

CARTER CRITICIZES PARDON OF NIXON

Refuses to Score Ford, but Terms Action 'Improper' Without a Trial

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Special to The New York Times

PLAINS, Ga. July 20—Jimmy Carter sharply disagreed today with President Ford's 1974 pardon of President Nixon before what the Democratic nominee termed Mr. Nixon's "inevitable conviction" in an "open trial."

While contending that he did not "criticize President Ford for the pardon," Mr. Carter termed it "improper or ill-advised."

The pardon issue was raised as Mr. Carter held his first formal news conference since accepting the Democratic Presidential nomination in New York City last week.

As he squinted into the early afternoon sun from the steps of the 55-year-old red brick high school he had attended here, Mr. Carter was asked to comment on President Ford's remark at a news conference yesterday that whether the pardon became a campaign issue was "up to the American people" and that he "would do it again" under the same circumstances.

"Had I been President," the Democratic nominee replied, "I would not have pardoned President Nixon until after the trial had been completed in order to let all the facts relating to his crimes be known."

He declared that he did not question President Ford's motives or intend to criticize him "because I take him at his word that he did it in his opinion to end as quickly as possible the Watergate tragedy and because he thought it was the best thing to do."

"I don't think there was any secret deal made between President Nixon and President Ford," Mr. Carter continued, "although they had always been very close. President Ford was very deeply indebted to President Nixon for choosing him to be the future President."

Pressed further for his reaction to Mr. Ford's statement that he would do the same thing again, Mr. Carter replied:

"I still think that the action he took was improper or ill-advised action. I would not have done it, but I honor his right to make that decision. He was there with the facts."

In response to another question, Mr. Carter said that he now believed that President Ford was "the more likely nominee" of the Republican party at its convention next month than was his challenger, Ronald Reagan.

He said that was his assumption in planning his own campaign, which began in earnest at his home here this afternoon with several of his top political advisers and an aide to Senator Walter F. Mondale of Minnesota, running mate. He added, however, that "contingencies" were being planned "so we will be prepared for either eventuality."

Asked how his campaign might differ depending up who his rival was, he said:

"I would guess the campaign itself, the organizational structure, the allotment of my time would be fairly compatible, no matter who the nominee is. The emphasis on issues, of course, would certainly be different. President Ford's record as President, his ability to govern, would not be a major issue obviously if he did not get the nomination."

As for the issues that might be raised against a Reagan candidacy, Mr. Carter said:

"I think the inclination of Governor Reagan to get militarily involved in Panama, in Lebanon, in Rhodesia, would certainly be an issue if he should be the nominee. It would not be an issue of President Ford should be the nominee."

Mr. Carter added that his polls "do not indicate any strength on the part of Governor Reagan that would be extraordinary even in his home state" and that "at this point I, ahead of both of them."

Mr. Carter was asked his comments today on the Nixon pardon and Senator Mondale's reference to the pardon in his acceptance speech last Thursday night in Madison Square Garden did not represent "direct criticism" despite Mr. Carter's insistence that he was not making the pardon a campaign issue.

"I've never raised the question of the pardon at all myself and I don't intend to," Mr. Carter said. "I'm not wiping the pardon out of the national consciousness. When you ask me a question about the pardon and then criticize me for answering the question, now that's a little improper."

He added that he thought "the evidence should have been presented to the American people in an open trial and after the trial and, I think, the inevitable conviction of President Nixon, then I would have reserved the right to pardon him then."

In his acceptance speech at the convention, Senator Mon-

dale, alluded to Watergate and referred to the pardon, declaring that "we have just lived through the worst political scandal in American history and are now led by a President who pardoned the person who did it."

Mr. Carter was asked whether Senator Mondale would continue to raise the pardon issue in the campaign.

Asked if he had "reservations" about Senator Mondale continuing to criticize the pardon, he said:

"I would not try to dominate Senator Mondale. I personally think that my position on the pardon is preferable from a political view point. The American people know who pardoned President Nixon. They know the circumstances involved in the pardon. They don't need to have it raised for political advantage by a candidate. I think they would resent it if it were and so I'll maintain the same position that I've had for the last five or six months when this question had been put to me."

In response to other questions, Mr. Carter said:

He did not think there was anything "illegal" or "improper" about Senator Mondale's acknowledged support for special legislation that would give a tax break to Investors Diversified Services, a Minnesota firm.

He did not see "anything wrong or improper" about his pollster, Patrick Cadell, having a contract with Saudi Arabia, subscribers where most of his income is derived."

He believed the International Olympic Committee ought to "establish rules for the recognition of participants in the Olympic Games" and that the "host government should stay out of that decision," a criticism of Canada's setting of the

terms for Taiwan's participation.

Mr. Carter also announced that the senior members of his staff would meet with Senator Mondale's aides at Hilton Head, S. C., starting Thursday, and that Mr. Mondale would join them Friday as they worked on campaign plans. He said that Mr. Mondale would come to Plains Saturday and that on Wednesday they would be briefed by a representative of the Central Intelligence Agency on matters of security.