

Ford and Watergate



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ALTHOUGH the pardoning of Richard Nixon produced a political backlash, President Ford not only would do it again but he may also exonerate other Watergate figures by granting them presidential appointments.

He has mentioned to aides that former Attorney General Richard Kleindienst, ex-White House aide Harry Dent and ex-Representative Wendell Wyatt, (Rep-Ore.), were caught in technical violations. All three pleaded guilty to minor Watergate-related crimes.

The President believes they are honorable men who have paid for their mistakes. He would like to give them back their good names by appointing them again to positions of public trust. He has in mind some honorary but prestigious spot for them, possibly on a presidential board or commission.

By bringing these Watergate figures back into government, the President might revive the controversy over the Nixon pardon. But there is a streak of Harry Truman in Mr. Ford. Just as Truman was stubbornly loyal to his friends, President Ford isn't likely to let political considerations deter him.

He still thinks it was right to pardon Nixon and spare the former President from being dragged through the courts. Mr. Ford is equally persuaded that some of the Watergate people deserve public rehabilitation.

FOOD STAMP SCANDAL: Close to three million Americans, who aren't entitled to food stamps, are using them to buy food below cost — if an unreleased Agriculture Department study is correct.

The food stamp program helps feed 17 million Americans at a cost to the taxpayers of \$4.4 billion.

A survey of 30,000 households revealed that more than 17 per cent of the recipients were ineligible. The sampling is supposed to be an accurate index of food stamp abuses across the nation.

Supporters of the food stamp program, however, have told us they believe the study is slanted to discredit the program. It's no secret that the Agriculture Department would like to get out of the food stamp business and let the states handle the problems of feeding the hungry.

In four states, the study found more than 30 per cent of the food stamp recipients were ineligible. Illinois had the worst record, with a startling 51 per cent ineligible. Massachusetts was close behind, with 50 per cent. Georgia was next, with 31 per cent; then Montana, with 30 per cent.

Supporters of the program claim the ineligibility figures have been made to look worse than they are, because people who are entitled to food stamps are counted as ineligible if they get tangled in government red tape. Or even if they sign their nickname rather than their formal name.