

By **MARJORIE HUNTER**  
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WASHINGTON, May 2—Vice President Ford said today that he thought President Nixon "could have been more forceful" in investigating the Watergate break-in when he first learned of it.

Mr. Ford also said that he thought that it might be wise if the White House showed "more flexibility" in the dispute over verifying the accuracy of transcriptions of tape recorded conversations between the President and certain key aides.

But while critical of Mr. Nixon's handling of the Watergate affair, Mr. Ford said that he was "convinced beyond any doubt" that the President was innocent of any wrongdoing.

His comments on the Watergate matter came during an interview today on the National Broadcasting Company's "today" program.

The Vice President said that he became convinced of the President's innocence in the Watergate break-in and subsequent cover-up "after reading a good bit of the transcripts." rceefslun

**Question of Forcefulness**

However, asked if he questioned the way the President had handled the matter, Mr. Ford replied:

"I think as you replay the whole scenario, going back to June 17, 1972, that the White House, including the President, could have been more forceful in bringing the people from CREEP into the White House and saying, 'Now, look here. Something's gone wrong. I want to get to the bottom of it. And you better tell me the full story.'

"Now, as I read the transcripts, it seems to me that there was some delay."

Mr. Ford has been highly critical in recent weeks of the

Committee for the Re-election of the President, terming it "an arrogant, elite guard of political adolescents" responsible for the Administration's Watergate troubles.

But he also seemed to indicate today that the White House was at least in part responsible for the continued struggle over Watergate and possible impeachment.

Commenting on the release of the transcripts, he said:

"I wish the White House had done this many months before. I think if the White House had indicated this before, it would have been a far better situation."

While praising the White House for releasing the transcripts, Mr. Ford expressed some measure of support for those members of the House Judiciary Committee who feel that the transcripts are not an adequate substitute for the tapes.

**No 'Real Problem'**

Yesterday, John M. Doar, chief counsel of the committee, reported some discrepancies between the transcripts and some tapes in the committee's possession. The committee voted last night, 20 to 18, to reject the transcripts as a substitute for the tapes.

Asked his views on the issue today, Mr. Ford replied:

"I don't think there's any real problem. If the committee honestly believes that the transcripts presented by the White House are not totally accurate, there can be a procedure worked out so that with the help of perhaps better equipment or better transcribers the total amount that is relevant could be authenticated."

He also reiterated an earlier suggestion—not agreed to by the White House—that Mr. Doar be allowed to monitor the tapes, along with the committee's chairman, Peter W.

Rodino Jr., Democrat of New Jersey, and the ranking Republican on the committee, Edward Hutchinson of Michigan.

However, Mr. Ford said last night at a news conference in Charlotte, N. C., that he would strongly oppose allowing the committee's Republican counsel, Albert E. Jenner Jr., to hear the tapes.

Mr. Jenner has been criticized by Mr. Ford and other Nixon supporters for saying last January that the President should be held responsible for some of the actions of his aides, even if he had not known about them in advance.

At his news conference last night, Mr. Ford also defended his own role in helping to block a House committee's investigation in 1972 of the Watergate break-in.

He said that he was only carrying out "my responsibility as House minority leader in 1972 in seeking to block the proposed investigation by the House Banking and Currency Committee.

The White House transcripts released this week quoted President Nixon as urging White House aides to enlist Mr. Ford's help in rounding up Republican votes against such an investigation.