

Ford Hopes to Have Rockefeller on Slate

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WASHINGTON, June 16 — President Ford issued today a strong endorsement of Vice President Rockefeller as both a partner in Government and a running mate in the 1976 election.

But the President deliberately left open the possibility that someone other than Mr. Rockefeller could be chosen for the Vice-Presidential nomination next year by delegates to the Republican National Convention.

"I wanted a good partner for Vice President, and he exceeded my expectations," the President said. "He has done a fine job in every way."

The statement was read to reporters at the White House by Ron Nessen, the President's

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spokesman, in response to inquiries about Mr. Rockefeller's comments yesterday on television about Central Intelligence Agency assassination plots and about continuing opposition to the Vice President among conservative Republicans.

"Both of us in these coming months will be submitting ourselves to the will of the delegates to the Republican National Convention in 1976," Mr. Ford said. "I am confident both of us can convince the delegates that, individually and as a team, we should be nominated."

Mr. Nessen declined, however, to declare outright that Mr. Ford would ask convention delegates to nominate Mr. Rockefeller rather than leave the decision on a running mate to the judgment of an "open convention."

Delegates to Decide

"The President will be for Nelson Rockefeller for nomination," Mr. Nessen said. "The delegates will make the decision."

One well-placed political associate of Mr. Ford said that Mr. Nessen's comment reflected the President's decision to let convention delegates have free rein in deciding whether to choose Mr. Rockefeller or someone else for the second spot on the national ticket.

The President was said to be confident that the convention would choose Mr. Rockefeller

but determined not to impose his choice on the delegates, particularly conservatives who have been opponents of the former New York Governor in previous national party conflicts.

The President's statement of support for his Vice President was drafted a week ago, amid reports of a rift over Mr. Rockefeller's handling of a formal report on the C.I.A.'s activities, but that specific issue did not arise at Mr. Ford's news conference last Monday. Mr. Nessen cleared the statement with the President again this morning, in anticipation of renewed interest in relations between Mr. Ford and Mr. Rockefeller.

Mr. Ford had said at the news conference that "utmost prudence" should be used in considering incomplete evidence on the role former Presidents may have played in alleged plots by the C.I.A. to kill foreign political leaders.

Comment on Program

Mr. Rockefeller, interviewed yesterday on the NBC-TV program, "Meet the Press," strongly implied that President Kennedy and Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy would have known of alleged plans to assassinate Premier Fidel Castro of Cuba in the early nineteen-sixties.

Mr. Rockefeller said that it was "fair to say that no major undertakings by the C.I.A. were done without either knowledge and/or approval of the White House."

The Vice President also said in the television interview that while there was no "conclusive information" some of those "allegedly involved" in assassination planning had themselves been assassinated. Later Mr. Rockefeller confirmed that he had in mind the two Kennedys.

Asked today if Mr. Rockefeller's comments had been contrary to the President's admonition to use prudence, Mr. Nessen would say only that Mr. Ford "made his views known" on that subject at the news conference last week.

Mr. Nessen read the statement of support for the Vice President after being asked if Mr. Ford agreed with the facetious suggestion that Mr. Rockefeller would be an ideal Secretary of State. The suggestion was made yesterday by Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona, a leader of conservative Republicans who would like to see Mr. Rockefeller replaced on the party's 1976 ticket.

Conservative Challenge

One group of conservatives, led by Senator James L. Buckley, Conservative-Republican of New York, issued a statement early this month calling for an "open" choice of both Presidential and Vice-Presidential nominees. Ronald Reagan, the former Governor of California and a potential Ford or Rockefeller challenger next year, has been making the same point in speeches across the country.

Mr. Rockefeller said through a spokesman that he was "deeply appreciative" of the compliments paid by Mr. Ford.

The spokesman said that Mr. Rockefeller had taken note of the White House suggestion that his fate as Vice President would hinge on the free choice of the convention delegates and had remarked, with a laugh, "I'm a veteran of open conventions."

Republican conventions rejected Presidential candidacies by Mr. Rockefeller in 1946 and 1968.

In separate White House ceremonies, meantime, the President signed into law today measures providing \$473-million for summer jobs for youths and extending through the end of 1976 a Government program that provides guaranteed loans for livestock farmers.

The summer employment program is intended to provide up to 12 weeks of part-time work for 840,000 teen-agers from poor families. The appropriation was nearly \$44-million more than Mr. Ford had sought.

The summer job funds were originally part of a \$5.3-billion emergency employment bill that Mr. Ford vetoed. House Democrats failed by five votes to override the veto two weeks ago.