

## Reagan Sees Threat to Ford In Nixon Pardon and Watergate

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BELLEVILLE, Ill., March 9— Campaigning in southern Illinois, with an eye on today's bloting in the Florida primary, Ronald Reagan suggested that President Ford might be vulnerable to attacks from Democrats on Watergate and his pardoning of former President Richard M. Nixon.

"I don't think we want to go into that battle against the Democrats in November having to defend a part of the past which Republicans would like to be left to history," Mr. Reagan told a breakfast meeting in Marion.

Asked later to explain his remark, the former Governor of California, who has always been a champion of Mr. Nixon said that he had not meant to imply that President Ford had anything to apologize for over his granting the pardon.

"I simply was indicating that undoubtedly the Democrats are going to try to keep the history of Watergate alive," he said. "It would be naive for Republicans to believe," he added, that the Democrats "are not going to campaign in the usual manner, which is going to be revive anything they can of that time."

The Watergate reference was deleted by Mr. Reagan in the same speech he delivered before a luncheon group in Belleville.

### Other Issues Raised

Mr. Reagan also brought up several other issues that he said Illinois Republicans would have to consider before voting in the March 16 primary. The eventual G.O.P. nominee must

be a man who "can win in November" and help elect other Republicans to Congress, he said, adding:

"I believe he should not have to defend, against the Democrats, the largest budget deficit in history or a record national debt that has increased by \$95 billion in just 12 months.

"A Republican candidate should not have to defend the decline of United States military strength perceived as second best, or defend the one-way street of detente. And certainly he should not have to defend the Helsinki Pact or the give-away of the Panama Canal."

### Ford Economic Record Hit

Mr. Reagan has previously charged that Mr. Ford's signing of the Helsinki agreement, which accepted the status quo on boundaries in Europe, was morally wrong. He also has said that United States negotiations with Panama were leading to a "give-away" of the Canal Zone.

The former governor also assailed today the Administration's record on the economy, and said that Mr. Ford's leadership in the area had vacillated.

"In March of last year, Mr. Ford appeared on television and drew a line, in no uncertain terms, that the deficit he would tolerate would not exceed \$66 billion," Mr. Reagan said.

"By fall, he put forth a tax cut proposal that suggested that the budget deficit could be \$70 billion. Now we learn that the final deficit is close to \$80 billion. Is that a steady balanced course?" he asked