

Ford Asks 'Fairness' For U.S. Agencies

By William Claiborne
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Vice President Gerald R. Ford issued an appeal to a "Fairness to the Presidency" assembly here yesterday to spread a little fairness to Congress and other beleaguered government institutions as well.

Addressing 400 unashamedly patriotic, flag-waving members of the "National Citizens' Committee for Fairness to the Presidency," Ford acknowledged that President Nixon's popularity ratings had dipped alarmingly low because of what he termed "the hammering of hostile critics."

But, the Vice President said, his concern extends beyond the White House.

"I say it is tragic and tremendously bad for America when only 20 to 30 per cent of its citizens—if the polls are anywhere nearly correct—have a good word to say for their elected officials in Congress," declared the former House Republican leader.

"I say we need to encourage fairness clear across the board, or we stand in danger of losing the greatest free government the world has ever known," Ford told guests at the \$100-a-plate luncheon at the Mayflower Hotel.

Flanked by larger than life-sized portraits of Mr. Nixon and George Washington and surrounded by red, white and blue bunting, the Vice President told the enthusiastic gathering that "this country needs fairness to the presidency if it is to survive in a dangerous world."

In one of only a few references to Mr. Nixon by name, Ford said, "I believe that Richard Nixon's place in history as a peacemaker already stands secure."

But most of his remarks focused on an appeal for fairness to the U.S. judicial system, Congress and other government institutions.

The luncheon guests, according to the national committees, represented dozens of Fairness to the Presidency chapters across the country. The most sizable delegations,

however, were from Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island.

Prior to the luncheon, Rabbi Baruch Korff pledged that the group would continue to campaign for fairness to Mr. Nixon "until we can wipe seditionist propaganda from the face of the nation's conscience."

Rabbi Korff formed the Providence-based, ad hoc committee last summer by buying \$5,700 worth of advertising space in the New York Times to run a tract headed, "An Appeal for Fairness."

Response to the advertisement mushroomed so much, Rabbi Korff said, that the group now has 200,000 members and has spent \$500,000 placing a series of nine advertisements in 37 major newspapers. Most of the group's revenue goes into the advertising campaign, Rabbi Korff said.

The committee's ads generally feature a free-wheeling writing style that likens the press and congressional critics of Mr. Nixon to a "motley crowd which has been longing for a cause since rioting for Vietnam became passe."

Late yesterday afternoon, Mr. Nixon met with Rabbi Korff and the 400 committee members at a White House reception. The President was given a scroll that commended "the faith that makes you fearless and the strength that equals your responsibilities."

In its most recent ad, which appeared yesterday in The Washington Post, the group warned, "If the media mob and the left lynchers can flim-flam America, the Republic will be governed by them, or not at all."

Also speaking at the luncheon were Sen. Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.) and Agriculture Secretary Earl Butz.

Guests at the assembly included Treasury Secretary George P. Shultz and Transportation Secretary Claude S. Brinegar. Several Presidential aides attended, including Special Assistant Patrick J. Buchanan and Communications Director Kenneth W. Clawson.