

# A Ford Pledge of Tape Disclosure

## Question Of Role in Pardon

Washington

President Ford says he "would be delighted" to make public any tape recordings of conversations between himself and former President Nixon before Mr. Nixon's resignation.

The President expressed his willingness — assuming only that there would be no legal difficulty with the Watergate special prosecutor — in an impromptu interview with five pool reporters aboard Air Force One Saturday night as he returned from a day of campaigning in North and South Carolina and Kentucky. *19 OCT*

Under White House rules, the interview was not to be made public until late yesterday.

It is not known whether any such Ford-Nixon tapes exist that would shed light on the September 8 pardon or on any other possibly roll Mr. Ford may have played in circumstances leading to the resignation of Mr. Nixon on August 9.

But the question came up last Thursday when the President testified before a House judiciary subcommittee on his reason for the pardon, and he did not answer it.

The automatic tape system installed in the Nixon White House was disclosed by White House aide Alexan-

der P. Butterfield at the Senate Watergate committee hearings on July 16, 1973, and reportedly was dismantled shortly thereafter.

On a Sept. 15, 1972, White House tape already made public, Mr. Nixon suggested to then-White House counsel

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John W. Dean III that then House Minority Leader Ford be asked to solicit the help of Representative William B. Widnall (Rep-N.J.), a ranking member of the House Banking Committee headed by Representative Wright Patman (Dem-Tex.), to steer the Patman committee away from a Watergate inquiry. Any Ford-Nixon tapes conceivably could shed light on that matter.

Mr. Ford was asked specifically about making Ford-Nixon tapes public last Thursday by Representative Elizabeth Holtzman (Dem-N.Y.) during his testimony. The question was one of a volley that Representative Holtzman posed, without waiting for reply.

The President said aboard Air Force One Saturday night that he wished he had had an opportunity to answer the questions, but said she didn't give him a chance. "She didn't ask them," the President said, "she just recited them. I would have been delighted to answer any of the others if I had time."

Mr. Ford said he did not wish to interrupt and appear rude to Representative Holtzman but felt obliged to interrupt once, when she asked about a deal on the

pardon, to categorically say there had been none.

Asked whether he believes Congress should be satisfied with his responses on the pardon, which he said was done primarily to focus national attention on more pressing matters, the President said: "I don't know, but Congress had its opportunity and I really believe I answered any questions . . . I certainly answered anything they asked . . . I certainly hope it has (satisfied them). I don't know what more they would want to know."

Asked whether any conservative Republicans had asked him to withdraw the nomination of Nelson A. Rockefeller to be vice president, Mr. Ford replied: "I wouldn't say anybody seriously." (One Republican, Senator William Scott of Virginia, has publicly called for that action). "I'm still convinced he would make a good vice president," Mr. Ford said.

He said he sees no connection between the nomination's difficulties over Rockefeller's huge gifts to friends, employees and charities, and a post-Watergate heightened sense of public morality.

"Watergate was a cover-up," the President said. "Everything that's come out about Nelson Rockefeller has been open . . . It's a pretty stringent standard (required for confirmation). I ought to know . . . One can't help but wonder how many people on either side of the aisle can undergo this kind of scrutiny. It's pretty rugged . . . I know how he feels. I had the same delay."

The President said "I

wouldn't think" the delay in Rockefeller's confirmation would affect his plans to go to Japan later this year, because he expects Rockefeller to be confirmed by then.

Congress will take up the nomination again after it returns from the November 5 election recess. Mr. Ford is scheduled to visit Japan November 18-22.

Mr. Ford sought to knock down speculation about imminent changes in the cabinet he inherited from Mr. Nixon. "I haven't told anybody on my staff about cabinet changes," he said, and if anyone has been spreading rumors it would have to be "either somebody outside who alleges they're influential" or a lower-echelon staff person.

Mr. Ford expressed confidence in the calming of the Boston school desegregation crisis and defended his refusal to send in federal troops. "What was done by the governor (Francis Sargent) apparently eased the situation, he said. "I don't think us sending in the 82nd Airborne Division would have done any good . . ."

"We followed the right decision. It seemed to work."

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