

# Ford Knew

## Nixon Pardon Would Hurt

New York

President Ford knew before he pardoned former President Nixon that the action would have a "very adverse effect" on his political fortunes, according to an interview released yesterday.

The interview, with Barbara Walters of ABC News, will be shown on television next Sunday. In it, Mr. Ford discussed the pardon as well as his campaign strategy against Jimmy Carter, which he defended, and his running mate, Senator Robert Dole, (Rep.-Kan.), whom he refused to blame for the defeat.

Mr. Ford said he issued the pardon not because Mr. Nixon was ill, but because "controversy day after day after day" over the former President was distracting him and the nation from "more important problems that had to be solved" — a point he made during the campaign.

"Lawyers were coming into my office, my counselors, and saying, 'we have this problem with the courts,' or, 'we have this problem with the Congress about what to do with the Nixon papers.'

"I was spending at least 25 per cent of my time listening to legal arguments about what we should do with the Nixon papers at a time when I should have been working 100 per cent of the time on the war in Vietnam and the problems of the economy, and that is the only reason that I really made the decision."

Mr. Ford said he told his wife, Betty, after deciding to pardon Mr. Nixon, "This will have a very adverse political impact."

Mr. Ford said, "I just decided that regardless of the political consequence that I would do what I thought was right."

Asked by Walters whether Mr. Nixon ever said to him anything like, "I know this must have cost you a great deal," Mr. Ford replied, "Not that I recollect, no. He, as I recall, thanked me but other than that we have not discussed it."

Mr. Ford said he has talked with Mr. Nixon by phone "maybe six to eight times" over the past 2½ years.

"I don't see anything wrong with that," Mr. Ford said. "He was a man who had spent a good part of his life in government. He had been, I think, very successful in foreign policy. He had known the political situation. He has been a friend of mine."

Immediately after he won the GOP nomination, Mr. Ford said his advisers told him, "We had to change 150,000 voters a day in the next 70-some days if we were going to win." He said he approached the campaign "from the point of view that we weren't going to win and that we weren't going to be disappointed if we didn't."

However, Mr. Ford said, the fact that "we got very close" later in the campaign caused his expectations to "get a little higher than were justified."

Mr. Ford denied that Dole, the vice presidential candidate, hurt the ticket.

Mr. Ford also said:

- He believes his greatest contribution while in the White House was restoring the trust of the American people in their government.

- His biggest disappointments were his inability "to turn the economy around as effectively as I had hoped" and his failure to negotiate a second strategic arms limitations treaty with the Soviet Union.

- He does not "anticipate" ever running for national office again.

- He considers himself the head of the Republican party and hopes "to make a contribution in that regard."

- He was not depressed, although "we didn't, you know, go out and celebrate my defeat."

- There was absolutely "no animosity" in his post-election meeting with Carter at the White House. "The truth is," he said, "we were friendly. I think we liked one another."

United Press