

Mr. Nixon's health—and the Congressmen never got around to asking him.

In fact, the panel was unable to ask Mr. Ford a number of questions it might have. It decided to limit its members to only five minutes of questions apiece. By the time some had finished thanking Mr. Ford for coming, they had little time left for much else. The arrangement angered panel member Elizabeth Holtzman (D., N.Y.) and her questioning—or lecturing, as one GOP member saw it—gave Mr. Ford his toughest moments.

Rep. Holtzman maintained that “dark suspicions” remain about Mr. Ford’s motivations, and then hit the President with a staccato of questions. Was there a deal? Why did he move with such “haste”? Why didn’t he consult his Attorney General on the matter? Is it possible that Mr. Ford’s real motivation was to ensure that tapes of Ford-Nixon conversations might never come to light? Mr. Ford emphatically broke in to declare there was no deal, but some of the Congresswoman’s questions never got answered.

When it was all over, reaction on the panel split along party lines. Extremely liberal Democrats like Rep. Holtzman remained unconvinced. Rep. Peter Rodino, the New Jersey Democrat who chairs the full Judiciary Committee (but who didn’t ask any questions yesterday), was asked if the President had “convinced” him. Well, Mr. Rodino said with a kind of shrug, he “accepts” Mr. Ford’s explanation. Republican Wiley Mayne of Iowa thought Mr. Ford had “certainly laid to rest many of the rumors.” However, Mr. Mayne still thinks Mr. Ford acted “prematurely.”

Asked how he thought things had gone, presidential counselor Robert Hartmann looked coldly at his questioner, then turned and walked away. Ford counselor John Marsh thought the testimony had been “very helpful.” And subcommittee chairman William Hungate of Missouri said the panel will probably call more witnesses.

## Historic Gamble

# Ford’s Testimony on Pardon Gives Insights on Pressures of Transition

By DENNIS FARNEY

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WASHINGTON — President Ford, in a calculated risk, tried to put his controversial pardon for Richard Nixon behind him.

In a historic appearance before a congressional committee, he declared anew that “there was no deal, period,” between himself and his predecessor.

Indications were that the President probably enhanced his political standing, while failing to close the book on the pardon, a decision that more than any other, has sapped the strength of the young administration.

Not in at least a century, and perhaps not ever, had a President voluntarily appeared before a congressional committee. Folklore has it that Abraham Lincoln once did, to defend his wife against ugly rumors that she was a Civil War spy. But many historians believe Mr. Lincoln merely met some Congressmen informally, not at a formal hearing as did Mr. Ford yesterday.

In the view of Ford confidants, this President had to risk such a meeting. They told him his gamble might rekindle the controversy and hurt Republican candidates in the coming election. Nevertheless, they argued, the bold stroke was the best way possible of firmly reestablishing the most basic assets of his presidency—his reputation for directness and candor.

And so, as Mr. Ford faced a House Judiciary subcommittee beneath the hot televi-

sion lights, a drama unfolded on two levels. On one level, it was an attempt by a President to regain the political initiative he lost on Sept. 8. But on another it was an account of how one man, who neither sought nor expected the presidency, reacted under enormous stress and pressure.

In a detailed account that largely elaborated on previous presidential statements instead of breaking new ground, Mr. Ford said:

—His primary purpose in granting the pardon was to switch national attention “from the pursuit of a fallen President to the pursuit of the urgent needs” of a sound economy and a peaceful world.

—He didn’t place any preconditions on the pardon—he didn’t tie it to a confession of guilt by Mr. Nixon, for example. To the contrary, Mr. Ford indicated, his chief fear was that the former President mightn’t accept the pardon, thus dragging the nation through a prolonged trial and crippling the capacity of the Ford administration to get on to other matters.

—The subject of a possible pardon for Mr. Nixon first was broached to Mr. Ford on Aug. 1, a week before Mr. Nixon stepped down. Mr. Ford said it was Nixon Chief of Staff Alexander Haig who raised the matter while advising him that Mr. Nixon would soon release evidence that probably would devastate his presidency.

—Almost to the very end, Nixon men were considering some explosive “options.” Among others, these included the possibility that Mr. Nixon might pardon himself; that he might pardon various Watergate defendants, then himself and then resign; or that he might try to “ride it out” for a while longer.

—Mr. Nixon brought “shame and disgrace” upon the White House. Moreover, Mr. Ford said, his acceptance of the pardon is tantamount to an admission of guilt.

The President’s 45-minute statement left at least one big question hanging: Why did he act so suddenly to pardon Mr. Nixon, only 10 days after he indicated in a press conference that he would await formal charges? Mr. Ford said that “shortly” after the press conference he became “greatly concerned” that the matter would damage the country unless ended soon. He never explained what aroused his concern—although he did say it didn’t have anything to do with