

# Ford's Role Questioned In Watergate Probe

New York

Representative John Conyers (Dem-Mich.) said yesterday that unreleased White House tapes from the Nixon administration may show that Gerald Ford perjured himself before two congressional committees when he said Richard Nixon did not order him to block the Watergate investigation.

Conyers said he has asked special Watergate prosecutor Charles F. Ruff to investigate the possibility that Mr. Ford was instructed by Mr. Nixon to block an early investigation by the House Committee on Banking and Currency into the source of money found on the Watergate burglars when they were arrested inside Democratic national headquarters in 1972.

That committee, headed by the late Wright Patman, voted shortly after the break-in not to subpoena top White House aides, including John Dean and H. R. Haldeman, for questioning about the burglars' money.

"Many questions that later came out in the House Judiciary Committee would have come out seven or eight days after the break-in" if the White House aides had been forced to testify before Patman's committee, Conyers said.

During House and Senate Judiciary Committee investigations on his nomination to become Vice

President, Mr. Ford said he tried to block the Patman probe because he felt it set a bad precedent for investigations into presidential affairs, and not because Mr. Nixon told him to.

Conyers said he read passages in a soon-to-be-published book written by Dean that described Mr. Nixon's orders to Haldeman to "head off" the Patman investigation.

Conyers said the book describes how "in the Sept. 15, 1972, tape, there were instructions that Nixon wanted it (the Patman investigation) headed off, and he instructed John Ehrlichman to tell Ford and Gerry Brown, a Michigan congressman who served on the House Banking Committee, to head it off."

"If it turns out Congressman Ford was acting on White House orders, it is quite possible that he may be subject to a charge of obstructing justice. He certainly would have committed perjury before two congressional committees," Conyers said. Conyers is chairman of the House Judiciary subcommittee on crime.

In Washington, a White House spokesman who was asked to comment on Conyers' remarks said only, "that is a matter for the courts to decide."

*United Press*