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Ford: 'A Few Partisans' Prolonging Watergate

The following is an excerpt from an address by Vice President Ford on Tuesday to the American Farm Bureau Federation in Atlantic City.

Of course there is another problem on many minds as we gather here today. It is not so much a material problem as a mental one. It is a matter of attitudes, morale and, most of all, a matter of confidence — confidence in the presidency and confidence in the American political system as a whole.

According to some of the polls, that confidence has seldom been lower.

The polls are bad enough, but a few extreme partisans seem determined to make them worse — seem bent on stretching out the ordeal of Watergate for their own purposes, whatever they might be.

While the American Farm Bureau Federation is meeting here to discuss solving some of the nation's problems, a coalition of groups like the AFL-CIO, the Americans for Democratic Action and other powerful pressure organizations is waging a massive propaganda campaign against the President of the United States.

And make no mistake about it — it is an all-out attack. Their aim is total victory for themselves, and the total defeat not only of President Nixon, but of the policies for which he stands.

If they can crush the President and his philosophy, they are convinced that they can then dominate the Congress, and through it, the nation.

Should that day ever come, we can all kiss goodbye the chances of reducing federal spending and increasing community and individual independence.

Should that day ever come — with the super-welfare staters in control of the Congress, and the White House neutralized as a balancing force — we can expect an avalanche of fresh government intervention in our economy, massive new government spending, higher taxes and a more rampant inflation.

The majority of responsible, thinking Americans must not let



it happen, and I don't believe they will.

So far, I think the vast majority of my former colleagues in the House of Representatives have taken a highly responsible approach to this matter. I have faith that my new colleagues in the Senate will do the same.

But I would also urge them not to sit by while a lesser, but still very serious, evil is perpetrated.

For 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.

They will try to stretch out the ordeal, to cripple the President by dragging out the preliminaries to impeachment for as long as they can, and to use the whole affair

for maximum political advantage. Such a course would be bad for the Congress, bad for one Presidency and bad for the nation.

There are vital challenges to be met and pressing problems to be solved. America has no time to waste on a long drawn out political grudge fight, and I think that most congressmen of both parties agree on this.

So, if the Congress must move, let it move now.

In particular, let the House Judiciary Committee act promptly. There is no reason why the com-

mittee cannot have finished its job by the end of April, as Committee Chairman [Peter] Rodino indicated to House Minority Leader [John] Rhodes.

Personally, I firmly believe that no valid grounds exist for impeachment of the President. 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.

They have no right to leave America hanging, 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 break. Settle Watergate, they say. Write the last chapter; close the book, and get on with the vital business of the nation.

It is high time we did just that. It is high time we got out of the rut of despair and self-doubt and back onto the high road of progress. Once we do that, America is bound to succeed.

This is the same country and the same President that managed to achieve an honorable end to America's longest war.

This is the same country and the same President that have built new and promising relationships with the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union, representing over a billion people.

This is the same country and the same President that have helped to lay the groundwork for a lasting peace in the strife-torn Middle East after a generation of hatred and violence.

None of those things happened by accident.

They happened because a wise and good people were led by a wise and good President.

No one is perfect — no nationality and no executive.

But when you look back on the past years of the Nixon administration and think of these really magnificent achievements, then Watergate no longer dominates the landscape.

Compared with these mountainous achievements, it's a tragic but grotesque sideshow.