

President Rejects Advice That He Drop Rockefeller

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By The Associated Press

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 20 — President Ford indicated last night that some conservative Republicans had urged him to abandon Vice President designate Nelson A. Rockefeller, but he said he did not take the advice seriously.

"I'm still convinced he would make a good Vice President," Mr. Ford told five reporters during an unusual news conference aboard Air Force One late last night.

The President and his press secretary, Ron Nessen, who met the newsmen in shirtsleeves during a flight here from a campaign stop in Louisville, Ky., asked that accounts of the meeting be withheld until tonight.

25-Minute Conference

Mr. Ford, who occasionally puffed on a pipe, discussed several other matters during the 25-minute meeting, including

the following:

¶He said he would "be delighted" to make public any taped conversations he had with President Nixon if the special prosecutor's office had no objection. The former President has said that his taping system was scrapped months before Mr. Ford became Vice President, however, and there is no indication that such tapes exist.

¶He said he hoped he had laid to rest the Nixon pardon issue, saying of a House Judiciary subcommittee before which he testified last Thursday, "I don't know what more

Continued on Page 23, Column 2

Continued From Page 1, Col. 5

they would want to know."

¶He said he had told no one on his staff that he planned any Cabinet changes, but he sidestepped an opportunity to deny that any changes were likely soon.

¶He said he was encouraged by his campaign travels, adding: "If I don't do anything and we lose, Republicans in the House would say, 'He didn't even try.' At least I tried, and if the results are better than the polls say—" He did not finish the sentence, but clearly

felt that such an outcome would help him.

¶He defended his refusal to intervene in the Boston school desegregation controversy, and said of the long-range answer to such problems, "That's for the judge to decide."

When the President was asked whether any conservative Republicans had asked him to withdraw the Rockefeller nomination, which has become increasingly controversial, Mr. Ford replied, "I wouldn't say anybody seriously."

At another point, he said he expected Mr. Rockefeller's nomination to be confirmed

prior to the Presidential trip to Japan. But Mr. Ford is tentatively scheduled to leave for Tokyo on Nov. 17, and Congress will not return from its election recess until the following day.

In response to another question, the President said he saw no connection between Mr. Rockefeller's difficulties and what a newsman called "the post-Watergate morality."

"Watergate was a cover-up," Mr. Ford said. "Everything that's come out about Nelson Rockefeller has been open."

Saying that Vice-Presidential nominees now must meet "a

pretty stringent standard," Mr. Ford added: "One can't help but wonder how many people on either side of the aisle can undergo this kind of scrutiny. It's pretty rugged."

The President also said House Speaker Carl Albert, who is now next in line to accede the Presidency, was in a position to receive special foreign policy and intelligence briefings, but Mr. Ford added that he had not talked to Mr. Albert about it.

The President said Air Force Two was being made available to the Oklahoma Democrat and added that he believed Mr. Albert would use the big jet in

the final stages of the off-year election campaign. The Democratic party would pay for the use of the plane, he said.

During Mr. Ford's testimony last Thursday before a subcommittee of the House Judiciary Committee, Representative Elizabeth Holtzman, Democrat of Brooklyn, asked the President to provide all tapes of conversations between him and Mr. Nixon, saying later they might show whether a pardon had been discussed before Mr. Nixon resigned.

Mr. Ford's initial response was to say that the executive branch was protecting the

tapes for Watergate and other prosecutions and would keep them for the time being.

Asked last night whether he would make public such tapes if there was no problem with the special prosecutor, the President replied, "I would be delighted to."

Mr. Ford also was asked about what some people regarded as aggressive questioning by Miss Holtzman. He said he wished she had given him time to answer her inquiries, and that he tried to avoid being rude and interrupting.

Expressing hope that his testimony had satisfied Congress,

the President said: "Congress had its opportunity and I really believe I answered any questions. I certainly answered anything they asked."

Asked about Cabinet changes, he said, "I haven't told anybody on my staff about Cabinet changes."

Mr. Ford was asked specifically about a report that Donald Rumsfeld, the White House staff coordinator, would eventually replace Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger. The President replied that Mr. Rumsfeld was doing an excellent job where he is.