

FORD URGES NIXON TO JOIN CAMPAIGN

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He Feels President Should Help G.O.P. Candidate in Special Michigan Race

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WASHINGTON, April 2—

Vice President Ford said today that he had urged President Nixon to "take the risk" and campaign for a Republican candidate in an upcoming special Congressional election in Michigan.

Mr. Ford conceded that the President's appearance on behalf of the Republican candidate, James Sparling, might turn the election into a referendum on the President.

"But there are always certain gambles in a political campaign," the Vice President said. "It's just my feeling that the President ought to go and take the risk."

Meanwhile, a White House spokesman said today that the President was considering Mr. Sparling's invitation to campaign for him, but that no final decision had been made.

The Sparling invitation to the President has set off a lively dispute among certain key Michigan Republicans, with some suggesting that the candidate cannot afford to be openly identified with Mr. Nixon in the Eighth Congressional District race.

Voices of Dissent

William McLaughlin, the Michigan state Republican chairman, has reportedly sought to discourage Mr. Nixon from campaigning in that state. Robert Grant, the Saginaw County Republican chairman who is coordinating the Sparling campaign, has been quoted as saying that neither the candidate's cause nor the party's cause would be helped by a Presidential visit.

Vice President Ford was not alone today in urging the President to appear in that Michigan district before the April 16 special election. George Bush, the Republican National Chairman, also said that he would like the President to go to Michigan.

"I have continually urged him to go to the people, and I hope he will," Mr. Bush said.

But Senator Robert P. Griffin of Michigan, the Senate Republican whip, appeared less enthusiastic about a possible Michigan visit by the President.

Meeting with reporters after a leadership session at the White House today, Senator Griffin said it was a "very close question, politically speaking" whether a campaign ap-

pearance by Mr. Nixon would help or hurt the Republican candidate.

The Senator said, in response to a question, that the President's presence would help Mr. Sparling in some sections of the district and hurt him in others.

'The Real Issue'

"It seems to me the real issue there ought to be what kind of a Congressman the people of the district want," Senator Griffin said. "The election shouldn't be turned into a referendum on President Nixon."

Mr. Sparling is to be opposed by State Representative Robert Traxler, a Democrat, in the race to fill the House seat being vacated by Representative James Harvey who has been nominated for a Federal judgeship.

Mr. Sparling, who worked briefly at the White House last year, said earlier this week that in asking the President to appear in his district, "I am not asking Mr. Nixon to boost my candidacy."

Instead, Mr. Sparling said, "I am inviting the President to defend himself on Watergate and his economic policies. I thought he ought to get out of the White House and come out and meet the people. If he is found guilty of any wrongdoing, then he will get a vote of impeachment from me."

Vice President Ford's views on a Presidential visit to Michigan were disclosed during a luncheon interview with reporters today. He said that he had not spoken about the matter with the President but had urged various White House aides to persuade the President to go.

Mr. Ford said that he thought such a visit would be helpful to both the President and the Republican candidate. "I happen to think" he said, "when the chips are down it will help the candidate."

The Watergate Issue

As to whether the President should discuss the Watergate issue on such a visit, the Vice President said that would be a decision for Mr. Nixon to make.

The Vice President also said that it would not be practical for him to accompany the President to Michigan, since this would require Mr. Sparling to divide himself between the two of them. But Mr. Ford said there was a possibility that

he would appear in the district a few days after the President if Mr. Nixon did decide to go.

In response to another question, the Vice President sought to soften the impact of his son Hohn's statement earlier this week about being disillusioned with President Nixon.

John Ford, 22, a student at Utah State University, was quoted as saying, "I worked on President Nixon's campaign for eight months, but of late, I have become disillusioned with him."