

Ford Suggests A Nixon-Ervin Compromise

Washington

Vice President Gerald R. Ford suggested yesterday that a compromise could be struck between President Nixon and Senate Watergate committee chairman Sam J. Ervin Jr. in Ervin's sweeping request for nearly 500 Watergate-related documents and tapes.

Ford, interviewed on NBC News "Meet the Press," 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 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 Mr. Nixon 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 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 tax and financial situations, he said. "And I hope and trust, despite what I understand is some reluctance at the present time, that the President continues with Operation Candor with a full disclosure on 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 seems to me that the President ought to maximize his effort to re-establish the good rapport that he had with the American people, and Operation

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Candor is one way of doing it," said Ford.

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 made against Mr. Nixon, Ford sidestepped the question but noted that 45 per cent in the same poll were against impeachment of the President (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 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 personal belief that the President is innocent of any impeachable conduct.

The Vice President portrayed himself as a man in frequent contact with the President if not always consulted in the decision-making process. He said he was "in daily contact" with Mr. Nixon before Ford went off on a two-week family vacation in Colorado and had talked to the President five or six times by telephone while he was away.

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