

GOP Defections Cut Odds, Ford Says

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CHICAGO, July 26—Vice President Ford conceded today that Republican defections from President Nixon's side in the House Judiciary Committee "narrows the odds" on his impeachment.

But he declined to criticize those defecting Republicans and instead took out after "a significant number of Democrats" on the committee who, he said, are playing partisan politics and would be "overjoyed if and when Mr. Nixon were impeached and convicted."

Asked to name those Democrats, Ford said, "You can start out with the group that voted against me" in his confirmation hearings before the same House Judiciary Committee last November.

Voting against Ford in committee were Democrats Don Edwards (Calif.), Jerome Waldie (Calif.), Robert Drinan (Mass.), John Conyers (Mich.), Elizabeth Holtzman (N.Y.), Charles Rangel (N.Y.), Robert Kastenmeier (Wis.) and Barbara Jordan (Tex.) When the nomination reached the

floor Dec. 6, John Seiberling (Ohio) and Chairman Peter W. Rodino (N.J.) joined in the "no" vote.

But Ford, asked specifically about Rodino, said he would "not under any circumstance" question his motives.

The Vice President said he was "disappointed the margin in the House [Committee] is not closer," but said he would not question the motives of Republicans who have indicated they will vote to impeach the President. Ford said he had listened to the argu-

ments of all 38 committee members and found those of the Republicans opposing the impeachment of Mr. Nixon "more persuasive to me."

These arguments, he said, "reaffirmed my own conviction that the President is innocent of an impeachment offense."

On Thursday night at a Republican dinner in Munice, Ind., in the district of Rep. David Dennis, one of Mr. Nixon's most stalwart supporters on the Judiciary Committee, Ford had expressed his belief in the

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President's innocence in particularly emphatic terms. "I can say from the bottom of my heart that the President of the United States, he is right," Ford said to a standing ovation of the Republican faithful.

Today, in a press conference here, Ford attributed no special motive to his emphatic statement of support beyond the fact he wanted to demonstrate his agreement with Dennis in his home district.

Ford also said in Munice that there was in the impeachment effort "a deliberate attempt to undermine the election results" of 1972. Today, asked about this charge, the Vice President said he was not criticizing the Democrats' motives but a number of them were "having the 1972 results affect their judgment to some degree."

In Munice, the Vice President predicted dire domestic and international ramifications from an impeachment and conviction of Mr. Nixon.

"In my judgment," he said, "if the President were impeached and convicted, and I don't think he will be, then the impact on the country on a worldwide basis and domestically would be very, very bad. I think that the uncertainty that would

result domestically would affect the economy and the uncertainty on foreign affairs would be very significant."

Ford said today he disagreed with those Republicans on the committee who favored a delay in the proceedings until it could be determined whether the President might release to the committee the 64 White House tapes the Supreme Court has ordered he turn over to Watergate Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski.

"I think the committee should proceed," he said. Members have "literally tons of evidence and ought

to make their judgment on what is already available," Ford said. But he repeated that he has continually urged the President to "turn over all relevant material" as soon as possible.

The Vice President was asked whether he was concerned that his charge that Democratic members of the committee were opposing the President out of mere partisanship might jeopardize his chances of unifying the country should he succeed Mr. Nixon. He replied: "I think my 25 years in Congress proves I can have adversaries and not enemies."

Ford opened his day in

Chicago with a speech defending the Nixon's administration's economic policies and answering questions from businessmen as part of a regional White House conference on the state of the economy and domestic affairs. He said the President in his televised speech Thursday night had outlined "a very reasoned plan for subduing public enemy No. 1—inflation."

Domestic political controversy should not interfere with this effort, he said. It should go forward, he said, "as if there were no impeachment" proceeding in the House.