

SF Chronicle
Ford View

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On Picking
CIA Chief

By David S. Broder
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Washington

President Ford said yesterday that there is "considerable merit" in an advisory commission recommendation that the Central Intelligence Agency should normally be headed by someone outside the intelligence field.

In an interview in the White House Oval Office, Mr. Ford said there are "no plans" at this time to replace William E. Colby as the director of the CIA. But his comment on the question of a career man heading the agency appeared to leave Colby's future in doubt.

Mr. Ford said he had read a summary of the report on intelligence operations, submitted last week by a commission headed by former Ambassador Robert Murphy, which suggested, among other things, that the director of intelligence "normally" come from outside the career service.

Colby has been an intelligence officer for 25 years and has come under considerable fire for his defense of the CIA's role in domestic surveillance and reported political assassinations overseas.

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However, Mr. Ford told three interviewers that he thinks "basically" the CIA activities are being well-monitored from the White House now and he warned strongly against investigations that "could be very harmful to the intelligence community."

He said the current Senate investigation of CIA "is right on the border" of incurring that risk and cautioned again that it would be "very ill-advised" for that committee to hold any public hearings on assassinations. Its chairman, Senator Frank Church (Dem-Idaho), has ruled out that course of action.

Mr. Ford also said he would "expect to be informed" by Attorney General Edward H. Levi before

Back Page Col. 8

From Page 1

any government officials are prosecuted for past practices of the CIA and "would certainly want to discuss the pros and cons" of such prosecutions.

In the wide-ranging, hour-long conversation the President also:

- Said he would make his proposals for decontrol of domestic oil prices later this week and would risk another veto battle with Congress if it blocked his action. He said he hoped for cooperation on a "responsible decontrol program" but said a veto of legislation extending the government's price control authority, now scheduled to expire on August 30, is "an obvious possibility" if Congress balks at his plan.

The price of newly-discovered oil already is decontrolled but Mr. Ford wants to free the price of existing oil supplies over a period of years in order to raise prices and decrease consumption. He denied his plan would mean \$1-a-gallon gasoline.

- Said he thinks "there may be a growing feeling" among Democratic congressional leaders "that confrontation is wrong and compromise is right." Victorious in four veto battles with Congress, Mr. Ford said he is "ready to go halfway" in seeking legislative compromise with the Democrats.

- Defended his administration's economic policy against criticisms from black leaders and AFL-CIO President George Meany, and forecast rising employment with a five per cent inflation rate in coming months.

He ruled out special programs aimed at reducing unemployment among black teenagers or other groups with high rates of joblessness, saying that "if we improve the health of the economy... everyone will benefit. That's better than trying to focus on any one segment."

- Said he would "assume" that he will make a formal recommendation of Vice President Nelson Rockefeller as his running mate once he himself is nominated by the Republican convention, rather than opening the vice presidential choice to the delegates without instruction.

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"We very, very badly need a strong intelligence community," he said, "and to destroy it would destroy a very important national security arm of the President."

He said his concern about the Senate investigation was that "if it goes much further with leaks or other unfortunate release of information by one means or another, we could seriously cripple our intelligence effort."

The President noted that "there is not much I can do" about congressional investigations, but said that if the investigators "should act irresponsibly, we might have to exercise limitations" on information given to the committee.