

Disclosure Is Backed By Ford

By Spencer Rich

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Vice presidential nominee Gerald R. Ford said yesterday that the President should produce whatever documents are needed to help clear up responsibility for the Watergate scandal.

Ford also said that while he considers the President "completely innocent" of any wrongdoing in the Watergate affair, he could understand why Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson had felt forced to resign rather than fire special prosecutor Archibald Cox. In the same situation, Ford said, he would have felt the same way as Richardson and "probably" would have resigned.

Ford's statements came in his second and final day of testimony before the Senate Rules Committee, which appears headed for rapid approval of his nomination.

After the hearing, Chairman Howard Cannon (D-Nev.) said of the nomination, "Personally, at this point, I do not see any problems." Sen. Robert C. Byrd (D-W. Va.) said, "His prospects are excellent . . . I think he made high marks in his appearance." A third committee member, Sen. Robert P. Griffin (R-Mich.), said he believes the nomination could reach the floor as early as next week.

Ford needs a majority vote of the House and Senate for confirmation. House Judiciary Committee hearings tentatively are scheduled to start Nov. 13.

Although Ford didn't make any direct criticisms of the President, he seemed in accord with Republicans who want complete Watergate disclosure from Mr. Nixon as a way to restore public confidence in the White House.

Ford also said he doesn't believe a President can legally stop a criminal prose-

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cution involving himself, and that "I don't think the public would stand for it" if one President resigned and his successor sought to quash any criminal prosecutions of the resigned man.

In other statements bearing on the Watergate case or his own philosophy of government, Ford said:

- The President shouldn't be able to fire the new Watergate prosecutor, Leon Jaworski, unless "7 out of 8" of the bipartisan leaders of the House and Senate and the Judiciary committees concur.

- "You get a more equitable understanding by being open and frank with the news media . . . so I can't imagine me going out and making a hardline speech attacking" the media, or advocating use of the Internal Revenue Service or anti-trust laws to try to bully the press. He said he doesn't share condemnation of the media, which were "the most significant contributors to exposure of the Watergate" scandal.

- "It shocked my sensibilities when I read how the FBI moved in" to surround the building holding Cox's files right after President Nixon fired Cox.

- Richard Nixon can save

his presidency and "the help he'll get from many, many others will enable him to finish the (term of) office with a fine record."

- There are "thousands of inaccuracies" in the book, "Washington Payoff," written by former lobbyist Robert Winter-Berger, who is to appear in closed session of the committee Wednesday. Ford used his condemnation of the book as an occasion to repeat previous denials of various Winter-Berger charges.

- He is favorable to détente with the Soviet Union and China; strongly favors \$2.2 billion arms aid to Israel; would be willing to study possible changes in present U. S. policy on Cuba and SEATO; hopes for eventual reopening of relations with Sweden, and likes the two-China stance.

At afternoon hearings, Ford's nomination was warmly endorsed by Reps. John J. Rhodes (R-Ariz.), George Mahon (D-Tex.), Leslie Arends (R-Ill.), Richard Bolling (D-Mo.), Donald W. Riegle (D-Mich.), Paul N. McCloskey (R-Calif.), Stanford Parris (R-Va.), Martha W. Griffiths (D-Mich.), John M. Ashbrook (R-Ohio) and Joe D. Waggoner (D-La.).