Ford Blames 'Elite Guard' For GOP IIIs

By Lou Cannon Washington Post Staff Writer

CHICAGO, March 30-Vice President Gerald R. Ford today described President Nixon's 1972 re-election committee as "an arrogant, elite guard of political adolescents" and called on Republican candidates to pledge never again to use "outside committees" in their cam-

More than 1,000 Midwestern Republicans, led by a cheering Illinois Sen. Charles Percy, gave Ford a tumultous standing ovation as he urged Republicans to learn "the political lesson of Watergate." He did not mention Mr. Nixon by name in his speech.

Ford said the GOP should insist that all potential presidential candidates for 1976he mentioned Percy, Nelson A. Rockefeller, Ronald Reagan and John B. Connally as examples-work within the party structure and "sign in advance on the dotted line that they will not set up outside committees without the specific approval of the party itself."

The theme of this 13-state Republican conference is "looking forward." It appeared from the tone and content of many of the speeches that Republicans are doing this without including President Nixon in their plans.

Speaker after speaker extolled the Republican Party or attacked the congressional record of the Democrats without making any mention of the President.

Percy predicted that the House would impeach Mr. Nixon. He said the White House was responsible for the trend toward impeachment because the President has asked for a quick resolution of the issue while his attorneys are doing "everything conceivable" to delay it.

"That contradiction has not escaped the Congress," Percy said. "It has not escaped the American people."

The mood of disassociation from the White House was so complete in the morning session here that one woman delegate wearing a 1972 Nixon

However, presidential loyalists gained some measure of reassurance later in the day when Rockefeller defended Mr. Nixon against "those who would push him out of office or force him to resign." Rockefeller received a standing ovation when he declared: "Everyone is entitled to a fair trial, even the President of the United States."

But it was Ford who touched the deepest emotional chord at this Republican Leadership Conference.

"Never again must Americans allow an arrogant, elite guard of political adolescents like CREEP to bypass the regular Republican Party Organization," Ford said. "It is we, not they, who should dictate

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the terms of a national election."

"CREEP" is the unflattering acronym for the Committee for the Re-election of the President that often has been used by Mr. Nixon's political opponents. The official abbreviation, and the one always used by White House spokesmen, is "CRP."

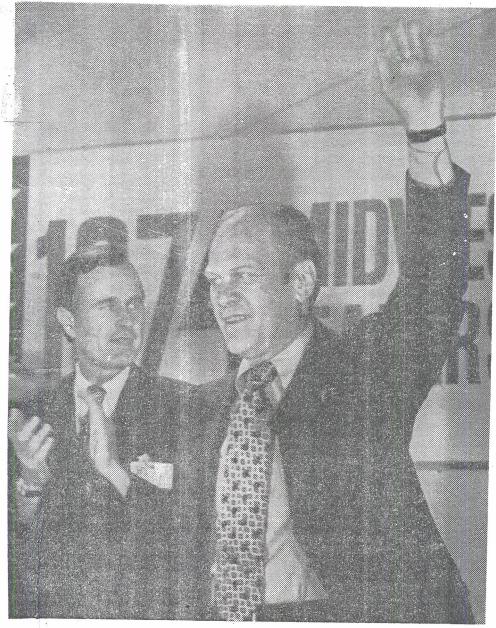
In a direct criticism of the re-election strategy devised by President Nixon, Ford said that the "political failure of CREEP was a failure to reinforce the President's impressive victory" with congressional victories. The Nixon strategy was based on the belief that the President was more popular than his party and that he could carry other Republicans to victory by campaigning on his own achieve-

"The fatal defect of CREEP was that it made its own rules and thereby made its own ruin," Ford said. "It violated the historic concept of the two-party system in America and it ran literally roughshod over the seasoned political judgment and the seasoned political experience of the regular Republican Party organization in all of our 50 states.

"Our great national parties evolved along the same basic grass-root pattern of widely shared responsibility and local self-determination, the Vice President continued. "The party recruits and trains and nurtures candidates and rewards some with higher office. The party allows for the participation, of rank-and-file citizens . . . and forges its party principles from the very broad spectrum of opinions and goals.

"So I say we as Republicans have learned one great lesson from Watergate, and that is that our Republican Party organization must be the vehicle for future elections. If there are any more cliques of ambitious amateurs who want to run political campaigns, I say let the Democrats have them next time."

Accompanying the mood of disassociation that prevailed here, and perhaps derived from it, was a resurgent optimism that Republicans can turn the tables on the Democrats in the Novem-



United Press International

Vice 'resident Ford acknowledges applace at GOP breakfast meeting in

Chicago. At left is Republican Committee Chairman George Bush.

ber elecons despite a string| The district, which includes of Democratic victories by No-

and Fid is President, they Motors plants. won't live all that much going forhem in November."

the Miket Opinion Research doubtful. organzaton, which showed

of Demoratic special election the Saginaw-Bay City area and vember. four suburban-rural counties An urpoken corollary of of Michigan's thumb region, speech, Percy discussed the this belie is the growing ex- has voted solidly Republican Republican outlook in somber pectation that Mr. Nixon except during the depths of terms, saying that the party is might bout of office by No-the Depression. However, Repeated with the short-range vember. "The emocrats have a bum the underdog in the special position and the long-term record i Congress," said one election because of the Waterprominat GOP official. "If gate issue and high unemploy- status. you tak away the Nixon issue ment at Saginaw's General

The poll showed the Democratic candidate leading by Michan Republicans were more than 6 percentage points

But in a Friday night problem of perennial minority

"Our immediate problem, of course, is that the leader of our party, the President of the United States, is in danger of Michan Republicans were more than 6 percentage points being forced from office," buoyedy the privately circubut with sufficient undecided Percy said. "... We must lated roults of a poll taken by voters to make the outcome make it unmistakably clear that Watergate does not repre-Whatever the results in the sent the traditional values and GOPlominee James Sparling Michigan 8th District, both beliefs of the Republican with striking distance of Ford and House Minority Party. Let us prove to Amer-Deporat Robert Traxler in a Leader John J. Rhodes of Arilica that our party's commitspeal election in the 8th Con-zona said, Republicans still ment to law and orderly procgresional District on April 16. have time to reverse the trend ess is not an empty promise."