

Rockefeller Says Accepting Pardon Like an Admission

By Spencer Rich

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Vice-presidential nominee Nelson A. Rockefeller said yesterday that former President Nixon's acceptance of a pardon was "tantamount to admitting guilt," but Rockefeller endorsed the pardon and declined to criticize Mr. Ford for agreeing to let Mr. Nixon keep his White House papers.

Handling questions with ease and agility, Rockefeller also defended his secret communications with President Nixon and John N. Mitchell in 1972 on behalf of a contract for Grumman Aircraft of New York, and said he didn't believe oil firms had deliberately fostered last year's gasoline shortage to boost prices.

In a statement that drew laughs, the multimillionaire nominee and former New York governor said he pays "12 per cent— at Chase Manhattan" as interest charges on borrowed money, despite the fact that his brother David is chief operating officer of the bank.

Senate Rulse Committee Chairman Howard W. Cannon (D-Nev.) called Rockefeller back to appear again today, and said there will be several more sessions to listen to other witnesses, some expected to be hostile.

So far, there is every indication that the nomination will sail through the nine-member committee easily, barring some unexpected revelation.

Cannon told reporters, "I have not seen anything to block the nomination," assuming that the committee can be satisfied that his vast financial holdings don't create potential conflict of interest.

Senate Democratic Whip Robert C. Byrd (D-W. Va.), who pressed Rockefeller hard yesterday in a vain attempt to get him to criticize the Ford agreement on Mr. Nixon's White House papers, also said he didn't see anything so far to endanger the nomination.

Senior committee Republican Marlow W. Cook (R-Ky.) and Senate minority Leader Hugh Scott (R-PA.) gave the same view.

Rockefeller must be approved by majority vote of both the Senate and the House to become Vice President. There has been no House action yet.

On Monday, testimony had focused on Rockefeller's money. He put his net worth at \$62.5 million, and said he also receives income from trust funds valued at \$116 million. He reported that his gross annual income had averaged \$4.7 million a year for the past decade.

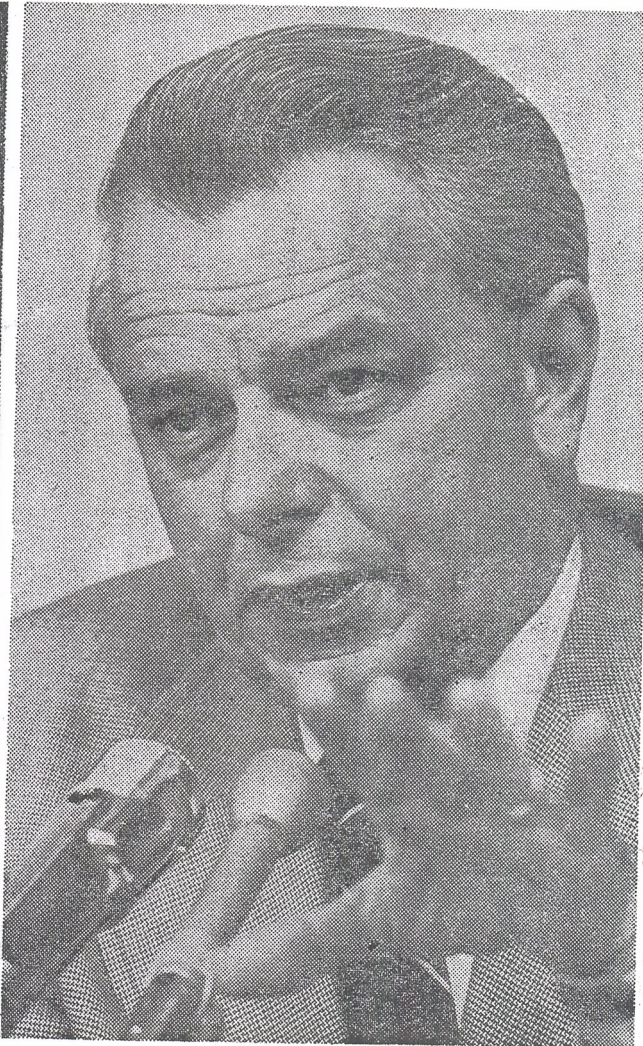
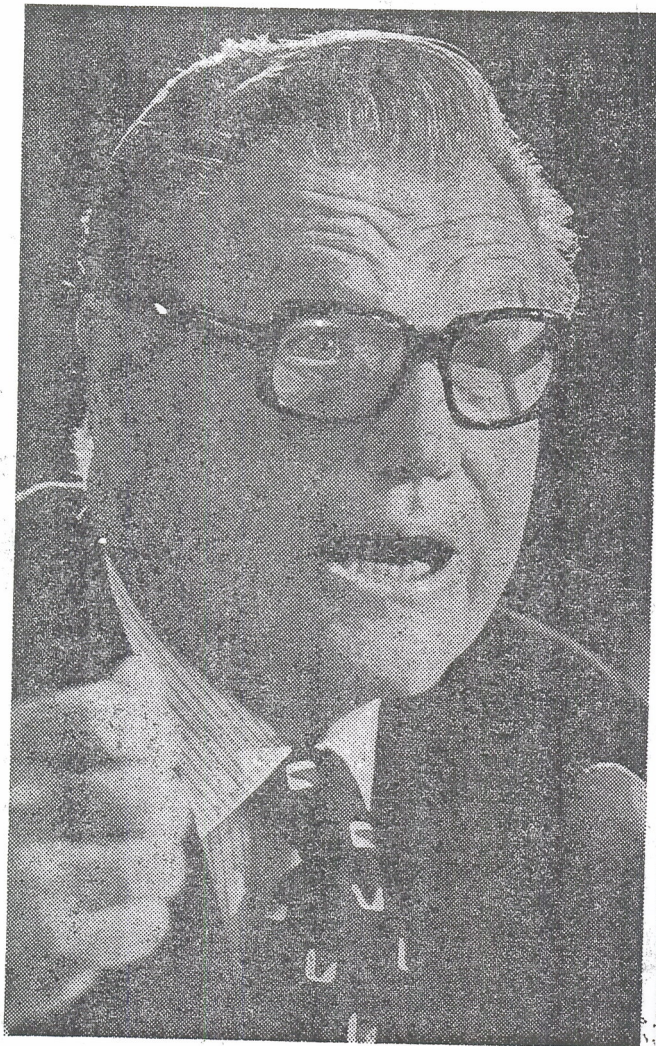
Yesterday, interest shifted to his views on public events and to incidents in his career such as the Grumman contract and the 1971 Attica Prison revolt, when he was governor, in which 43 persons lost their lives.

The hearing opened with Cannon's complaints, with which Scott and Cook concurred, that the three TV networks had decided against live TV coverage, although they praised public TV for carrying the hearing at length in a delayed broadcast and public radio for verbatim broadcasts.

But attention quickly shifted to the Nixon pardon, and Rockefeller said he views the pardon as "an act of conscience, compassion and courage—very controversial for the short run, and for the long run it will probably accelerate the healing of wounds of this country."

"Few people want to see the President in jail," he said, calling the Nixon matter "a special case."

Then he added, "The President (Nixon) accepted a pardon in a way which in my opinion is tantamount to admitting guilt." He refused to say whether, if President, he would pardon other Watergate



By James K. W. Atherton—The Washington Post

Sen. Robert C. Byrd, right, brought the strongest pressure to bear on Nelson A. Rockefeller yesterday.

figures, saying that he would review each case on its merits. On Monday he said he favored adjudication of such cases before any pardon was considered.

The toughest pressure yesterday came from Byrd, who Rockefeller to concede that while he favors full airing of the facts of the Watergate scandal and related cases, the agreement to let Mr. Nixon take his White House papers perhaps circumvents that objective by making it hard for anyone to get at the documents.

If that is so, Byrd insisted, wouldn't it be fair to say that the agreement on the papers isn't "in the best interests of the nation?"

Slightly uncomfortable, Rockefeller ducked the ques-

tion, saying he couldn't criticize the agreement outright because, "I do not know the circumstance which brought the President . . . to make the decision which he did" to give Mr. Nixon the papers.

Byrd pressed him again and again, and he finally said, "I agree in principle" that the Nixon papers ought to be available to reveal all the facts. But he said Byrd wanted to push him into open disagreement with President Ford's decision on the matter and he simply refused to be pushed.

At any rate, he said, finding a way out of the corner into which Byrd was forcing, "I would assume that under the subpoena powers those [records] can be made available" simply by having the Justice Department or Water-

gate special prosecutor subpoena them.

Byrd shot back, "If you were a candidate on a national ticket I think you'd have to show down on this question."

Cannon read into the record a series of letters and memoranda concerning Rockefeller's role as governor in seeking to help Grumman Aircraft Co. of Bethpage, N.Y., out of its financial difficulties in 1972. Rockefeller conceded that he had talked to President Nixon by phone and had also written a letter, which Cannon read into the record, to John N. Mitchell, who had already retired both as Attorney General and as head of the Nixon campaign committee but apparently at this still in active contact with top White House aides.

The object of the activity was to improve the terms of a

Grumman contract for production of 48 F-14 Navy planes, because Grumman felt it couldn't build 48 planes for \$570 million; and, as another way to help, to try to get Grumman a contract for the \$2 billion space shuttle project over a competing firm, North American Rockwell. (North American ultimately got the contract.)

The first document, a memo from Rockefeller aide James Cannon to the governor, was dated June 16. It reported that Chief of Naval Operations Elmo Zumwalt, in a meeting that Zumwalt asked be kept a "non-meeting," suggested to Cannon that one solution would be to leave the existing F-14 contract as it was but give Grumman the space shuttle contract to make up for F-14 losses.