

FORD AD

Rockefeller to Campaign For Ford, Officials Assert

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 4—Vice President Rockefeller will campaign actively for the nomination of President Ford as the Republican Party's Presidential candidate next year, White House officials close to both men said today.

The President is reported to have telephoned Mr. Rockefeller before the Presidential news conference last night to ask specifically if he could count on active and continuing political support. Mr. Rockefeller was said to have answered affirmatively.

However, sources close to Mr. Rockefeller said that he would not campaign with any great enthusiasm for Mr. Ford and was keeping his own options open for future political activity.

Mr. Rockefeller told President Ford yesterday that he

did not want to be considered as a running mate on the Republican ticket in 1976. One high Presidential aide suggested today that now that the Vice President was no longer personally involved in the campaign, he could be a more effective advocate for the President, who may face a strong challenge from former Gov. Ronald Reagan of California.

However, several persons close to Mr. Rockefeller said today that he could reassess his political posture in the event that Mr. Reagan defeated Mr. Ford decisively in one or more

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of the early primary contests.

Meanwhile, Mr. Rockefeller remained in virtual hiding from the news media at his mansion on Foxhall Road in Washington. He did emerge for a meeting with Republican leaders of Congress and for a discussion of Federal pay with the President in the Oval Office this afternoon. But both times he drove up to a side door of the White House, went in, came out the same door and drove immediately back to his home and stayed out of sight.

No Phone Calls

His press secretary, an ordinarily obliging man named Hugh Morrow, would not answer telephone calls from reporters.

This afternoon, a reporter stopped Mr. Rockefeller as he was hurrying to the White House surrounded by aides and asked him the reasons for his decision to step aside.

"It's all in the letter. It's spelled out clearly," he said with a grin.

"Read the letter," he added and hurried into the White House.

The letter to Mr. Ford, which Mr. Rockefeller delivered yesterday, gives no reasons for the decision to withdraw from the Vice-Presidential race other than to help the President with his planning by simplifying "the range of options."

The President and his spokesmen have repeatedly declined to comment on the decision beyond telling questioners to "read the letter."

However, White House officials conceded in background discussions that Mr. Rockefeller had become a liability to Mr. Ford's campaign to win the Republican nomination. The reason, they said, is that Mr. Rockefeller is intensely disliked by the influential right wing of the party.

Seems Relieved

Mr. Rockefeller appeared jovial today, and several White House staff members described him as being "relieved" by his decision. They said that his potential Vice-Presidential candidacy in the face of strong opposition from the Republican right had imposed heavy pressures on him. Now, they said, those pressures have been lifted.

His action already appears to have taken off some of the pressure President Ford was experiencing from the challenge by Mr. Reagan.

There were also indications of relief among members of the White House staff. One high staff official speculated that now that the Vice-Presidential slot on the ticket is open, many Republican leaders who consider themselves potential candidates will be careful about voicing support for Reagan or other possible challengers.

Mr. Rockefeller's withdrawal appears to have enhanced President Ford's prospects for obtaining the nomination. Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona, a venerated leader of the Republican right wing, said in an interview with The Washington Star that Mr. Reagan ought to "reassess" his possible candidacy in the perspective of the Vice President's decision. Mr. Goldwater also reportedly said that there is "no question the Rockefeller move puts a serious crimp in Reagan's prospects."

No Problem For Aides

Meanwhile, Administration officials associated with Mr. Rockefeller said they expected no serious problems as a result of his decision. One such official said he was loath to discuss the subject because "I already have problems being associated with the Vice President."

He added, however, "We have plenty of work to do and as long as we do it there will be no problem."

Mr. Rockefeller's political future, however, remained up in the air. Representative John J. Rhodes of Arizona, the Republican leader of the House, praised him for stepping aside because he knew himself to be all ability to the President. "I do think that the Vice President acted as a beautiful team player," Mr. Rhodes said.

Some observers in Washington think these words could serve as a political epitaph for Mr. Rockefeller, a 15-year Governor of New York with long undisguised Presidential ambitions.

But his aides cautioned against his premature political burial.