

Ford Says He'll Stay 'Own Man'

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By Suzanne Dean

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LOGAN, Utah, June 8.—Vice President Ford said today, he will continue his efforts to "head off deadlock" on Watergate, but at the same time will "remain my own man, fly my own course, and speak my own convictions."

The Vice President said, "I categorically reject the demand that I listen to the strident voices on the banks of the Potomac". He said that despite "heavier burdens of official duty" in the capital, he hopes to speak his mind "in every one of our fifty states during 1974."

Ford addressed about 8,000 persons at commencement exercises at Utah State University, which is 90 miles north of Salt Lake City. Ford's son, John, 22, is a junior forestry student at the school.

Ford, whose heavy speaking schedule has been criticized by some newspapers and by President Nixon himself, admitted he has been getting "quite a bit of free advice."

"The kind of advice I get runs along two main lines," he said. "First, why don't I stop flying around the country meeting people, giving speeches and stay in Washington doing my job? And second, if I must make speeches and permit press questions wherever I go, why do I uphold the President one day, and the next day side with Congress, which is deliberating his impeachment?"

The Vice President said that when he was confirmed by Congress, he promised to be "a ready conciliator and calm communicator between the White House and Capitol Hill."

Considering that, he said, it should not be surprising if he

sometimes voices the viewpoint of the legislative branch, to which he belonged for a quarter century, and at other times sees things much the same as the President who appointed him.

He said he feels such a role is "both necessary and right at this time in our nation's history" and flows directly from his responsibility to support as well as defend the constitution.

He added that in his years in public office, he has never seen a controversy "in which one side was all wrong and the other 100 per cent right." Nor has he seen a "human being who was totally good or altogether bad," he said.

"Truth is the glue that holds government together, and compromise the oil that makes government run," Ford said. "Our three separate branches

of government were designed to check and balance each other's abuses and excesses, but not to produce stalemate and paralysis."

He said he feels his duty is to "try and head off deadlock and seek a reasonable and prompt resolution of the nagging Watergate issue that is sapping the valuable time of our elected officials and the political strength of our nation."

Ford said he feels his travels are important in giving him a feeling for public opinion around the nation. "And," he contends, "what I hear from Hawaii to New Hampshire and from Utah to Georgia and from Michigan to Oklahoma—yes, even in Massachusetts—is a lot different from what I hear in Washington, D.C."

Ford said the American people are telling him that "our institutions are strong and sound and they are not crumbling down or crashing around us."

Americans, he said, have "faith in our religious traditions and the basic moral values common to them," as well as faith in "a heritage of law and equal justice which holds every person innocent until proven guilty beyond reasonable doubt, but places none above the law."

While pledging to speak with an independent voice, Ford praised the President's actions in foreign policy. He said he trusts, "in all fairness," that Americans will "recognize the guiding role of President Nixon" in bringing a Middle East cease-fire.

The Vice President arrived at Hill Air Force Base near Ogden, Utah, Friday night and attended what was described as a "non-political reception" in Tremonton, Utah, given by Mr. and Mrs. James E. Brown, personal friends of the Fords. Guest included Utah Democratic Gov. Calvin L. Rampton and Democratic Rep. Gunn McKay.

Ford is scheduled to attend a special performance of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir in Salt Lake City Sunday and to confer with leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints—a traditional meeting for major political figures visiting Utah. He will fly to Cleveland later in the day to address the National Conference of Christians and Jews.