

Congress Reacts Angrily

Very Few Back Granting of More Pardons

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Congress, already in a furor over President Ford's pardon of Richard M. Nixon, reacted angrily yesterday to a White House statement that pardons are being considered for other Watergate figures.

Very few lawmakers supported the idea, and most reactions ranged from moderate disapproval to fury. Outside Congress the reaction was also strongly negative.

"I think it would be viewed as an abuse of presidential power," said the normally mild-mannered House Speaker Carl Albert (D-Okla.). "Would it mean that all politicians in trouble would be pardoned?"

Senate Democratic Whip Robert C. Byrd (W.Va.) warned, "Making a second mistake won't help matters. If it's a trial balloon," intended to sound out public sentiment, "it's a bad one. It would complete the cover-up of the cover-up."

House GOP Leader John J. Rhodes (Ariz.) said that while he supported the Nixon pardon because of special factors in the case of an ex-President, "it does not necessarily follow that a similar pardon should be issued to those individuals under the former President who participated in criminal activity. After all, they were not the President of the United States and have not been forced to suffer the special consequences that a fallen President must bear.

Also, their fates are not directly connected with the well-being of the Republic."

Rep. Barber Conable (N.Y.), chairman of the House Republican Policy Committee, said, "I'm not sure that's what the American public had in mind when they complained about a double standard of justice. I don't think they were concerned about equal justice

See REACT, A 18, Col. 1

REACT, From A1

for Haldeman and Ehrlichman. I think the President had better go a little slow on this."

Rep. Bob Michel (Ill.) House GOP Campaign Committee chairman, said, "Oh gad, I can't imagine that."

Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr. (D-N.C.), who headed the Senate Watergate committee, said, "I didn't think Ford would be foolish enough to grant absolute pardon to President Nixon... I can't imagine he would make such a mockery of equal justice, by pardoning these men who undertook to steal from the American people the right to a free election and undermine the process by which presidents are chosen."

Sen. Robert Taft Jr. (R-Ohio), who had endorsed the Nixon pardon, said, "I don't think I'd go along with" pardons for others.

Sen. James L. Buckley (Cons.-R-N.Y.) issued a statement calling the Nixon pardon "premature" and then told reporters that while he hadn't any objections to a review of clemency for those already convicted and sentenced, he believed the Sept. 30 trial of former Nixon aides H. R. (Bob) Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman and others should be allowed to go forward, to establish the facts, before any consideration of clemency for them.

Sen. John L. McClellan (D-Ark.) said, "I don't think pardons are justified at this time."

Sen. Ted Stevens (R-Alaska) said, "I don't believe we ought to start a concept like that." He also was critical of the Nixon pardon.

Sen. Robert T. Stafford

(R-Vt.) said, "I hope personally that serious considerations will decide the President not to do it. The courts and prosecutions should run their course."

The angriest and most caustic criticism came from Democratic liberals.

"This is very premature; the American people won't stand for it," said Sen. Warren G. Magnuson (D-Wash.).

Sen. Walter F. Mondale (D-Minn.) said, "It's incredible, and I surely hope the President reconsiders before he makes the most tragic mistake of his career." Mondale said he will propose a constitutional amendment allowing Congress to overturn future presidential pardons by a two-thirds vote.

Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) said, "I would hope the President would declare at least a 30-day moratorium on any further pardons over Watergate. The tidal wave of national criticism over his pardon of Mr. Nixon should have shown the President that his instincts are clearly out of touch with the vast majority of the people of America. In the current atmosphere a premature pardon for others involved in Watergate would be even a bigger mistake."

Rep. John Brademas (D-Ind.), chief Democratic assistant whip in the House, said, "Compounding one injustice with another does not make for justice."

Reps. Don Edwards (D-Calif.) and John Conyers (D-Mich.) called for a full congressional investigation if Mr. Ford pardons others besides Mr. Nixon, and Rep. Jerome Waldie (D-Calif.) called the new announcement "almost incomprehensible."

"Well, we're going to empty out the prisons now," said Sen. Daniel K. Inouye (D-Hawaii).

While liberals were the most critical, Republicans and conservative Southern Democrats also expressed opposition.

"This certainly is the best way to get rid of Watergate," said Sen. John Sparkman (D-Ala.) caustically, "but what about John Dean, what about Jeb Magruder? I just don't know where you stop."

"I think it might be well to think first and then act, rather than act and then

think," said Sen. James B. Allen (D-Ala.).

"That's the fallacy of our thinking when we depart from the law. There's no end to what it can encompass," said Sen. Lowell P. Weicker (R-Conn.), who was a member of the Watergate committee.

Sen. Jacob K. Javits (R-N.Y.) said, "I thought it was a mistake to act so precipitately about the Nixon pardon, and I feel similarly about the others."

Sen. James Eastland (D-Miss.), in a cryptic comment, said he favors a pardon for former Attorney General John N. Mitchell, but gave

no explanation.

Rep. G. V. (Sonny) Montgomery (D-Miss.), one of three House members who voted against accepting the House Judiciary Committee impeachment report, was one of the few members yesterday who had anything favorable to say on the new pardon idea. "I really have no strong feelings either way," he said. "But if this would close the book on Watergate forever so we could get on with solving the problem of inflation, high electric bills, high food prices and low cattle and poultry prices for the farmer, I'm all for it."

House Judiciary Committee Chairman Peter W. Rodino (D-N.J.) reiterated his opposition to pardoning former President Nixon before any charges had been brought. But since Mr. Ford had already taken that action, Rodino told newsmen, "I don't think I'm in a position to make a judgment as to whether he should consider pardoning others." He suggested, however, that decisions to pardon should be made case-by-case.

Rodino also restated his strong opposition to reopening the Nixon impeachment proceedings as some have urged to place the full case

against the former President before the public. Rodino said his committee's inquiry had produced ample evidence for Mr. Nixon's impeachment and removal from office had he not resigned.

When the House returns today from a three-week recess, it would be possible for any member to introduce a resolution of impeachment against Mr. Nixon and demand an immediate vote on it. If that happened, House leaders probably would move to head off a divisive debate with a motion to table—which would kill the resolution without a vote.