

FORD IS AVOIDING MENTIONING NIXON

Confident That Watergate
Won't Hurt Candidacy

Special to The New York Times

WACO, Texas, April, April 29 — President Ford said today that he would rather not mention the name of former President Richard M. Nixon in public because "it is better for all of us to just not remind ourselves" of the Watergate era.

The President, who, previously dropped the word "détente" from his campaign vocabulary, told a Houston news conference it was by design that he customarily referred to Mr. Nixon only as "my predecessor" or "the former President."

"I do it deliberately," Mr. Ford said.

He professed confidence that his candidacy for a full term in the White House would not be affected by the events that led to Mr. Nixon's resignation in 1974. The decision not to refer to Mr. Nixon, he said, was based on a belief that "the more that all of us forget that period and the unfortunate developments, the better."

The President's remarks, two days before the Texas primary, illustrated the care with which Mr. Ford, like other political candidates, has sought to use rhetoric to define and shape issues on his own terms.

A victory Saturday in Texas could all but assure Mr. Ford of the Republican nomination. For several weeks the President has cast himself as the "underdog" in the Texas contest with Ronald Reagan, the former California governor.

Response to Challenge

As he traveled across the state today, however, Mr. Ford told friendly audiences that he was "closing that gap." At one point, in Conroe, he went so far as to say that a victory here, which he expected, would assure both his nomination and election.

"I can win against Bert Humphrey, Jimmy Carter or any of the other Democratic candidates," he said. "I don't know whether they will win in the election or not. I will do it in the election. I will get it done in New York."