

Reaction: Is the Honeymoon Over?

"Well," said California's Democratic Representative **Don Edwards**, "that's the end of the honeymoon." That curt comment may prove to be as good a summary as any of the political consequences of President Ford's complete pardon of Richard Nixon. Democrats were almost unanimously opposed. Most of those Republicans who agreed to comment said that they favored the pardon. "It was the only decent and prudent course to follow," declared **Barry Goldwater**. Many Republicans were distressed, however, and the abrupt resignation of Ford's press secretary in protest against his boss's decision could encourage further defections. Whatever else it accomplished, the President's stunning move stirred such deep passions that it could bring his month-long era of good feeling to an abrupt end.

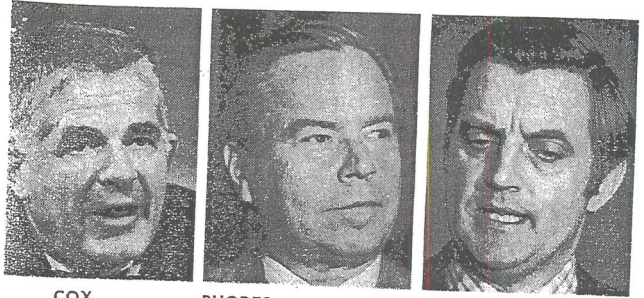
Unlike Richard Nixon's resignation, which had been expected for days before it occurred, his pardon by Ford came as a complete surprise. "You've just ruined my day," groaned **James Giller**, a Manhattan computer analyst, reflecting what may be a widespread reaction to the President's most important decision thus far.

Most critics complained that Ford's action had dealt a devastating blow to the idea that the poorest citizen is equal to a President—or former President—under the laws. "There is the obvious anomaly of punishing people who were working on Nixon's behalf or on Nixon's orders, yet not punishing Nixon," concurred Historian **Arthur Schlesinger**

White House since Aug. 9. Assistant Senate Majority Leader **Robert Byrd** said that he was "greatly disappointed. I think this sets a double standard—one standard for the former President of the U.S. and another standard for everybody else." Senator **George McGovern**, who lost to Nixon in 1972, also emphasized the same point. "It has seemed to me that the central lesson of Watergate should be that no one stands above the rule of law," he said. "It is difficult to understand granting immunity to Mr. Nixon while committing his subordinates to prison." "This deals a terrible blow to the system of justice as we know it," said **Peter Rodino**, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, which called for Nixon's impeachment. "I'm distressed and disquieted by it. It will reopen a lot of old sores."

Many were not necessarily opposed to a pardon, but to a pardon at this time, before Nixon's guilt or innocence had been absolutely established. "No one wished the former President to go to jail," said Minnesota's Senator **Walter Mondale**, "but to grant a pardon for unspecified crimes and acts is unprecedented in American history." Ford "is kind of getting the cart before the horse," judged Oklahoma Representative **Tom Steed**.

"My whole position on Watergate has been to get at the truth," said Historian **James MacGregor Burns**. "To the extent that the par-



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Jr. "It seems to be an act which can only suggest that we do have a double standard of justice in the U.S.—that the President is indeed above the law."

For the most part, Republican politicians fell in line behind their new party chief. Vice President-designate **Nelson Rockefeller**, who had already urged clemency for Nixon, called Ford's pardon "an act of conscience, compassion and courage." The pardon will undoubtedly be controversial in the short run, Rockefeller said, but in the long run it will speed the nation's recovery from Watergate. "I don't think the people want Nixon to stand trial or to be convicted," agreed House Republican Leader **John Rhodes**. "I think Ford is trying to defuse this thing and bring us back together." Among the few Republicans who opposed the pardon were Massachusetts Senator **Edward Brooke** and Tennessee's Senator **Howard Baker**, ranking Republican on the Senate Watergate committee, who said that he was apprehensive about the pardon, fearful that it might prove devastating to the G.O.P. "Watergate is once again an issue," he sighed.

With few exceptions, however, Democrats in Congress were angered by the President's decision—the first real break in the good fellowship that has existed between Capitol Hill and the

don interferes with that process, it is most unfortunate. I am worried that this means that Nixon will not play a role in the completion of facts that he should play. He has never been a voluntary source of facts on Watergate." **Archibald Cox**, whom Nixon fired as special Watergate prosecutor last October, was also afraid that Ford's premature forgiveness had created a situation in which Nixon partisans could claim that he had been the victim of a political vendetta.

"Without a declaration of personal guilt from Nixon, the whole thing is still up in the air," agreed **Chesterfield Smith**, former president of the American Bar Association. "It allows the diehards to continue to cry that he was innocent."

The question uppermost in the minds of most people was what would now happen to those who are under indictment or already in prison for Watergate crimes. **E. Howard Hunt**, who was convicted for his part in the break-in at Democratic headquarters and who is scheduled to testify at the Watergate trial beginning Sept. 30, had his own, no doubt biased answer. "It would really be a mockery to continue the trial," he said. "I certainly would have liked the same indulgence Nixon had."

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