

# Ford Plans Formal Entry Into '76 Race This Month

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WASHINGTON, June 4—President Ford will announce his 1976 candidacy this month, the White House press secretary, Ron Nessen, said today. Other Republican sources said that the formal declaration would probably come within two weeks.

The President's return from Europe, according to his intimates, signals the beginning of a 90-day period during which the elements of a campaign structure will be assembled so he can begin an intense political effort this fall.

In the past, incumbent Presidents have raised money and put together organizations without making formal announcements until their efforts were well under way. Richard M. Nixon, for example, announced on Jan. 7, 1972; Lyndon B. Johnson made no formal declaration until Aug. 25, 1964, the day after the Democratic convention opened in Atlantic City.

But Mr. Ford is in no position to follow their example.

## Flexibility Is Limited

For one thing, unlike them, he has never before faced a national or even a statewide electorate. For another, he is eager to dispose completely of the belief that he does not intend to run.

Most important, the President's flexibility is limited by the new Federal campaign financing statute. Under the law, any money raised and any money spent, whether in the form of cash or services, must be reported promptly.

If he had wished, Mr. Ford could have gone ahead without an announcement, simply allow-

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ing his first financial report to constitute his declaration of candidacy. But in the post-Watergate environment, he and his advisers decided that it would be far wiser to make everything public from the start.

"There's no way to hire staff, no way to do research until you have money," said Richard L. Herman, one of the members of the President's 1976 planning committee. "This time, you can't just casually detail someone from the White House to a political job. Everything has to be accounted for."

By announcing more than a year before the Republican National Convention, Mr. Ford will cause himself some problems, the shape of which is not entirely clear. There may, for instance, be difficulty in deciding which of his trips and which of his television appearances are political. Should opponents get equal broadcast time? Should his campaign committee pay for his transportation?

The organization, according to those involved in preliminary planning, will be carried out on the assumption that the President is likely to encounter some opposition in some of the primary states. But Mr. Ford's advisers do not now expect a challenge from former Gov. Ronald Reagan of California, who has been toying with the idea of running.

## Packard May Get Job

According to one White House source, David Packard, a Deputy Secretary of Defense in the Nixon Administration, has agreed to oversee fund raising. The founder of the Hewlett-Packard Company in Palo Alto, Calif., he has a personal fortune of \$200-million and a wide acquaintance among businessmen.

He is expected to hire as an assistant Lee Choate, a 55-year-old retired Air Force officer who has in recent years run a number of citizens' pressure

groups, including Americans for the Presidency, which worked to stave off the impeachment of Mr. Nixon.

Mr. Choate said in an interview that he had already begun scouting for office space in downtown Washington.

The search for a campaign chairman and a campaign manager—or one person who would do both jobs—has not yet been completed. Mr. Ford said in a background interview recently that none of the members of the advisory committee would be chosen.

But some skeptics continue to focus on the name of Melvin R. Laird, the former Defense Secretary, who serves on the committee and who has repeatedly said that he is unavailable because of his job at the Readers Digest.

"I don't really rule Mel out," said one of those whose political advice the President often seeks. "I don't know whether he said, 'No, damn it,' or just 'not yet.'"

## Other Names Cited

A member of the White House staff, who also believes that Mr. Laird will ultimately serve, remarked on Mr. Ford's tendency to surround himself with former members of Congress (Mr. Laird was a Representative from Wisconsin) and on Mr. Laird's unusually broad network of political friends.

Among the other names on the various lists circulating in the White House are those of

Ray C. Bliss of Akron, Ohio, the party's master grass-roots organizer who served as national chairman following the 1964 Goldwater debacle; former Gov. Winfield Dunn of Tennessee, and George C. Bush, the United States representative in Peking.

One of the problems in finding top-level talent, several sources said, is the number of persons who were involved in or tainted by the scandals that marred Mr. Nixon's 1972 reelection campaign.

Pending the establishment of a permanent organization, Dean Burch, who heads the advisory group, has been looking into the political implications of the funding law and conferring with other members of the committee by telephone. It has held only one formal meeting.

A tentative decision has been reached, according to informed sources, that the President should concentrate his efforts in as few primaries as possible—probably including New Hampshire, California, one or two Middle Western states, a Southern state and those that require his name to be on the ballot, such as Oregon.

## Cotton Is Approached

In New Hampshire, former Senator Norris Cotton, who recently resigned as state chairman, has been asked to head the Ford committee. A manager has not been selected, but approaches have been made to Stewart Lamprey, an experienced officeholder who has compiled a computer listing of New Hampshire voters that could be invaluable to Mr. Ford.

New Hampshire is considered inevitable by the President's planners because its primary will be first, because Mr. Ford will be challenged there by Gov. Meldrim Thomson Jr. if not by anyone else and because it offers the President a chance to demonstrate strength in a conservative state.

In California, less planning has been done, but substantial roles will probably be played by State Attorney General Evelle Younger, who offered his services to Mr. Ford in a meet-

ing earlier this year, and by Leon Parma, a longtime golfing chum of Mr. Ford's who is an executive of the Teledyne Corporation of San Diego and a member of the advisory group.

## The General Plan

The general notion, according to the planners, is to use the time between now and Labor Day to organize two months of campaigning by Mr. Ford on behalf of state and local candidates and succeeding weeks for a gradual inten-

sification of his own campaign. The New Hampshire primary will probably take place in late February.

"There's no substitute for getting out there and seeing real, live people and sweating and shouting into a bad mike," said one of Mr. Ford's friends of his intentions. "That's the way it works, and that's the way he likes it."

Asked what use the President planned to make of Vice President Rockefeller, who may be opposed for nomination by conservatives, the same friend replied:

"One would suppose that the best way for a Vice President to run is to run around the country saying what a good President we have."