

FORD AD

Rockefeller Doubts Role As Contender in '76 or '80

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Vice President Rockefeller

WASHINGTON, Feb. 27— Vice President Rockefeller, in a relaxed chat with reporters in his airplane early this morning, described himself as no longer a contending factor on the Republican Presidential scene.

He said that President Ford was "bound to be the candidate" in 1976. Mr. Rockefeller also said that as Vice President he was determined to maintain what he called "a low profile" and work closely with Mr. Ford.

As for 1980, he said, "The Vice President is 66, going on 67, and therefore is not in a competitive situation with the rising stars on a long-term basis."

The scenario sketched by Mr. Rockefeller, who was still wearing his tuxedo and savoring a friendly reception that he had received after a speech a few hours earlier in Detroit, appeared once again to foreclose his seeking the Presidency—a goal he has sought three times since 1960 despite occasional

disclaimers of Presidential ambitions.

But then, when a television reporter thrust a microphone at him and the portable lights went on to record him and his words, Mr. Rockefeller turned to a denunciation of political speculation in general.

"The people could care less about politics," he said, adding that the public wanted politi-

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ROCKEFELLER DOUBTS AN ELECTION ROLE

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... leaders to solve the nation's problems.

Mr. Rockefeller said that he did not think anyone cared about 1980 and added that he was "fed up" with political speculation. "This is the time for people to work together," he continued, and "not put politics behind us."

He denounced political speculation as "out of character," as in "poor taste," and "offensive to the American people in terms of human suffering."

Mr. Rockefeller, who had

sought to avoid any public statement that would displease the President and the White House staff, has been given a key role in shaping the President's Domestic Council.

Two of Mr. Rockefeller's aides, James Cannon and Richard L. Dunham, have been named by Mr. Ford as the two top staff directors of the Domestic Council, and Mr. Rockefeller disclosed before the discussion turned to politics that two more of his own staff members—Richard D. Parsons and Arthur F. Quern—would be moving soon to the Domestic Council.

Reminded that he had suggested some years ago that a Vice President could not be delegated a major share of power by a President, Mr. Rock-

efeller said that his situation reflected "the personality" of President Ford, the Vice President's age and the fact that he was not in a "competitive situation."

"The President is there," Mr. Rockefeller said, and added that no Republicans were talking about running against him in 1976, "unless they've got a role in their head."

"So you've got to be talking about '80," he added.

"You've got to look at the realities," he went on. "I'm not a competitive factor in 1980."

He described himself as "a staff assistant" to the President, who "can move me out at any time."

As vice chairman of the Domestic Council, Mr. Rockefeller said, he explained to the President that he would not

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cause Mr. Ford "any trouble" by trying to come between the President and his Cabinet or the President and his staff. "I want to help him," Mr. Rockefeller said.

When a reporter said that others have not counted him out of the Presidential race in 1980, Mr. Rockefeller replied, "They've got to be crazy."

He noted that he said the first day after taking office last December that Mr. Ford was bound to be the Republican candidate in 1976. Repeating that he was "not a competitive factor," Mr. Rockefeller said that, therefore "I see no real problem about doing things for the President."

It might be different, he added, "if I were in my 40's or 50's."

Then, when the lights were

turned on, and a cameraman sought to record some of the Vice President's remarks, Mr. Rockefeller turned the discussion into a long denunciation of political speculation that appeared to be aimed at the reporters crowded around his seat.

He appeared to be concerned that some of his remarks about 1980 might be taken out of context and used as a brief television film excerpt or to make, as he said at one point, "a headline."

His VC-137B, the Air Force version of a Boeing 707, touched down at Andrews Air Force Base and taxied to the passenger terminal, but Mr. Rockefeller remained in his seat and continued to talk for several minutes.

"I deal with I don't know how

many candidates a day in the Senate," he said. "I just think this country deserves the best from everybody, and the person who puts the nation first is going to be the person who comes out best."

As he moved up the aisle to the front exit, Mr. Rockefeller added, "This town is filled with this sort of speculation."

His concern, he reiterated, is in trying to solve the nation's problems, and he added, "I want to make sure we're still here by 1980."

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