

Ford Says Nixon's Trip 'Probably Hurt' Campaign

Washington

President Ford said yesterday that Richard Nixon's China trip "probably was harmful" to the Ford election campaign in New Hampshire.

The President cautioned that returns in the Tuesday presidential primary have not been fully analyzed, but when they are, he said, "I presume there will be evidence that it probably hurt."

Mr. Ford made his comments during a taped interview with Ralph Renick of WTVJ in Miami.

Asked about the impact of the Nixon trip, Mr. Ford said, "I think the weight of the evidence we have so far — we don't have all the evidence in — that it probably was harmful, but I wouldn't want to make that comment at this time."

Mr. Ford won the Republican presidential primary in New Hampshire narrowly, taking 51 per cent of the vote over challenger Ronald Reagan.

During the interview Mr. Ford placed heavy emphasis on Mr.

Back Page Col. 6

From Page 1

Nixon's role as a private citizen in Peking.

"President Nixon went to China as a private citizen on the invitation of the Chinese government," Mr. Ford said. "Mr. Nixon did not go to China representing this country.

"He did not speak for this administration in foreign policy."

As for a briefing from Mr. Nixon on his return, Mr. Ford said: "If Mr. Nixon gets some information that he thinks is important, he can communicate it to the proper authorities."

Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger told reporters earlier in the day that Nixon "will be debriefed, but not by me" upon his return.

Mr. Ford said he is optimistic that the New Hampshire victory over Reagan will carry into the Florida primary election March 9.

The President was asked what kind of person Reagan is.

"I've known him for a number of years, primarily in a political sense," the President said. "I think he is a very nice person. . . . He is a very pleasant and decent person."

Mr. Ford said it is possible that Reagan, among many other Republicans, might be chosen as his running mate if Mr. Ford wins the Republican presidential nomination.

Associated Press

★ ★ ★