

FORD BARS PLEA THAT NIXON QUIT

Says President Is Innocent
'But Time Will Tell'

By MARJORIE HUNTER

Special to The New York Times

BOSTON, March 11—Vice

President Ford said today that he was still convinced that President Nixon was not involved in Watergate or its cover-up "but time will tell."

The Vice President also said he would not join those asking that Mr. Nixon step down from the Presidency for the good of the country or the good of the Republican party.

"That would be asking a person to admit guilt when he believes he is innocent," Mr. Ford said.

His defense of the President—seemingly less vigorous than on earlier occasions—came in answer to questions posed by members of the Harvard College Republican Club.

The Vice President flew here late today to receive a Man of the Year Award from the Harvard Republican group and to address a gathering of the Middlesex Club, also a Republican organization.

Visited Philadelphia

Earlier today, Mr. Ford toured manpower training projects in black sections of Philadelphia and pledged continued Federal aid to such community-based programs to train the unemployed.

As young Harvard Republicans questioned the Vice President inside the Harvard club, other young men and women gathered outside and chanted "Impeach Nixon—dump Ford." The police dispersed the crowd without incident.

Later, at a press conference in downtown Boston, Mr. Ford was asked if President Nixon had briefed him on the duties and responsibilities of the Presidency.

"The President hasn't briefed me as such," Mr. Ford replied, smiling broadly. "But many of the responsibilities he has delegated to me have given me an opportunity to see first hand the responsibilities not only of the Vice President but the President as well."

'Out on My Own'

In addition, he said, he has "gone out on my own" to in-

spect facilities such as those of the Strategic Air Command.

"These and other things have helped prepare me if the unfortunate should happen," Mr. Ford said.

During his appearance before the Harvard College Republicans, a questioner noted that former Vice President Spiro T. Agnew had suggested last year that if Mr. Nixon were removed from office, he, too, would leave. Mr. Ford was asked if he felt the same way.

"Well, I think the Constitution would take care of that," he replied. "I'd have no other alternative [than to succeed to the office of the President]."

'Not Compromised'

Asked if he felt that his convictions had been compromised by defending President Nixon against critics, Vice President Ford said: "My loyalty to the President and the White House have not compromised my convictions at all."

"Policywise," he said, "this Administration has done a good job and I have no hesitancy to approve its policies."

However, he added, "I firmly deplore and condemn individuals involved in Watergate. Those convicted must pay the penalty."

Later, Mr. Ford said, "I don't happen to believe on the basis of the evidence I am familiar with—and I think I'm familiar with most of it—that the President was involved in Watergate per se or involved in the cover-up, but time will tell."

Pledging continued loyalty to Mr. Nixon he observed: "You don't have a President and Vice President going off in two directions."

The Vice President also said in answer to other questions that he did not favor legalizing the use of marijuana and that he favored return of the death penalty in kidnapping cases.

Mr. Ford also indicated he thought that the House Judiciary Committee might vote for impeachment of the President. He said he thought that the committee would act by the end of April and that "the House would act a month thereafter. By the end of May," he said, "I think we will know what the House will do, one way or another."

In his whirlwind tour of the manpower projects in Philadelphia, the Vice President gave every appearance of a man on the campaign trail.

As Secret Service agents watched nervously, Mr. Ford plunged into predominantly black crowds gathered on the street corners. "Good to see you," "How are you?" he kept repeating as he pumped extended hands at what was his first venture into the inner cities since becoming Vice President.