

FORD SEES ROLE AS 'PEACEMAKER'

Stresses Cooperation With
Congress as Senate Panel
Questions Him Closely

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 1 — Representative Gerald R. Ford assured a Senate committee today that, as Vice President, he would attempt to be a "peacemaker" and a "calm communicator between the White House and Capitol Hill."

He also defended President Nixon against those calling for

*Excerpts from testimony by
Ford are on Page 23.*

his impeachment, but said, as he had earlier, that he thought an inquiry into possible impeachment should continue "in order to clear the air."

The 60-year-old Michigan Republican appeared to be attempting to be loyal to the President without antagonizing Congress as he became the first witness at his own confirmation hearings before the Senate Rules Committee.

He will be questioned further

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on Monday. The committee is then expected to hear other witnesses, both for and against his confirmation as Vice President.

During long hours of questioning, Mr. Ford praised President Nixon and described himself as a loyal member of the "President's team."

"After a play is called, you shouldn't tackle your own quarterback," he said.

But in response to questions, Mr. Ford made clear that he differs with President Nixon on a number of crucial issues that have faced the nation in recent weeks and months. Among these were the following:

¶ White House tapes bearing on Watergate. Had he been the

President, he said, he would have released the tapes at least several weeks earlier than Mr. Nixon did. He also said he felt that the White House should have informed the Senate and the courts much earlier about the so-called "missing tapes."

¶ Executive privilege. "I don't think a President has unlimited authority in the area of executive privilege," he said. "On the other hand, I don't think Congress has unlimited rights to Presidential documents." He said each case should be decided individually on the basis of "what's best for the country."

¶ Selection of a Watergate prosecutor. While agreeing with the President's stand in naming a prosecutor, he said he felt the selection should be subject to Senate confirmation.

¶ Relationship with Congress. He said he would have an "open door" policy for Republicans and Democrats.

¶ President Nixon's dismissal of Archibald Cox as the special Watergate prosecutor. He called the move "an unfortunate incident, but I don't want to get into personalities right now."

Mr. Ford also differed with the President about the news media ("I feel that the press has always treated me fairly") and on the need for regular news conferences ("I've always had them, and I would plan to continue them").

Despite the heat of the television lights, Mr. Ford seemed to remain cool, even during extensive questioning about political campaign practices.

He denied that he had ever "laundered" campaign funds, that he had exchanged favors in return for campaign contributions, and that he had received a \$15,000 loan from a one-time Washington lobbyist.

He also denied a contention by the one-time lobbyist Robert Winter-Berger that he had undergone treatment for a year by a New York City psychotherapist.

'Disgustingly Sane'

"The truth is," he said smiling, "that I'm disgustingly sane. I've never undergone any kind of psychiatric treatment."

The committee's scrutiny of Mr. Ford's mental health, campaign practices and personal financial standing indicated the importance Congress attaches to filling the Vice-Presidential vacancy created by the resignation two weeks ago of Spiro T. Agnew.

Furthermore, some believe that Congress might be deciding on not just a Vice President, but the next President, should Mr. Nixon resign or be impeached and convicted.

This is the first time in history that Congress has been called upon to confirm a Vice President — under the 25th Amendment adopted less than a decade ago.

Committee members questioned Mr. Ford closely about the so-called "laundered" campaign funds, \$11,500 in 1970 contributions to him that he said he turned over to the Republican Congressional Campaign Committee for the use of others.

He said he did not report the contributions, but was certain the campaign committee had done so. He conceded that the campaign committee had sent about \$13,000 to a "Michigan Ford for Congress" cam-

paign, but that no attempt had been made to "evade the law."

He was questioned, too, about his role in funneling money from a middle Western mil producers association to help pay off campaign debts of six other members of the House. He acknowledged that he had suggested that the funds be used that way, but that he had received none himself and had never seen the money.

Mr. Ford confirmed, under questioning, that a committee organized in the District of Columbia raised \$38,216 for his re-election in 1972, shortly before the new campaign reporting law went into effect. But he said he did not know the names of the donors because the committee treasurer, James G. Morton, a political official for the chemical industry, is now dead.

Mr. Ford denied recent allegations that he had borrowed \$15,000 from Mr. Winter-Berger or that he had borrowed money from a hometown bank to buy stock and gain a seat on the bank board.

"I can assure you that I'm clean," he said, noting that his full financial records, including income tax returns and net worth, had been made available to the committee.

Senator Claiborne Pell, Democrat of Rhode Island, commented, "I would say that your net worth is not extraordinary after 25 years of public service."

Mr. Ford said that as Vice President, he would consider himself cast in the role of peacemaker, not only between Congress and the White House



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Senator Howard W. Cannon, Rules Committee chairman, directs Gerald R. Ford to seat

but between the American people and their Government.

"I would try to calm the waters," he said at several points.

He maintained, as he has since his nomination by President Nixon, that he would not seek the Presidency in 1976, thus making sure that "no one can accuse me of seeking personal aggrandizement."

"That would leave me free to be a peacemaker," he said.

In his opening statement, Mr. Ford observed: "Truth is the glue that holds government together—and not only government but civilization itself."

He said his one concern in leaving the House to become Vice President was that "my friends might stop calling me Jerry."

He disputed critics who termed him a staunch conservative on all issues. Instead, he described himself as a moder-

ate on domestic issues, a conservative on fiscal affairs and a "died-in-the-wool internationalist in foreign affairs."

Senator Howard Cannon of Nevada, chairman of the committee, said after the hearing that he felt that Mr. Ford "has been a very open, forthright witness, not at all evasive."

"His views certainly differ from those of the man he is going to assist," Mr. Cannon added.