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**Ford Urges
Decision on
Impeachment**

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Vice President Ford yesterday threw his weight behind the Republican push for speedier House Judiciary Committee consideration of the impeachment of President Nixon, adding that all the committee's hearings, except those involving national security, ought to be open to the public.

At a breakfast with newsmen, Ford said the committee should be able to bring the impeachment question to a vote "in three to four months at the most."

If the Democratic majority does not resolve the question by the end of April, he said, "then you can say it's partisan."

Ford is the latest and the highest-ranking Republican to urge that the Judiciary Committee accelerate its consideration of impeachment resolutions. The Republican demands reflect a worry that Democrats may deliberately allow the impeachment question to carry over into next year's mid-term primary and general election campaigns.

Judiciary Committee Chairman Peter W. Rodino (D-N.J.) has denied any suggestion of partisan foot-dragging, but said yesterday he doubted it was feasible to meet the Republicans' April target date.

Ford, insisting that "none of the evidence I've seen so far justifies a favorable vote" on impeachment, said he thought public doubts about the President could best be diminished if the preliminary impeachment proceedings were as public as possible.

"In any area except that involving national security," he said, "I think it ought to be open."

Ford argued—apparently on the basis of incorrect in-

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formation—that the House had an obligation to act on impeachment early enough in the second session to allow for Senate trial of the President before adjournment next fall, should impeachment be voted. Otherwise, he said, "this resolution dies with this Congress," and the President could be left with his reputation tarnished without ever having an opportunity for a trial that could acquit him.

But House Judiciary Committee Republican aides said there is no legal requirement that a trial of impeachment take place in the same Congress that votes impeachment. In the case of President Andrew Johnson, they said, one Congress impeached the President and the next tried and acquitted him.

Ford also told newsmen that President Nixon has promised him he would be in daily contact with the chief executive on government policies and problems—either in a personal meeting or an "extensive phone conversation."

The Vice President said Mr. Nixon had suggested that procedure at their first meeting following his confirmation last week, and that "his performance on that pledge has been good so far."

Ford said he "talked at length with him by phone on Sunday and Monday" and met with him on each of the past two days.

Aides to former Vice President Agnew frequently complained that he had only occasional access to the President. But after a meeting with Mr. Nixon and Ford yesterday, Senate Minority Leader Hugh Scott (R-Pa.) and House Minority Leader John J. Rhodes (R-Ariz.) expressed satisfaction at Ford's expanded role.

Rhodes said, "I think the Vice President is being brought into the highest White House councils because of the necessity of rapport with Congress," adding that he was told Ford would be meeting regularly with the President's economic and energy advisers, as well as the Domestic Council and the National Security Council.

Ford himself told newsmen he doubted he would take any administrative responsibilities as Vice President but would concentrate on congressional liaison and work for the Republican Party.

Asked if he would allow himself to be used as the "cutting edge" of the Republican campaign in 1974, as

Agnew was in the 1970 election, Ford said, "I'm not going to take any direction" from the White House, "but I will speak affirmatively for the administration and the Republican Party."

"I'm not going to criticize the Democrats," he said. "Their record can stand or fall on its own."

Asked about his own income tax payments, in light of the controversy over Mr. Nixon's claim to be exempt from California income taxes, Ford said, "I paid an income tax in Michigan as long as we've had a tax there, because my CPA (certified public accountant) told me it was the law."

"I think the President relied on his CPA or attorneys, the same I relied on mine," he said, "and now there's some dispute on it."

"But the city of Grand Rapids has an income tax of its own, and my CPA told me I was not liable for it, so I didn't pay it."

Ford also said he has made periodic donations of his papers to the University of Michigan but never sought to have them appraised for a tax deduction.

"I don't think they were worth much," he said.