

'Nixon Is Innocent,

Concord, N.H.

Vice President Gerald R. Ford said yesterday that President Nixon is innocent of any involvement in the Watergate break-in and innocent "by preponderance of evidence" of any part in the coverup scandal.

"President Nixon is innocent, period," Ford said.

The Vice President said

there are excerpts in the 1300 pages of White House conversation transcripts "that can be taken out of context that somebody might construe" as evidence Mr. Nixon took part in the coverup. But Ford said he himself did not believe this.

"John Dean, by his own word, admits the President didn't know about it," Ford said.

When reporters at a news conference here pressed him on the apparent difference in his statements about the break-in as opposed to the coverup, Ford said: "President Nixon is innocent, period."

He said, "It's my judgment no evidence is available of an impeachable offense."

Ford was in New Hampshire to attend a \$25-a-ticket fundraising reception for the state Republican party in Manchester.

Ford said Mr. Nixon in 1971 agreed to raise milk support prices to 80 per cent of parity "because about 120 House members and 30 senators" had introduced bills to raise the support even higher, to 90 per cent.

If the Watergate committee disagrees with that, the Watergate committee doesn't know what it's talking about," he said.

Ford said he wondered how many of those 120 House members and 30 senators also received substantial campaign contributions from milk producers.

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