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FORD SAYS HE VIEWS NIXON AS PUNISHED ENOUGH NOW; PARDON OPTION KEPT OPEN

DECISION PUT OFF

President Cites Duty of Jaworski to Act as He Sees Fit

By JOHN HERBERS
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Aug. 28 —

President Ford said today that he subscribed to the belief that former President Richard M. Nixon had been punished enough for the Watergate scandals, and that he was leaving open the option of granting Mr. Nixon protection from prosecution or granting him a pardon.

Mr. Ford addressed the question of Mr. Nixon's future in

Transcript of news conference appears on Page 20.

his first news conference since he became President on Aug. 9. [Question 1, Page 20].

His statements, clearly leaning toward leniency for his predecessor, followed those of other Republican leaders. Taken together, they seemed designed to bring about a climate of public opinion in which some step could be taken that would spare the former President prosecution or a prison term.

Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, the Senate Republican leader, recently said that he did not believe Mr. Nixon, having been forced to resign with 2½ years remaining in his term, should be "drawn and quartered." Nelson A. Rockefeller, Mr. Ford's nominee for Vice President, said he agreed with that point of view, and Mr. Ford said today that he did, too.

Asks for Guidance

"But let me add," he said, "in the last 10 days or two weeks, I've asked for prayers for guidance on this very important point. In this situation, I am the final authority. There have been no charges made. There has been no action by the court. There's been no action by any jury, and until any legal process has been undertaken, I think it's unwise and untimely for me to make any commitment."

At the same time, he made it clear that the special prosecutor, Leon Jaworski, had the responsibility to take whatever action he saw fit against "any and all individuals." And as

far as he knows, Mr. Ford added, no one on his staff has got in touch with Mr. Jaworski about the matter.

Several avenues are open for clearing Mr. Nixon of legal charges in the Watergate case. One is for Mr. Jaworski to grant him immunity from prosecution. At the same time, Mr. Ford as President could grant him a pardon, apparently either before or after conviction.

The 30-minute conference was nationally televised but held in the afternoon rather than in the evening, as was customary for Mr. Nixon. The new President seemed to be relaxed and striv-

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ing for informality as he made the following additional points in response to questions:

¶When Mr. Rockefeller is confirmed as Vice President, he will be given responsibilities for preparing legislation and formulating policies in the domestic area. He said that Mr. Rockefeller would also be helpful in the political and foreign policy areas, but he did not say how.

¶Confirming statements of last week by his spokesmen that he will "probably be a candidate" in 1976 for a four-year Presidential term, Mr. Ford also spoke favorably of Mr. Rockefeller as a running mate. "I think Governor Rockefeller and I are a good team," he said. But added that the "final judgment in this matter" would be left to the Republican National Convention. Thus, he sidestepped the question whether the Vice-Presidential selection would be left to the "free choice" of the convention. [Question 4.]

¶Mr. Ford denied charges by some conservatives that in his first 19 days in office he had moved to the left from his basic conservative philosophy. He said that his choosing of Mr. Rockefeller as Vice President and his favoring of leniency for Vietnam draft dodgers and deserters were actions "for the good of the country" that do not "fall into the political spectrum right or left." [Question 2.]

¶The President indicated that his views on antipoverty programs initiated under the Johnson Administration coincided with those of Mr. Nixon, who had sought to move some of them out of the Office of Economic Opportunity to old-line departments and to abolish others. He said that he had no plans to revive the antipoverty agency and pointed out that under new legislation providing block grants of Federal funds, states and cities now had the choice of abolishing or continuing community action agencies and Model Cities programs.

[Question 21.]

President Ford brought note cards with him and spread them on a lectern that was a narrow pillar, broad at the base and the top.

Mr. Hushen called it a more "natural setting."

Where as the former Presidential press secretary, Ronald L. Ziegler, stood close by Mr. Nixon, his successor, J. F. Horst, stood farther away.

Mr. Nixon held his news conferences and speeches in the evenings, during prime television viewing hours.

Mr. Ford's news conference was at 2:30 P.M., during "working hours" as Mr. Hushen described it. True to this same new pattern, he pointed out, the announcement of Nelson A. Rockefeller as Vice President-designate was made at 10 A.M.

The First Question

The question of whether to prosecute Mr. Nixon for his role in the Watergate cover-up has obviously been troubling Mr. Ford since he became President, and that subject along with questions on the economy, dominated the news conference.

The first question was, did he agree with a resolution adopted recently by the American Bar Association asserting that the law applied equally to all men, or did he agree with Governor Rockefeller that Mr. Nixon had suffered enough?

Mr. Rockefeller, asked in Seal Harbor, Me., last Friday how he felt about "amnesty" for Mr. Nixon, said, "I listened to Senator Scott on the air, and as Senator Scott said, he's been hung, and it doesn't seem to me that in addition he should be drawn and quartered."

Mr. Ford, responding to the question, said that he had made a statement at his swearing in that "I had hoped that our former President who brought peace to millions would find it for himself."

"Now the expression made by Governor Rockefeller, I think, coincides with the general view and the point of view of the American people," he said. "I subscribe to that point of view."

He then went on to say that he had asked for prayers and was leaving his options open.

A Pertinent Question

Later in the conference, he was asked whether Mr. Jaworski could in good conscience prosecute the former Nixon aides in the Watergate case as long as there was a possibility that Mr. Nixon might not be prosecuted.

The question was pertinent because Mr. Nixon, shortly before resigning, issued a statement admitting that he had ordered a halt to the investigation of the Watergate burglary by the Federal Bureau of Investigation for political as well as national security reasons.

"I think the special prosecutor, Mr. Jaworski, has an obligation to take whatever action he sees fit in conformity with his oath of office," Mr. Ford replied, "and that

should include any and all individuals, yes."

Mr. Jaworski has not yet indicated what he would do in regard to the former President, now in retirement at San Clemente, Calif. It was learned yesterday that Mr. Nixon had hired a Washington lawyer, Herbert J. Miller Jr., to represent him in the Watergate case, and Mr. Miller is expected to try to persuade Mr. Jaworski not to seek an indictment of the former President.

Mr. Ford's statements on the subject since taking office indicate that he is leaning toward leniency for the former President, just as he is favoring leniency for 50,000 Vietnam draft evaders and deserters in

what he was described as an effort to heal the nation's wounds after years of division.

This has aroused speculation that he plans to grant some form of amnesty both for the Vietnam dissidents and the former President, and that both actions will be found acceptable by a broad spectrum of the public when the time comes. So far, however, he has not acknowledged any connection between the two.

No Jaworski Comment

WASHINGTON, Aug. 28 (UPI)—A spokesman for Mr. Jaworski said today that he had no comment on Mr. Ford's statement and would not answer questions about it.