

Rockefeller Remains at Center of Speculation

Bush Picks Up Support; Others See Inexperience

By CHRISTOPHER LYDON

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 12—

The talk of Nelson A. Rockefeller for Vice President has proved a durable trial balloon. Nearly a week after the speculation began in earnest, the former New York Governor is still the man near the top of every list—lists of names that President Ford is considering, and lists of favorites that party leaders are submitting to the White House.

Again today, however, there were no intimations from Mr. Ford about the choice he is expected to make later this week, after the Wednesday deadline for recommendations from his fellow Republicans.

George Bush, chairman of the Republican National Committee, picked up more endorsements today, including second-ballot support from the top Republican leaders in Congress, Senator Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, whose first choice is Mr. Rockefeller, and Representative John J. Rhodes of Arizona, who prefers his own Senator, Barry Goldwater.

Rockefeller Endorsement

In New York City, the Northeast Republican Chairmen's Association — party chiefs from the New England and Middle Atlantic states and from the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico—endorsed Mr. Rockefeller, with Mr. Bush the second choice, for the Vice-Presidency.

The association meeting was called by a key Rockefeller supporter, Richard M. Rosenbaum, the party chairman in New York State.

The two Republican Senators from Oklahoma, Henry L. Bellmon and Dewey F. Bartlett, joined Senator Goldwater in public support of Mr. Bush.

Representative John B. Anderson of Illinois, chairman of the House Republican Conference, said that Mr. Bush—a 50-year-old Connecticut yankee who became a millionaire Texas oil driller — is his second choice

after Mr. Rockefeller.

At the same time, one of President Ford's most trusted advisers dismissed Mr. Bush with assurance. Behind a veil of anonymity, he remarked that Mr. Bush's four years in the House and two years as Ambassador to the United Nations were scant training for national office.

Further, Republicans were saying today that Mr. Bush, twice defeated in Texas for the Senate, lacks the popular base that Mr. Ford—the first President who has never won a national election—is thought to require in his No. 2 man.

Still others point out that a proudly partisan President has the opportunity to dramatize Republican integrity by nominating Mr. Bush, the party chairman, who often equivocated about the political impact of Watergate but was never remotely tainted by the scandal himself.

It was also noted, in Mr. Bush's behalf, that any of the men being mentioned for the Vice-Presidency might have a hard time demonstrating a popular base.

Size of Mandate

The top vote-getters on most lists are Gov. Ronald Reagan of California, who won 3,439,664 votes in winning a second term in 1970, and former Governor Rockefeller, who was re-elected on his fourth term the same year with 3,151,432 votes. But both men faced difficult challenges this year and chose not to run again.

If mandates must be recent to count in the Vice-Presidential contest, Senator Howard H. Baker Jr., of Tennessee, re-elected with 62 per cent of the vote in 1972, probably has as strong a claim as any Republican under consideration.

Yet the popularity standard is not regarded as one that must be applied literally.

And three of the men most seriously mentioned have not

on Ford's Choice for Vice President

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run for office since they first joined the Nixon Administration in 1969. They are Melvin R. Laird of Wisconsin, Mr. Ford's close colleague in the House and later Secretary of Defense; Elliot L. Richardson of Massachusetts, who succeeded Mr. Laird at the Defense Department and then became Attorney General but later quit in protest against Mr. Nixon's handling of the Watergate case, and Donald L. Rumsfeld of Illinois, a former Representative who directed the antipoverty program and later the Cost of Living Council for Mr. Nixon before becoming Ambassador to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The Guessing Game

The Vice-Presidential hand-capping—viewed as the capital's first serious exercise in studying Mr. Ford's decision-making—has grown more and more arcane.

"It all depends," one practiced observer said today, "whether he holds the final meeting with party leaders or his own personal staff. If he talks to people like Rhodes, Goldwater and Scott, it will be Rockefeller.

But, that analyst went on, "His staff will veto Rockefeller because, like all staffs, they want their guy to govern and they know that Rockefeller as Vice President and Henry Kissinger as Secretary of State won't leave much room for Ford. If the staff gets the last word, it will be either Richardson or Bush."

But that observer, like all the others, was only guessing—still awaiting the first hint of Mr. Ford's intentions from Mr. Ford himself.

Senator Scott said today the President was "nowhere near" making up his mind.