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Mr. Ford: Facing Major Problems . . .

With due apologies to everyone who has formed another judgment, the acid tests of President Gerald Ford still lie ahead. To see why, you need only consider what former Gov. William Scranton has been doing in Washington last week.

Gov. Scranton had finished a first round of work on the problems of transition and had actually gone home to Pennsylvania when President Ford called him back to do a special job. The job was to make carefully researched lists of men of the right stature for positions on the level of Cabinet office. No doubt there were other list-makers at work at the same time. Some of them may have started work a bit earlier.

Yet it is still significant that Gov. Scranton was only given his special job about a week ago. It is also significant that he concentrated heavily on the financial-economic sector of the government. Four names of men of major standing in this area were submitted to the President last Friday.

The governor's reasons for choosing the financial-economic sector of the government for concentration are not hard to figure out.

To begin with, it is a bit like saying the king has no clothes on at this moment when President Ford can do no wrong, but the fact remains that the "summit" meetings on our economic and financial problems were an inherently silly idea from the outset. The idea began in the Senate and it was just the kind of idea that senators always put forward, and administrations often buy, when they all long to avoid painful decisions.

To be sure, widespread consultation is not silly in itself, especially when the consultation concerns novel and desperately complex problems like the worldwide inflation, the dire strain on the worldwide financial system and the other new menaces of this dangerous time. But the fact is that serious consultation cannot possibly be achieved with a series of large and miscellaneous meetings. No one can really get down to business in that kind of context because everyone talks for the audience.

Yet convening this series of meetings is the only positive step the President has taken toward dealing with the



By Peter Mikelbank

most urgent and dangerous group of problems now confronting him. He has taken a negative step, as it is no means silly, however, by sending Kenneth Rush away to the Paris embassy.

Rush is a decent, able man. Yet the real motives for Rush's original transfer to the White House from the State Department reveal, at a glance, the kind of mess that now exists in the financial-economic sector of the government. One motive was to get Rush out of the State Department where he was not on the best terms with Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger. The other, more dominant motive was to insert Rush as a kind of human barrier between Secretary of the Treasury Wil-

liam Simon and the director of the Office of Management and Budget, Roy Ash.

Ash is about the most depressing remaining souvenir of what may be called the H. R. Haldeman era of personnel selection. The Simon-Ash feud is one of the bitterest Washington has known in years. Besides this feud, moreover, there is another deep split in the government. Secretary Simon and the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, Dr. Arthur Burns, favor a hard-nosed approach to our financial-economic problems. The squashtest kind of temporizing is wanted, however, by many of the new presidential staff members in the White House.

In short, you have total confusion in this single governmental sector where bold, clear, well-thought-out policies are most desperately demanded from President Ford. It is mistaken to suppose, too, that the President can work out a broad policy line and then get the right people to implement it. The President's first need is the strongest possible financial-economic team, presumably organized around Chairman Burns and Secretary Simon.

No serious judgment can be passed upon the future of the Ford administration until the President has at least tried to put such a team together—and not only in the financial economic sector, either. Other such teams are badly needed, most notably in the White House itself.

The truth is that all the happy talk about an "open White House" is completely misleading, at least for practical purposes. The White House cannot be run as it was in President Theodore Roosevelt's time or even as it was in President Franklin Roosevelt's time. The President today simply has too many questions to ponder, too many burdens to carry, too many challenges to meet.

For these purposes a rather tightly organized White House is absolutely essential. The foregoing are only two of the organizational matters the President is going to have to tackle if he hopes to succeed for the long pull. So if we are to be honest with ourselves, he has hardly begun to tackle the tough parts of his job.