

President To Run In 1976

Doubts Ended By Statement On Candidacy

By William Chapman
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The White House washed away any lingering doubts yesterday and confirmed that President Ford definitely intends to run for a full term as President in 1976.

It was the final and not unexpected stage in an evolution that carried Mr. Ford from the position of a non candidate to a "probable" candidate to a full-fledged candidacy.

White House press secretary Ron Nessen confirmed earlier reports yesterday, saying that, "He intends to run in 1976."

When he was nominated last year for the vice presidency, Mr. Ford told reporters he did not expect to be a candidate for President in 1976. He said he wanted to declare "as emphatically and as strongly as I can, I have no intention of being a candidate for any office, President, Vice President or anything else, in 1976."

Last August, after he had succeeded Mr. Nixon at the White House, he sent out word through a press secretary that he "probably" would be a candidate.

Yesterday, Nessen was asked why Mr. Ford had dropped the "probably" from his plans. Nessen answered with a smile, "I guess you have heard him say many times how much he enjoys being President."

He said he had first heard Mr. Ford's unequivocal statement last Monday during a meeting with several persons at the White House. He declined to identify them, but said they were not people in the political arena.

The announcement came as

no surprise to Republican politicians, who had assumed for some time that Mr. Ford would seek a first full term.

The word was put out yesterday, according to one White House source, in part because of recent press speculation that the President's influence is diminished if he is thought of as a lame-duck President with two more years to serve.

There was some concern as well about rumors of a conservative third-party movement springing up in the absence of any firm commitment by Mr. Ford to head the GOP ticket, the source said.

Also, the unequivocal statement would end any hopes of gaining the White House being nurtured by supporters of such potential Republican con-

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tenders as Sen. Charles H. Percy (Ill.), Elliot L. Richardson, the former Attorney General, and outgoing Gov. Ronald Reagan of California.

Nessen said yesterday Mr. Ford, of course, had read of speculation about other candidates, but he declined to say whether that was in any way connected with Mr. Ford's decision.

Nessen said he did not know whether the President had consulted with party leaders and Republican members of Congress.

But Mr. Ford had consulted his family, Nessen said. There had been speculation that the health of his wife, who recently had surgery, might deter Mr. Ford from running in 1976. "... She must have gone along with (the decision to run)," Nessen added.

On another subject, Nessen refused to disclose the identity of the two persons other than Nelson A. Rockefeller who the President had ordered investigated as potential vice-presidential nominees.

Mr. Ford said in Phoenix Thursday that FBI checks had been ordered for two potential nominees at the same time the agency had been looking into Rockefeller's background. Nes-

sen said he could not divulge their names.

The door apparently was finally closed yesterday on any effort by the Ford administration to propose a tax on gasoline as a fuel-saving device. Despite Mr. Ford's repeated opposition to the tax, Interior Secretary Rogers C. B. Morton had indicated he might consider it as one option in an energy conservation plan.

On Thursday, in Phoenix, Mr. Ford emphatically renounced the idea again and said he hoped that Morton got the message.

At a Cabinet meeting yesterday morning, Morton said that he would present a conservation program when the President returns from his Asian trip and that it definitely would not include a gasoline tax, Nessen said. Morton smiled as he said it, according to Nessen.

Today is Mr. Ford's one hundredth day in office and the White House commemorated it by issuing a "brief review" of what it called "a notable number of achievements."

It said: "From the outset, President Ford set a tone of stability and continuity in foreign policy, openness and candor in domestic affairs, coop-

eration and reasonableness in his dealings with Congress."

The four-page review cited, among other things, the "economic summit," the administration's effort to reduce dependence on oil imports, the overseas missions of Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, and Mr. Ford's meetings with leaders of many countries.