

President Is Studying List Of 15 for Vice President

Calls in Dozen Friends Singly, Mostly Leaders of Congress, to Discuss Choice—No Surprises Reported

By CHRISTOPHER LYDON

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Aug. 11 — President Ford is puzzling over a list of about 15 names, with no surprises on it, for a man to fill the vacant Vice-Presidency. But he is still asking for ideas not only about who the choice should be but also about what it is he needs in a No. 2.

This was the impression of some of the dozen old friends, mostly Republican leaders from Congress, who each got a first chance at giving Vice-Presidential advice in a series of individual half-hour meetings with the President in the White House this afternoon.

"I was trying to figure out what he was looking for," said Representative Barber B. Conable Jr. of upstate New York, chairman of the Republican Policy Committee in the House, but he kept asking me what he ought to be looking for."

Mr. Conable's answer, he said later, was that "he ought to have someone who would add stature and function as well as constituency" — specifications broad enough to accommodate Mr. Conable's three favorites: Nelson A. Rockefeller, the former Governor of New York; Melvin R. Laird, a one-time colleague of Mr. Ford's in the House and Secretary of Defense in the first Nixon term, and George Bush of Texas, chairman of the Republican National committee.

Mentioned Goldwater

Mr. Conable also mentioned Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona as a prime candidate for the Vice-Presidency. And when Mr. Ford asked him to comment on a group of about a dozen more.

"All the names you've been hearing," Mr. Conable said. "I can't recall any surprises."

Senator Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, the Republican leader in the Senate, commented in a television interview today hours before his meeting with the President that "he's picking the No. 2 man for 1976, whether he wills it or intends it or not."

Others made the same as-

sumption without discussing it explicitly with Mr. Ford, who has said often, but not recently, that he would not run for any office in 1976.

A major difference, however, between the President's considerations today and the conventional choice of a running-mate is the outward lack of interest in political and regional balance.

"Geography is not that important," Representative Elford Cederberg of Michigan told the President today. "Political

compatibility is important; he needs somebody that's going to support his viewpoint," Mr. Cederberg, a conservative, said.

The discounting of balance, in general, was taken to mean specifically that Mr. Ford, a "middle American" from Michigan, was not putting a special premium on Southerners. Senators Howard H. Baker Jr. and William E. Brock of Tennessee and John G. Tower of Texas have been mentioned as possibilities, as well as Mr. Bush, who was born and reared in Connecticut but made his oil fortune in Texas.

"I don't think the South has the same claim on [President Ford's] attention as it did on President Nixon's," said Mr. Conable. "Not that he was antagonistic, but region didn't figure largely in our conversation."

Ambassador to U. N.

Mr. Conable found it interesting that the President had asked to see each of his friends separately today.

"He's a true collective-decision man," he observed. "He wanted to see if any consensus developed, and he didn't want it artificially arrived at."

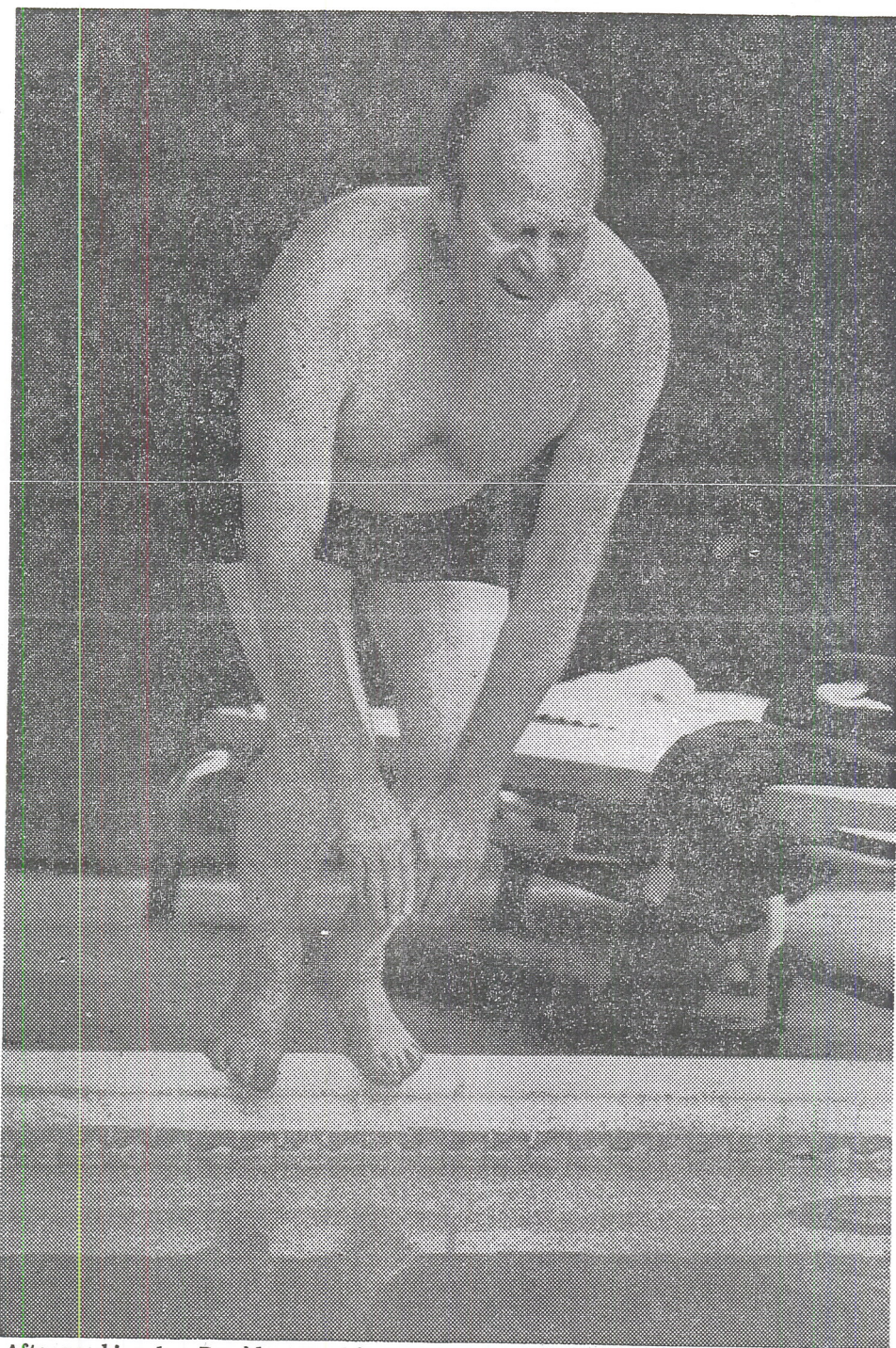
No consensus was apparent today, and Mr. Bush won Senator Goldwater's personal endorsement, complementing the Texan's support from several liberal and moderate House members.

A former two-term Representative, Mr. Bush lost a Texas Senate race in 1970 and then served two years as Ambassador to the United Nations. As the Republican chairman during the Watergate collapse of the Nixon Presidency, he managed somehow to avoid offending anyone in his party severely.

If political and financial bases mean anything, it is Mr. Bush's advantage to claim two of them — in Houston and through family connection on Wall Street. His father, the late Prescott Bush, was a Senator from Connecticut.

President Ford has also asked Republicans in Congress, in 18 Governors' offices around the country and on the party's national committee to submit their suggestions to him, in one-two-three order, by Wednesday.

Donald Rumsfeld, a former Representative from Illinois and still officially Ambassador to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, is reportedly the key staff man working on the Vice-Presidential selection.



After working day, President Ford found a moment to take a swim in backyard of home