

Nor had he committed himself to consider them. The very next day, he said, he told Haig that he was making no recommendation whatsoever about anything having to do with a possible Nixon resignation or a pardon.

Ford also admitted that he had misled the public during that period—although he managed to paint the prevarication white. The President recounted how he had learned from Haig on Aug. 1 about the presidential tape of June 23, 1972 that, under the Supreme Court's decision, was soon to go to Federal Judge John Sirica for use in the conspiracy trial of Nixon's former aides. The tape was to force Nixon's resignation because it clearly demonstrated how he had tried to obstruct the investigation of Watergate. When he heard about the tape, said Ford, he was "stunned." For months he had been saying that the President was not guilty of any impeachable offense.

Despite his knowledge of the tape's

contents, Ford continued to say that he believed in the President's innocence while making a three-day tour of Mississippi and Louisiana. Ford's rationalization: any change in his position might lead the press to conclude "that I wanted to see the President resign to avoid an impeachment vote in the House and probable conviction vote in the Senate."

Sudden Change. As Ford himself reminded the subcommittee, he declared at his first presidential press conference, held on Aug. 28, that he would make no decision on pardoning Nixon prior to some kind of legal conclusion. Why then did he issue the pardon on Sept. 8? Ford did not really explain his sudden change of heart, except to say that he had become increasingly worried that the prosecution of the former President would generate passions that "would seriously disrupt the healing of our country from the wounds of the past."

Why had Ford not insisted that Nix-

on confess his guilt before giving him his pardon? The President replied that he did not think it was proper for him to have made such a demand. But he also made it clear that he felt that Nixon had admitted guilt by the simple fact of accepting the pardon.

Some of the members of Congress were worried about what Ford's pardoning of Nixon did to the nation's standards of equality under the law. California's Don Edwards, a liberal Democrat, wondered how Ford would explain American justice to his students if he were a high school teacher in Watts or Harlem. Ford's reply was that Nixon was the only President to resign in shame and disgrace; that, he implied, was punishment enough. South Carolina's James R. Mann, a conservative Democrat, asked if Ford agreed with "the maxim that the law is no respecter of persons." Ford's reply: "Certainly it should be." The gentle, courtly Mann seemed about to follow up the question

THE PRESIDENCY/HUGH SIDNEY

Gerald Ford's Old Clothes

Jerry Ford moved in genial confusion through the Midwest last week wearing his WIN button and the same blue suit two days in a row. He stayed in Harry Truman's old suite at the Muehlebach in Kansas City and was made a member of the Future Farmers of America. He did not dodge any protesters or reporters. In Sioux Falls the supporters of George McGovern were swept into his hammy grip just as readily as others.

The presidential barnstorming's impact on the congressional elections next month may be entirely uncertain; but Ford's road show is more evidence that the new President is fighting a good campaign against self-isolation. No matter what they say now about the economy, oil and the Nixon pardon being Ford's main problems, his biggest battle is with himself. The kind of frontal criticism Ford is getting usually encourages a President to seek protection. Behind him the Oval Office enlarges the impulse, offering opulent seclusion as the angry world goes by.

Shortly after Ford moved into the White House he went back to his Alexandria home to pick up his shoe trees. A graduate of the Nixon School of Imperial Protocol was aghast because American Presidents are not supposed to indulge in such menial tasks. Fortunately Ford has not as yet found out that he is completely above the humdrum routines of daily existence.

The army of White House advance men hit Ohio State University like a flying wedge when Ford decided to speak there recently. An argument arose over whether to have a small table with a water pitcher beside the lectern. The university president wanted it, but the White House disagreed. Old-fashioned image. To the everlasting glory of the Buckeyes, they carried the field and there was a water pitcher on a table beside the lectern.

The monstrous machine that has grown up around the White House is frequently idiotic and it will cut a President off from the real world if he does not fight it tooth and claw. It is little things like shoe trees and water pitchers that keep a President anchored to the ground on which the rest of the people walk. They are the tiny nerve ends of judgment. If enough of them are dulled from nonuse, a President can slip into narcosis.

Ford seems to understand this and he is clinging to his old lifestyle. He uses Sir Walter Raleigh pipe tobacco, sometimes out of a can. After Daughter Susan and Photographer David Kennerly gave Ford his new pup, Liberty, the President stuffed some dog biscuits into his pockets. As plain folks know, the new master of a golden retriever should pass out the rewards and feed the dog for a few weeks. The President is going to have crummy pockets for a while, and when the White House cook gives Ford his English muffins in the morning, Ford is going to give Liberty his bowl of chow.

Ford's suits have been comfortably baggy and wrinkled. The men's clothiers are planning a massive counterattack to put him into some of those fastidious, elder-statesman outfits that Nixon and Johnson wore. No wrinkles, no bulges, no flaws. Nobody who really works can keep clothes like that, which may have been part of our trouble. Ford has been seen with buckle shoes, no-cuff pants and colored shirts. The other day he had on a gray shirt. Not a dirty shirt. Just a gray-colored shirt, like one of those which children and wives get for fathers and husbands.

Ford carefully puts his feet up at the end of the day and likes a martini—in fact two. He is on an 1,800-calorie diet to get off six stubborn pounds, but he has insisted on devoting some calories to Beefeaters gin and a touch of vermouth in the evenings. To stretch the gin the White House valets put in extra ice.

When his tennis companion goofs one, Ford says, "Come on, partner." He does not like to lose. When he has his experts in, Ford listens. But sometimes, if he is not certain he understands, he doesn't fake it. "Let's see if I've got it straight," he says, then plays back what he heard. His major economic speech before a joint session of Congress was at 4 p.m. E.D.T. because that was a working hour for everybody in Washington. After dinner is show biz.



LIBERTY & FRIEND