

FORD →

ROCKEFELLER'S AGE CALLED HINDRANCE

Aide Hints Ford May Drop
Him for a 'Younger Man'

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Washington, July 24—President Ford's campaign manager has suggested that the President may seek "a younger man" than Vice President Rockefeller to run on the Republican ticket next year.

"The President has told me very clearly he is keeping a very open mind on who he might recommend," the campaign manager, Howard H. Callaway, said last night.

He said Mr. Ford was "very high" on Mr. Rockefeller but added that it "may be his best judgement" when the time comes that he needed "a younger man" or someone who could balance the ticket in a way that Mr. Rockefeller was not able to do.

"People keep bringing up the fact," Mr. Callaway said, that Mr. Rockefeller, who is 67 years old, would be too old to be a logical successor to Mr. Ford at the end of a second term in 1980 and thus to assure Republican continuity in the White House.

"We're hearing that a lot," the campaign manager said, from conservative critics of the Vice President.

And, he added, Mr. Ford thinks that this concern for the future is "a sound concept" and "one of the things he should consider" in making his decision on a running-mate at the Republican convention next year.

'Full Agreement'

Mr. Callaway's comments at a dinner meeting with a dozen reporters seemed to represent a further erosion of Mr. Rockefeller's position with the Ford political hierarchy, although the former Georgia Congressman insisted that he and the Vice President "are in full agreement" on the factors that Mr. Ford should consider next year.

It was the first time that anyone high in the Ford organization had publicly raised the question of the Vice President's age. Mr. Callaway said, however, that Mr. Ford's choice might also be affected by such factors as "the world situation" at convention time and the ticket that the Democrats will have chosen in their July convention.

Pressed by reporters on how this squared with the President's frequent statements of at least implicit commitment to Mr. Rockefeller, Mr. Callaway conceded that it was "very likely a change."

He said that other Republicans being suggested frequently as replacements for Mr. Rockefeller included both Senators from Tennessee, Howard Baker Jr. and William Brock; Representative Jack Kemp of New York, and Senator Charles H. Percy of Illinois. Some professionals, he said, also have mentioned John B. Connally, the former Treasury Secretary, and Donald Rumsfeld, the White House chief of staff.

"The president sincerely and genuinely is keeping an open mind and he may choose any

one of the good Republicans," Mr. Callaway said.

For his own part, Mr. Callaway said, he has encouraged Mr. Rockefeller to take to the road and show himself to Republicans to strengthen his position among them.