

Ford Suggests Nixon-Ervin Compromise

Cutback Urged In Tape Demand

By Jules Witcover
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Vice President Gerald R. Ford suggested yesterday that a compromise might be struck between President Nixon and Senate Watergate committee Chairman Sam J. Ervin Jr. on the sweeping request for nearly 500 Watergate-related documents and tapes.

Ford, interviewed on "Meet the Press" (NBC, WRC), called Ervin's bid a "scattergun approach" and a "fishing expedition" and said he agreed with the President's decision to reject it.

But the Vice President said he thought that if the committee was "willing to make some refinements in the demands, cutting it down to things that are more relevant to the committee's responsibilities, then I think there may be—and I underline may be—some area of compromise."

Ford said he had not discussed the issue of disclosure of Watergate information with the President in any depth in recent weeks. But he said, "I hope and trust as we go down the road perhaps there can be some compromise."

The Vice President also said he has urged continuation and expansion of "Operation Candor"—the White House release of more information on Watergate-related matters designed to repair the President's credibility with the public.

He strongly favored release of information on Mr. Nixon's income taxes and finances, he said, "and I hope and trust, despite what I understand is some reluctance at the present time, that the President will continue with 'Operation Candor' with a full disclosure or white paper involving the ITT

matter and the so-called milk fund contributions."

Ford said he had not been consulted on the future of "Operation Candor." He said he thought most Republicans in Congress would agree with him that it should be continued. "It seem to me that the President ought to maximize his effort to re-establish the good rapport that he had with the American people," he said, "and 'Operation Candor' is one way of doing it."

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The Vice President said, however, that "in the long run as well as perhaps in the short haul, the President by concentrating on the solution of problems—the energy crisis, the Middle East controversy and other matters of real substance—will increase his personal support by the American people even more quickly and more importantly than by 'Operation Candor.'"

Asked about a recent poll by the Roper Organization that indicated 79 per cent of individuals surveyed believed one or more of the serious charges against the President, Ford sidestepped the question but noted that 45 per cent in the same poll were against impeachment (to 44 per cent for it).

"Somewhere in between, it seems to me," he said, "the American people may have some lack of full faith in every action by the President, but on the other hand, the majority are not in favor of the impeachment action that is contemplated by some in the House of Representatives."

Ford said he did not believe there are the necessary votes either in the House Judiciary Committee or the full House for impeachment, and he reiterated his belief that the Pres-

ident is innocent of any impeachable conduct.

The Vice President portrayed himself as a man in frequent contact with the Presi-

dent, if not always consulted by him in the decision-making process. He said that before he went off on a two week family vacation in Colorado,

he was in "daily contact" with Mr. Nixon and had talked to the President five or six times by telephone while in Colorado.