

Nixon's Pardon Proposal

Washington

President Ford dismissed as a "conversational gambit" an offer two weeks ago by former President Nixon to relinquish the unconditional pardon granted to Mr. Nixon, a senior White House official said last night.

The official, commenting on a report in Time magazine that Mr. Nixon had offered to "return" the pardon and Mr. Ford had declined, said that the account is "an essentially accurate" version of a telephone conversation the former president initiated on September 17.

But the White House aide cautioned that Mr. Ford regarded the overture as a "small talk" and that the President "certainly didn't consider it a serious offer."

The news magazine, in an issue scheduled for distribution today, reported that Mr. Nixon had made the offer after telling Mr. Ford he regretted the "trouble" the pardon had caused since Mr. Ford issued it September 8.

One senior White House aide said that he had discussed the September 17 conversation with Mr. Ford

Libel Suit Is Dismissed

Los Angeles

A superior court judge threw out a \$4 million libel suit Friday against Los Angeles Times cartoonist Paul Conrad. The suit had been brought by the president of Union Oil Co., Fred Hartley.

Ruling there was no issue of malice worth considering, the judge gave a summary judgment in favor of Conrad, the Times and its publisher, Otis Chandler.

United Press

and that the account, by Hugh L. Sidey, the chief of the magazine's Washington news bureau, had come from a "friendly chat" Sidey had with the President last week.

Sidey described the pardon discussion in a column in which the newsman said that Mr. Ford's decision to grant the pardon "may be

shown to have been more right than wrong."

Sidey described the conversation as follows:

"A fortnight ago Nixon phoned Ford. Nixon said that he was sorry for all the trouble the pardon had caused. Then he offered to send the pardon back if it would help. No, said Mr. Ford, he did not want that. He told the ex-President to stand firm. It would blow over. Ford told Nixon that he thought his decision was the right one. He still feels that way."

The White House official said that Mr. Ford's recollection of the discussion was that Mr. Nixon had been engaging in a conversational "courtesy" which Mr. Ford felt compelled to "brush aside" in reply.

According to the aide, the pardon comments were but the opening part of a brief conversation, lasting fewer than ten minutes, in which Mr. Ford and Mr. Nixon dealt largely in foreign affairs matters. Mr. Nixon was said to have asked how the strategic arms limitation

talks with the Soviet Union were progressing and urged Mr. Ford to retain Henry Kissinger as secretary of state.

"There was nothing formal about it," the official said of the pardon conversation. "If Mr. Nixon's lawyer sent a legal document proposing to return the pardon that would be another matter."

Associates of Mr. Nixon in California said that they doubt the former president would make a serious offer to return the pardon.

One of the associates, who has discussed the pardon with the former president, said that Mr. Nixon was annoyed that Mr. Ford said at a September 16 news conference that acceptance of the pardon could be interpreted as an admission of criminal guilt.

The West Coast informant suggested that Mr. Nixon had raised the subject with Mr. Ford the next day, September 17, to express his displeasure with the news conference statement.

New York Times