the process by which presidents are chosen."

Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., expressed the hope that Ford "would declare at least a 30-day moratorium on any further pardons over Watergate."

"The tidal wave of national criticism over his pardon of Mr. Nixon should have shown the President that his instincts are clearly out of touch with the vast majority of the people of America," Kennedy said.