

WXPost
1957

Ford Denounces Critics of Nixon

JAN 16 1974

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'Grudge' Cited

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Vice President Gerald R. Ford yesterday assailed President Nixon's critics and accused them of waging an "all-out" campaign to "crush" the President and the policies he advocates.

The Vice President named the AFL-CIO and Americans for Democratic Action among "powerful pressure organizations" that he said are "waging a massive propaganda campaign against the President."

Echoing the cry that it is time to impeach the President or get off his back Ford said, "America has no time to waste on a long drawn-out political grudge fight."

The Vice President's vigorous assault on the critics came in the course of a speech in Atlantic City, N.J., before the American Farm Bureau Federation. The text was released here.

Ford spoke about two hours before technical experts testified in U.S. District Court here on the missing portion of a tape of a presidential conversation with former aide H. R. (Bob) Haldeman.

The White House dis-
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claimed any responsibility for the Ford speech and refused comment on it. A Ford aide said, "This is the Vice President's speech; he meant every word of it."

The aide said that the Vice President had no information about the testimony on the tapes before he spoke.

Replying to Ford, ADA said in a statement that "no amount of rhetoric" by Ford can obscure the fact that ADA's interests in the impeachment proceedings "are based on solid evidence and a prima facie case against the President."

The AFL-CIO said it would have no comment immediately.

Ford called on the House Judiciary Committee, which is considering an impeachment resolution, to "act promptly" on its investiga-

tion and complete its work no later than April 30.

"Personally, I believe that no valid grounds exist for impeachment of the President," Ford said. "I believe that a majority of the committee will reach the same conclusion. But, whatever their feelings, they owe it to all of us to do their job promptly and responsibly."

Administration supporters have urged the House not to drag out its proceedings. House minority Leader John J. Rhodes (R-Ariz.) has urged the committee to complete its work in the early spring. Last month, White House counselor Melvin R. Laird also urged the committee to vote up or down at the earliest possible date.

Even earlier, the senior Republican in the Senate, George D. Aiken (Vt.), quoted a constituent as saying it was time to impeach the President or get off his back. Other Republicans have used the phrase frequently since then.

Ford had high praise for Mr. Nixon's accomplishments, declaring that Watergate is "a tragic but grotesque sideshow" compared with "these mountainous achievements."

He said Mr. Nixon ended America's involvement in Vietnam, improved relations with China and the Soviet Union and has laid the groundwork for peace in the Middle East.

"When you . . . think of these magnificent achievements, then Watergate no longer dominates the landscape," Ford said.

Ford charged that "a few extreme partisans" are bent on "stretching out the ordeal of Watergate for their own purposes.

"Their aim is total victory for themselves, and the total defeat not only of President Nixon but of the policies for which he stands," the Vice President said.

If the critics win, "we can all kiss goodbye the chances of reducing federal spending and increasing community and individual independence," Ford said.

If "the super-welfare stat-

ers" dominate Congress and neutralize the White House "we can expect an avalanche of fresh government intervention in our economy, massive new government spending, higher taxes and a more rampant inflation," he said. "If the relatively small group of activists who are out to impeach the President see that they do not have the strength to do it, they will try to do the next most damaging thing," Ford said. "They will try to stretch out the ordeal, to cripple the President by dragging out the preliminar-

ies to impeachment for as long as they can, and to use the whole affair for maximum political advantage."

The critics have "no right to leave America hanging," the Vice President said, "when so much that is important remains to be done.

"That is what the American people are telling their elected representatives, again and again, during the holiday period. Settle Watergate, they say. Write the last chapter; close the book, and get on with the vital business of the nation."

In an interview with the

British Broadcasting Corp. aired yesterday, Ford said with reference to the President's popularity: "The slide down has stopped and the corner has been turned."

Discussing the President's unpopularity, Ford said it was due in part to his personality and life style.

"I think I am more gregarious and less shy than Mr. Nixon," he said. "But he is not shy once you get to know him. In public he is reserved. My lifestyle is the opposite. I am less suspicious of people than Mr. Nixon is."