

# Ruth Hits Timing Of Nixon Pardon

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Outgoing Watergate prosecutor Henry S. Ruth Jr. said yesterday that the pardon of former President Nixon was "atrocious" in its timing and deficient for failing to require Nixon to confess guilt in the Watergate affair.

Ruth said that while he had thought it was "inevitable" that President Ford would ultimately pardon his predecessor, "I never dreamed in my own mind that the pardon would come before the Watergate jury was sequestered."

The pardon was given Sept. 8, 1974, a month before the start of the Watergate cover-up trial of high Nixon White House aides. Prosecutors feared that the pardon, by excusing the former President, might make jurors reluctant to convict his underlings.

"Fortunately, the timing did not hurt the Watergate trial, but no one knew on Sept. 8 whether or not it would," Ruth said in an interview on "Face the Nation" (CBS, WTOP).

"I would have hoped that a

pardon given would have been conditioned on admission of guilt," he added.

Ruth, who resigned last week and issued a final report on the prosecutor's office, defended his decision to prosecute former Treasury Secretary John B. Connally on a bribery charge.

The case was brought "under normal standards," Ruth said, adding that he did not think he owed Connally an apology. But Ruth said that when a defendant is acquitted, "he should be regarded by the citizenry as a man who has not been guilty of anything."

Ruth said his office sought the elusive goal of equal justice among Watergate defendants and achieved some success. He added, "As to people who didn't go to jail en masse for long periods of time, I would imagine those sitting in jail with five-year sentences for robbery might be upset about equal justice."