

Nixon Reported
Undecided on
Resigning; His
Staff Said to Want
Him to Step Down;
Goldwater Sees
Only 15 Votes in
Senate

A FORD INTERVIEW

AUG 8 1974

Vice President Shuns Talk of a Transition, but Says He's Ready

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Aug. 7—Vice President Ford is fully aware that he is on the threshold of the Presidency but is uncertain when he will cross it.

That is the impression that emerged from an interview

Excerpts from Ford interview
will be found on Page 22.

today with The New York Times, as rumors of President Nixon's possible resignation swept the capital.

Helping to fan the rumors was an early morning meeting between the Vice President and Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr., Mr. Nixon's chief of staff.

Meeting Sought Suddenly

The hour-long conference, in Mr. Ford's office next door to the White House, was requested by General Haig without warning, causing the Vice President to cancel abruptly a breakfast appearance at a gathering of some of his oldest Republican friends, members of the Chowder and Marching Society.

Only hours after the meeting, Mr. Ford was asked if the matter of an orderly Presidential transition had been discussed at his meeting with General Haig.

"I'm not talking about matters of that kind," he replied quietly.

The Vice President also said firmly that he and his staff had not made any "transition plans," as had been reported in some quarters.

Feels Fully Prepared

However, he said that he feels fully prepared to assume the office of the President.

Mr. Ford termed it "premature" to discuss whether he would chose former Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller of New York as his Vice President—a suggestion made yesterday by one of Mr. Ford's closest friends and political advisers, Melvin R. Laird, former Secretary of Defense in the Nixon Cabinet.

Mr. Rockefeller's was the most prominent name among many being discussed as Vice Presidential possibilities. Later

today, Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona said he could not refuse the Vice Presidency if he was asked to serve.

Mr. Ford spoke freely in the interview of his own ideas of what America could become and of the men he considers his closest advisers, including some who presumably might form the nucleus of his own Administration.

The Vice President was sur-

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prisingly calm as he relaxed in a satin-upholstered chair in his spacious Capitol office, just off the Senate floor.

Attracts Crowd

Outside his door, newsmen and tourists thronged the ornate lobby and, when he left his office, pursued him down the Capitol hallways.

In the interview, Mr. Ford said that he had not had any private conversations with Mr. Nixon in recent days, and that the President had not asked him to remain for a talk after yesterday's Cabinet meeting, as happened frequently in the past.

"No, and I think understandably," Mr. Ford said. "But I have been kept abreast. I've had, as you know, several meetings with al [Haig]."

Asked what he considered the President's emotional state to be, the Vice President replied: "I thought he looked surprisingly well yesterday, considering all the trauma he had gone through."

Asked if he felt that the President had lied to him, as some members of Congress have said they do, Mr. Ford paused for a few seconds, then replied: "I don't think I ought to answer that."

Does he feel that he has adequately prepared himself to become President?

'No Question About That'

"No question about that," Mr. Ford replied, self-assuredly. "I think I've worked real hard. Aside from all the speeches, I've worked very hard."

He said that he had visited every executive department of the Government to confer with the Cabinet Secretaries and their top aides.

He said that he has had regular meetings with Secretary of State Kissinger, whom he has praised lavishly at every opportunity in recent months, and with Mr. Kissinger's deputy, Maj. Gen. Brent Scowcroft.

In addition, he said, he has had three or four breakfast conferences with Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger and meets weekly with William E. Timmons, head of the White House legislative liaison team.

"I get a daily briefing from the C.I.A., the same briefing that the President has gotten, or gets," he added.

Military Briefing

Mr. Ford was also briefed extensively by Adm. Noel Gayler, commander in chief of the United States armed forces in the Pacific, during a visit to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, several months ago. He was given a confidential briefing on nuclear capabilities on a visit last month at Los Alamos, N.M.

He said that he had also received a "detailed briefing" on a visit to Strategic Air Command headquarters and was given two "in-depth briefings" by Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

"I think I know as much, if not more, about the Government than any Vice President," he said.

Does he think feel prepared to assume the Presidency?

"Ready for Any Contingency"
"I think I'm well prepared reservoir of pent-up feeling that

for any contingency," he replied.

The Vice President denied reports that he had ordered the staff to prepare plans or policies for Presidential transition.

"I have told nobody on my staff, from Bob Hartman, [his chief of staff] on down to make any contingency plans," he said.

Asked if he felt the time had come that he should do so, the Vice President replied: "I don't think the time has come for me to discuss it."

Asked whom he considers his closest advisers, aside from those on his staff, Mr. Ford named Mr. Laird; John W. Byrnes, a former House colleague who was ranking Republican on the Ways and Means Committee; Philip W. Buchan of Grand Rapids, his former law partner and a moderate Republican; Bryce Harlow, a former aide to both Presidents Eisenhower and Nixon, and William G. Whyte, assistant vice president of the United States Steel Corporation.

'All My Friends'

"Now if you start talking about people in Congress," he said, "I don't want to differentiate at this point. They're all my friends. And, hopefully, will be my advisers."

Describing his own dream for America, the Vice President said that he sees a nation of "211-million wonderful people" whose belief in this country should be channeled into providing both material things and "all of the other blessings" they seek.

"I think there's a great

people think we can have more jobs and better jobs and better education," he said. "There's really a deep conviction that we can meet all these challenges and I think if we give some direction and some inspiration, this is the kind of vision I feel is right for America in these next 10 years."

Asked if he thought this would be possible under the present circumstances, he replied: "A lot can be done in a hurry."

'Bold Domestic Policy'

In recent speeches, the Vice President has called for "bold domestic diplomacy" to cure the domestic ills of the nation.

He declined to say today whether he thought this could be achieved if Mr. Nixon refused to leave office. However, those close to the Vice President say that if Mr. Ford became President there would be a greater chance to achieve domestic tranquility and progress along these lines during a sort of "honeymoon period."

Asked today if he would consider forming a "coalition Cabinet" as President, tapping Democrats as well as Republicans, Mr. Ford replied: "I ought not to talk about that."

Some months ago, Mr. Ford said he felt fully capable of meeting the toughest problems, that he has always had difficult circumstances, personally and politically. Asked today if he feels he is now facing his toughest of all problems, he replied: