

# 2 Major Reasons For Ford's Action

Washington

President Ford's decision to issue an immediate pardon to Richard M. Nixon came after Mr. Ford was told that the delay would have damaging consequences both to White House political policies and to Mr. Nixon's emotional state, according to sources close to the situation.

At least two friends of Mr. Nixon had communicated to President Ford their belief that the former President was so emotionally depressed that he would have been unable to withstand prolonged indecision.

"Thank God, if he was going to give him a pardon, he didn't wait," one former aide of Mr. Nixon said yesterday. Another person who had seen Mr. Nixon at San Clemente reportedly told the President that the situation was "very bad and getting worse."

Mr. Nixon had known at least since Thursday that President Ford intended to grant him a pardon yesterday, and his statement of acceptance was prepared ahead of time.

According to several sources, President Ford had concluded that he made a political miscalculation in his original decision to wait until the legal process had been completed before issuing any pardon.

"If he was going to do it, this was the time to bite the

bullet," said Robert H. Finch, Mr. Nixon's friend and former White House official. "The President would be subject to far more criticism after the attorneys had gone through the arduous work of preparing a case and seeking an indictment."

Herbert G. Klein, a longtime Nixon associate and former White House communications director, said that the Ford decision, which he praised as "exactly in the best interests of the country," would have proved far more difficult after months of national debate.

"The making of this decision now will serve to unify the country and close the issue," Klein said. "It is also good that he acted well in advance of the (November) election."

Only ten days ago, in the first formal press conference of his administration, Mr. Ford had said that it would be "unwise and untimely" of him to make any commitment to a pardon until legal action was taken.

But the President was aware that political reaction was building in favor of prosecution of Mr. Nixon, a point dramatically confirmed by a Gallup Poll last week that showed that 56 per cent of the American people thought Mr. Nixon should be tried, while only 37 per cent opposed such action.

This political reality, plus

Mr. Ford's decision to "heal the wounds" and his awareness of Mr. Nixon's emotional condition, all led him in the direction of an immediate pardon, one source indicated.

Legal research, which cited the Sam Shephard murder trial in Ohio as a case of prejudicial pre-trial publicity, convinced Mr. Ford that it would be difficult for Mr. Nixon to receive a fair trial, at least until a very long period of time had elapsed.

If the agitation caused by Watergate and its aftermath were to continue for a very long time with no quick means of resolving it by trial, the President was said to have concluded, then a presidential pardon became a means of resolving an issue that would otherwise continue to fester.

After reaching this decision and receiving another report on Mr. Nixon's emotional state, President Ford decided to waste no more time.

One source said that the Ford action was "very unilateral" and would have been done even if Mr. Nixon had decided to remain silent. Another source said he understood that Mr. Nixon had agreed to issue a statement showing "contribution" for what he had done. This source said also that Mr. Nixon had indicated he would not issue future state-



UPI Telephoto

PRESIDENT FORD  
As he announced pardon

ments protesting his innocence.

But whatever the understanding on this point, it was clear that Mr. Nixon had made no agreement to acknowledge criminal conduct.

His statement yesterday, while going far beyond his resignation statements in expressing regret for his Watergate conduct, did not acknowledge legal wrongdoing. Still, one former aide said, Mr. Nixon's admission of "mistakes and misjudgments" was as close as he was likely to come to such an admission.

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