

Ford Hints At Pardon Secret

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WASHINGTON (UPI) — President Ford Friday told a group of Republican governorship candidates that he has not yet revealed all the reasons for his controversial decision to pardon former President Nixon.

DURING A strategy and picture-taking session with 11 GOP statehouse challengers, both Mr. Ford and his chief political advisor, Dean Burch, alluded to still-secret information and said that Ford might reveal it soon.

Following the meeting in the office, Tennessee Gov. Winfield Dunn, said Mr. Ford told the group he "might be able to explain in the not-too-distant future a number of things" about the pardon issue.

Dunn, chairman of the Republican Governors Association, said Mr. Ford did not elaborate on his remark. But two others in attendance verified the statement.

JAY HAMMOND, Republican candidate for Alaskan governor, said Mr. Ford mentioned the confidential information in answer to a question from the group. But he said the same thought was volunteered earlier in a briefing by Burch.

BURCH spoke of "some information that the President may or may not reveal that played an important part in his decision," according to Hammond.

James Granberry, Texas gubernatorial challenger, told reporters Burch disclosed that Mr. Ford was "privy to some information that . . . he might make public but also might never make public."

"I didn't think too much about it because the President has a lot of information of that sort," Granberry said.

ALL THREE men said the remarks were made in passing, without much emphasis. They said there was no hint as to the topic of the information, including whether it related to Nixon's apparent worsening physical problems, his reported low spirits, or to the difficult state of his finances.

Burch is a former chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, a confidant of Sen. Barry Goldwater, R-Ariz., and for many years one of the most influential conservatives in the Republican Party.

THE COMMENTS from the politicians came as Nixon's personal psychiatrist, Dr. Walter Tkach was

telling reporters in San Clemente that the ex-President was "suffering from severe physical strain and physical fatigue," and had developed a new blood clot in his left leg.

Earlier, a White House spokesman told reporters he could not discount reports that Nixon's health was a factor in Mr. Ford's decision to pardon him.

Responding to persistent accounts that Mr. Ford's abrupt decision last Sunday to pardon his predecessor was motivated by Nixon's weakened physical and emotional condition, Deputy Press Secretary John W. Hushen said:

The President is of course concerned about the former president's health, but the health of the nation is more important than the health of one man . . . and that's his paramount concern."

Mr. Ford's decision to short circuit the judicial process has been roundly criticized by many lawyers, leaders of both political parties and a cross section of the American public. But Hushen replied "Yes, he does" when asked if the President still felt the nation was healthier for the pardon.