

Ford Claims 'Surprise' At Scandals

Washington

Closely questioned by a Congressman who predicted he would become President within a year, vice presidential nominee Gerald R. Ford swore over and over yesterday that he knew nothing about the Watergate conspiracy or other scandals before they became public.

At a daylong confirmation hearing by the House Judiciary Committee, Representative George E. Danielson (Dem-Calif.), a former FBI agent and U.S. prosecutor, said it was important to get Ford's denials under oath.

"I'm thinking you're going to be President within a year," Danielson told Ford.

Ford said nothing in reply.

But at another point in the hearing, he defended President Nixon's record on Watergate.

"I know of no instance where the President has violated the law," the 60-year-old House Republican leader said. "There have been allegations some (people) in the administration violated the law but no convictions."

Later he modified that statement, noting that John W. Dean III has pleaded guilty, that former White House agent E. Howard Hunt had been convicted and that a number of other administration figures had been indicted in connection with Watergate and other illegal activities.

One by one, Danielson drew denials from Ford that he had prior knowledge of the break-in conspiracy, efforts to raise funds to buy the conspirators' silence, a \$400,000 gift from International Telephone and Telegraph; a \$250,000 gift from financier Robert Vesco, a contribution from the dairy industry, the Ellsberg break-in, the "plumbers" operation, the "dirty tricks" campaign or the President's custom of tape-recording his conversations.

All these, Ford said, came

as surprises to him. He learned of most of them, he said, by reading the newspapers.

Later, Danielson told a reporter he has a "gut feeling" that Mr. Nixon will resign within a year and probably within six months.

Ford, promising to serve as a go-between to reconcile differences between Mr. Nixon and Congress, told his questioners: "I'm not a rubber stamp."

"I do differ with the President," he said. "I have in the past and will in the future in my new role."

He cited one analysis of his House voting record which showed he had taken the President's position as his own 81 or 82 per cent of the time.

"So I'm 16 or 17 per cent off what the White House would think should be a perfect score."

Ford also told the committee that the government paid for the summer clothes he and his wife bought for a trip to China last year.

Ford said the Internal Revenue Service agreed when he put the cost of the clothing on his expense account.

Ford explained that he and his wife went as representatives of the U.S. government. He said she had to purchase walking shoes and skirts longer than those she usually wears, and he had to buy short-sleeved shirts, which, he said, "I never wear."

"I have no apologies for it and the IRS apparently considers it a legitimate expense," Ford said.

United Press



AP Wirephoto

GERALD FORD
'No violations by Nixon'