

Ford Denounces

Critics of Nixon

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'Grudge' Cited

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'Candor' Over

By Carrol Kilpatrick
Washington Post Staff Writer

Vice President Gerald R. Ford yesterday assailed President Nixon's critics and accused them of waging an "all-out" campaign to "crush" the President and the policies he advocates.

The Vice President named the AFL-CIO and Americans for Democratic Action among "powerful pressure organizations" that he said are "waging a massive propaganda campaign against the President."

Echoing the cry that it is time to impeach the President or get off his back Ford said, "America has no time to waste on a long drawn-out political grudge fight."

The Vice President's vigorous assault on the critics came in the course of a speech in Atlantic City, N.J., before the American Farm Bureau Federation. The text was released here.

Ford spoke about two hours before technical experts testified in U.S. District Court here on the missing portion of a tape of a presidential conversation with former aide H. R. (Bob) Haldeman.

The White House dis-

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The White House made it official yesterday that President Nixon has no intention of carrying forward Operation Candor and that he will not make public a promised report on the "Plumbers" operation.

Deputy press secretary Gerald L. Warren said Mr. Nixon "believes he has answered all the questions" in areas relating to Watergate charges.

When asked about the promise to provide a report on the "Plumbers," the White House group which sought to plug White House leaks and which was involved in the break-in of the offices of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist, Warren said: "I wouldn't expect anything on that subject."

Last week in San Clemente, when the President made public documents on the milk fund case and the antitrust settlement with ITT, spokesmen indicated that they expected no more public reports on Watergate-related matters.

Warren's official confirmation of those intimations came at a morning briefing prior to the latest dislo-

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Official End Signaled To 'Operation Candor'

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tures in U.S. District Court here about a missing segment of a presidential tape.

In November, when Mr. Nixon was meeting with large groups of congressmen to answer Watergate questions, he told Sen. Charles McC. Mathias (R-Md.) that he would send him a written statement concerning the "Plumbers."

Asked yesterday if he had received any White House material on the subject, Mathias said he had not. After his failure to receive the promised statement, Mathias said, he "dropped a line" to White House counselor Bryce Harlow to prod him.

"He called and renewed the promise," Mathias said, "but notwithstanding the promise I have received nothing."

Warren said that he could not discuss the "Plumbers' " operation "because of various legal discussions and grand jury actions."

He did say that "from time to time" the President might speak on the subject, but that he would not expect him to do so while court actions are under way.

"I foresee no statements similar to the ones" on the President's finances or the ITT and milk cases, Warren said.

In November, as Mr. Nixon began a series of meetings with members of Congress to answer Watergate charges, the White House initiative came to be known in the media as "Operation Candor." The White House disclaimed au-

thorship of the expression, but the meetings continued.

On Nov. 17, Mr. Nixon spent more than an hour answering questions at an Associated Press Managing Editors Association meeting in Orlando, Fla. He told the editors that if they wanted more information they should write to him "and I will give it to you. I want the facts out because the facts will prove that the President is telling the truth."

White House officials were disappointed that Operation Candor produced no greater benefits for the President that it apparently did. They expected release of the income tax returns, for example, to rebound to his credit, but instead they provoked a new round of criticism.

The President has not submitted to any questions since his Nov. 17 appearance in Orlando before the managing editors. His most recent press conference was Oct. 26. It is not known when he may hold another one, but there are some indications it will not be soon.

One official, discussing the President's reluctance to face the press, said he is determined to stop being constantly involved in trying to prove a negative.

Nevertheless, the official said the President is going to put everything in perspective at the proper time and label the misconceptions and distortions.

This official maintained that there could be no more disclosures because everything has been made public.

Ford Denounces Critics

FORD, From A1

claimed any responsibility for the Ford speech and refused comment on it. A Ford aide said, "This is the Vice President's speech; he meant every word of it."

The aide said that the Vice President had no information about the testimony on the tapes before he spoke.

Replying to Ford, ADA said in a statement that "no amount of rhetoric" by Ford can obscure the fact that ADA's interests in the impeachment proceedings "are based on solid evidence and a prima facie case against the President."

The AFL-CIO said it would have no comment immediately.

Ford called on the House Judiciary Committee, which is considering an impeachment resolution, to "act promptly" on its investigation and complete its work no later than April 30.

"Personally, I believe that no valid grounds exist for impeachment of the President," Ford said. "I believe that a majority of the committee will reach the same conclusion. But, whatever their feelings, they owe it to all of us to do their job promptly and responsibly."

Administration supporters have urged the House not to drag out its proceedings. House minority Leader John J. Rhodes (R-Ariz.) has urged the committee to complete its work in the early spring. Last month, White House counselor Melvin R. Laird also urged the committee to vote up or down at the earliest possible date.

Even earlier, the senior Republican in the Senate, George D. Aiken (Vt.), quoted a constituent as saying it was time to impeach the President or get off his back. Other Republicans have used the phrase frequently since then.

Ford had high praise for Mr. Nixon's accomplishments, declaring that Water-

gate is "a tragic but grotesque sideshow" compared with "these mountainous achievements."

He said Mr. Nixon ended America's involvement in Vietnam, improved relations with China and the Soviet Union and has laid the groundwork for peace in the Middle East.

"When you . . . think of these magnificent achievements, then Watergate no longer dominates the landscape," Ford said.

Ford charged that "a few extreme partisans" are bent on "stretching out the ordeal of Watergate for their own purposes.

"Their aim is total victory for themselves, and the total defeat not only of President Nixon but of the policies for which he stands," the Vice President said.

If the critics win, "we can all kiss goodbye the chances of reducing federal spending and increasing community and individual independence," Ford said.

If "the super-welfare stat-

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of President

ers" dominate Congress and neutralize the White House "we can expect an avalanche of fresh government intervention in our economy, massive new government spending, higher taxes and a more rampant inflation," he said.

"If the relatively small group of activists who are out to impeach the President see that they do not have the strength to do it, they will try to do the next most damaging thing," Ford said. "They will try to stretch out the ordeal, to cripple the President by dragging out the preliminar-

ies to impeachment for as long as they can, and to use the whole affair for maximum political advantage."

"The critics have 'no right to leave America hanging,'" the Vice President said, "when so much that is important remains to be done."

"That is what the American people are telling their elected representatives, again and again, during the holiday period. Settle Watergate, they say. Write the last chapter; close the book, and get on with the vital business of life nation."

In an interview with the

British Broadcasting Corp. aired yesterday, Ford said with reference to the President's popularity: "The slide down has stopped and the corner has been turned."

Discussing the President's unpopularity, Ford said it was due in part to his personality and life style.

"I think I am more gregarious and less shy than Mr. Nixon," he said. "But he is not shy once you get to know him. In public he is reserved. My lifestyle is the opposite. I am less suspicious of people than Mr. Nixon is."