

NBC Special Report on Presidential Pardon

Douglas Kiker: Shortly after President Ford announced that he was granting Mr. Nixon a pardon, other White House spokesmen announced that the administration reached an agreement with him on Saturday [7 SEP] under which the government will have full access to all his White House papers and tape recordings for the next three years. This is material which can and probably will be used in future Watergate trials. For more details on the legalities of all this and how the pardon came about, here is NBC correspondent Carl Stern:

Stern: Two friends of President Ford worked out the arrangement, Benton Becker and White House counsel Philip Buchen. It started on Friday, August 30, when Buchen was asked by the President to research a number of questions, including whether Mr. Nixon could be pardoned before trial and conviction.

On September 2, Labor Day, Buchen conferred with Watergate special prosecutor Leon Jaworski. Jaworski said there were no new time bombs that have been discovered about Mr. Nixon.

On September 3, Jaworski submitted a formal memo, including an opinion that it could take another year before Mr. Nixon could even be brought to trial. And that seemed to settle things for Mr. Ford, eager to avoid still another year of Watergate.

The next day [Sept. 4] he dispatched his special emissary, Becker, to meet in California with Mr. Nixon. And, Friday and yesterday [Sept. 6 and 7] details were settled on Mr. Nixon's statement of contrition and access to his tapes and papers.

.... The special prosecutor's office emphasized today that what happened was Mr. Ford's decision and not Mr. Jaworski's. Otherwise the prosecutors seemed resigned to it. The pardon may make it easier to have Mr. Nixon appear as a trial witness, but it will make it harder to convince a jury that his former subordinates should be convicted when Mr. Nixon can't be prosecuted. The former President still, however, is subject to civil lawsuits and to possible state prosecutions. xxxxxx

While the prosecutors were barred by court order from speaking out publicly about Watergate, one man who was not was former Republican counsel to the House Impeachment Inquiry, Albert Jenner. He said he was saddened, amazed and disgusted.

Jenner: Is there a precedent set now? I'm afraid there is, that if it appears that a man in office under investigation will be impeached, and his impeachment sent to the Senate for trial, that he ~~xxxxxxxx~~ may just subvert all that by resigning and then obtain a pardon.

Stern: It is known that prosecutor Jaworski told the White House today's announcement would not delay the trial of Mr. Nixon's subordinates Sept. 30. Defense lawyers said the former Nixon aides would testify that they just did what the President wanted, and that Mr. Nixon if he testifies will just say he was misled. Carl Stern, NBC, Washington.

Kiker: Thank you Carl. Let me ask you this: President Ford said today he hoped this chapter of Watergate. Is that likely in your opinion?

Stern: No, I don't think so, Doug. There are at least two major figures of the Nixon years who have not yet been indicted, who are likely to be indicted; ~~xxxxxxxx~~ There's nothing in Mr. Nixon's pardon that would shield him from prosecution if he failed to cooperate ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ with the prosecution of his former friends. So I think we will hear a lot more about Mr. Nixon and his former associates.....