

Urged Nixon to Act, Ford Tells Panel

1/16/73

By Richard L. Lyons
Washington Post Staff Writer

Vice President-designate Gerald R. Ford said yesterday he strongly urged on President Nixon the actions the President is taking to improve his national credibility.

Ford told the House Judiciary Committee as it opened a week of hearings on his nomination that he had urged the President to release to the court his tapes of Watergate conversations, and to meet with all members of Congress to answer Watergate questions. Ford said he also urged more press conferences so that the President could talk directly to the people, and proposed that he travel more about the country.

Ford said he has had about 15 meetings with Mr. Nixon since his nomination five weeks ago to succeed Spiro T. Agnew, who resigned as Vice President after pleading no contest to a charge of tax evasion.

Ford, the House Minority Leader, was generally received with expressions of respect and affection by his colleagues, though he was pressed hard and will be again today on the views he would hold on issues such as executive privilege and federal spending on private presidential property.

The committee appreciated, as had the Senate hearing, his statement that, "I think people ought to tell the truth." To his statement that "truth is the glue that holds government together" he added: "Compromise is the oil that makes government go." He views his vice presidential role as that of a conciliatory bridge between the Republican President and the Democratic Congress.

But when pressed by Rep. John Seiberling (D-Ohio), Ford conceded there might be times when a President might have to tell less than the truth. In "most unusual circumstances" where Amer-

influence to help Louis Wolfson out of criminal difficulties in exchange for information detrimental to Douglas. Ford flatly denied the suggestion.

Waldie presented a letter written by Washington attorney Benton L. Becker, who was helping Ford, to Wolfson's attorney, William O. Bittman, asking if Wolfson could provide information on Douglas' relations with Albert Parvin. Parvin, who had set up a foundation which Douglas headed, was named as a co-conspirator in Wolfson's case involving the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Becker said in his letter to Bittman that "I am personally sympathetic to your client's present plight and would be anxious to assist him in any way available to me."

In forwarding Becker's request to Wolfson in Florida, according to copies of the correspondence, Bittman said that Becker told him that if Wolfson cooperated Ford and other congressmen "probably could be of some assistance to you . . ."

Ford noted that Becker made only a personal offer to help Wolfson. He said that what Becker offered had "become enlarged in Mr. Bittman's mind . . . We never authorized any such action."

On other matters, Ford said:

- "Of course I support the President," because they have been friends for 25 years, share similar philosophies, and Mr. Nixon is party leader and chief executive of the nation. But "I am my own man."

- Asked what qualified him to become President if the office became vacant, Ford said he considered his 25 years in the House good training. He noted that Harry S. Truman, John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson all moved to the presidency from Congress and added the judgment that all will be remembered as "better than good presidents."

Meanwhile, the Senate Rules Committee—having finished its hearings—agreed to vote on the Ford nomination Tuesday morning.

ican lives are involved, it might be necessary to "blur the facts" for a limited time, he said.

Rep. Jerome Waldie (D-Calif.) cited correspondence taken from Ford's files to suggest that when Ford was leading a move in 1970 to impeach Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas he was prepared to use his