

Changeover Said Planned 4 Months Ago

DETROIT, Aug. 10 (AP)—President Ford began quiet preparations for a possible transition to the White House as early as April, a long-time confidant to the new chief executive said.

Jack Stiles, Mr. Ford's campaign manager when the President first ran for Congress in 1948, told The Detroit News Friday that Mr. Ford wanted to plan a smooth takeover "in case the other shoe dropped" and President Nixon was impeached and convicted or resigned.

"We organized what we called a transitional advi-

sory group," Stiles said. "Of course, it was all very confidential. We talked about expanding his staff and who would be where."

Stiles said the spring strategy sessions were kept under wraps to avoid making waves for an already unsteady Nixon ship.

"We had to do it without appearing to be disloyal to Mr. Nixon," Stiles said.

He said he and other friends of the then Vice President met with Mr. Ford in April and again in July at his Alexandria home. "We pulled together who we thought were experts in var-

ious fields and discussed a great many things—the economy, the foreign policy and domestic affairs."

Stiles said the group never discussed who would be Mr. Ford's choice for Vice President.

"We decided it was up to Jerry to decide what area he wanted his Vice President to be strong in," Stiles said. "I know all the men who are being mentioned—(former Attorney General) Elliot Richardson, (Illinois Sen.) Charles Percy, (former Defense Secretary) Melvin Laird and (former New

York Gov.) Nelson Rockefeller."

But Stiles would not predict whom Mr. Ford eventually might select as his Vice President.

Stiles met Ford when the two were high school students at Grand Rapids South High School. Later they were fraternity brothers at the University of Michigan.

"Jerry came to me in 1947 when he was just out of the Navy and told me he was running for Congress and wanted me to be his campaign manager," Stiles recalled.