

# Ford Visit Fails to Cheer A Candidate for Governor

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FRESNO, Calif., Nov. 1. — When it became apparent in Los Angeles last night that President Ford would pay a hospital visit to his ailing predecessor, a campaign aide to Houston I. Flournoy, the Republican candidate for Governor, groaned and said, "We can't get rid of this burden." Mr. Ford's visit to California to help trailing Republicans in Tuesday's election has demonstrated in a vivid way how the burden of Watergate continues to cling to the new President and the party he is attempting to save almost three months

after he succeeded to office.

For Mr. Ford and a number of Republican standardbearers, the last few days have presented one problem after another in campaign speeches and behind-the-scenes maneuvers.

It was not clear how the Presidential visit to the hospital evolved, but it was apparent from White House statements that Mr. Ford considered it a delicate political matter and the Flournoy people made it plain they thought the visit would be one more painful reminder of what was causing

Continued on Page 12, Column 4

Continued From Page 1, Col. 6

Mr. Flournoy to run behind his Democratic opponent, Edmund G. Brown Jr.

California Republican leaders attribute Mr. Flournoy's troubles almost exclusively to the White House. Every time the 45-year-old state controller has begun to show progress, his campaign has been rocked by another blow from Washington — the impeachment hearings, the disclosure of Mr. Nixon's part in the Watergate cover-up and then, Mr. Ford's decision to grant the former President a pardon. Supporters of Mr. Flournoy say they believe that their candidate would be ahead if there had been no pardon.

It was by chance that Mr. Ford's campaign tour took him within a few miles of Mr. Nixon's officials privately acknowledge that the President was faced with a difficult choice—visit Mr. Nixon and raise fresh reminders of the unpopular pardon or not visit him and be subject to accusations of being indifferent to the man who picked him as his successor.

## Call to Mrs. Nixon

Last night, when it was uncertain what Mr. Ford would do, the White House sought to show that the initiative for a Presidential visit had come from the other side, through the following statement from the White House Press Secretary, Ron Nessen:

"At 6:35 P.M., the President placed a phone call to Mrs. Nixon, who was at a private residence in Rolling Hills, Calif. The President said, 'How is the President?' and Mrs. Nixon described his condition and she used the word 'feisty' to describe his mood. The President said, 'I don't want to push, but would it be helpful if I came down there?' Mrs. Nixon replied, 'I cannot think of anything that would do him more good.'"

This morning, Mr. Nessen said that Mr. Ford, on the way to the hospital by helicopter, was in a subdued mood and said he had decided to go for "just a very humane reason."

"Mrs. Nixon said it would help, and the doctor said it would help, so I'm going to do it," Mr. Nessen quoted the President. "It [politics] doesn't have anything to do with it, so I don't care. I just believe I'll do it."

At the fund raising dinner in The Century Plaza Hotel last night, which the President addressed, there were more reminders of the Republican's problems and dilemmas. Mr. Flournoy, because of the bur-

den of the Nixon pardon, was reported by California political observers as not eager to appear with Mr. Ford in the campaign, but he did so because the dinner helped raise much-needed campaign funds.

About 800 Southern Californians turned out and paid from \$250 to \$500 a plate. It was a glittering occasion, with Bob Hope as master of ceremonies and Gov. Ronald Reagan on the platform.

## Bob Hope and Ronald Reagan

But it was not all happiness. In the speeches, the participants sought to extract cheer from the fact that a recent California Poll showed that Mr. Flournoy had narrowed the Brown lead from 11 to 7 per cent. Mr. Ford was advised by the Flournoy people not to be as harsh on the Democrats as he had been elsewhere, because of the preponderance of Democrats in this state.

Mr. Ford took the advice, refrained from repeating his charge that too many liberal Democrats in Congress would endanger bipartisan foreign policy and said his appeal for the election of Congressmen who practiced fiscal restraint applied to Republicans as well as Democrats.

Governor Reagan may have wiped out the bipartisan spirit of the affair when he charged that the Democrats, in addition to being excessive spenders, were a threat to peace because Democratic Presidents had been in office each time the United States had gone to war in this century.

As President Ford sat at the head of the table grinning and smoking his pipe, Governor Reagan and Mr. Hope made jokes about the Governor's forming a third party, a reference to speculation that Mr. Reagan might oppose Mr. Ford for the Presidency in 1976 as a third-party candidate.

## Tuxedos and WIN Buttons

The guests arrived in limousines wearing tuxedos, evening gowns and WIN buttons to support Mr. Ford's voluntary drive to "Whip Inflation Now."

Before this audience, Mr. Ford urged, "When you go into the voting booth next Tuesday, take with you your latest grocery checkout receipt, and before you vote take a good hard look at the bottom line total. Then vote for the candidate for Congress who you honestly believe will work best with me to make sure that your pay check buys as much the day you spend it as the day you earned it."

Outside the hotel was one of the largest protest demonstrations Mr. Ford has drawn since he became President, about 500 persons representing a variety of causes.

Today, Mr. Flournoy went to San Diego to resume his independent campaigning while Mr. Ford visited Mr. Nixon and then came to Fresno, where at an airport rally attended by about 10,000 persons he spoke in behalf of Rep. Robert B. Mathias, a fourth-term Republican who has been trailing in the campaign.