

An 'Era of Good Feeling'

Congress Expects Harmony With Ford

By Spencer Rich and Richard L. Lyons
Washington Post Staff Writers

From one end of Capitol Hill to the other, members of Congress predicted last night that the presidency of Gerald R. Ford will start with a new "era of good feeling" between Congress and the White House, helping to heal the deep and wrenching blows the nation's government has suffered in the past two years.

The tone was set by the Democratic leaders of the House and the Senate, both of whom have served with Ford on terms of close cooperation during his 25 years in Congress before he became Vice President.

"Jerry Ford is a personal friend," said House Speaker Carl Albert (D-Okla.). "I am sure our relationship will be good."

Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont) said, "He's a decent man. He's conservative but you know where he stands. He'd give consideration to congressional views. He would get exceptional cooperation."

With little dissent, members of Congress of all shades of opinion gave these views on the likely course of events in Ford's presidency:

- Ford will start with a honeymoon period that will last from a few

months to a half year or more, with even his political opponents leaning over backward to help him get a "handle" on the enormously difficult new job he is undertaking. This will fade later but he will start the job with a strong disposition on the part of Democrats and Republicans alike to avoid bitter partisan squabbles.

- The accession of Ford probably will greatly help the GOP in the 1974 elections by removing Richard Nixon and the Watergate scandal as the immediate central issue of controversy. The GOP may still fare poorly, but a potential disaster has been averted.

- Ford can be expected to consult Congress far more often and far more directly than his predecessor, because Ford is "a creature of the Congress" who has served a quarter of a century and has shown that he respects the legislative process and knows how to get along with members of Congress. "He knows the workings of the Congress, he'll work well with the Congress, and more importantly, he listens and will take political advice from the political sources he respects," said Sen. Edward W. Brooke (R-Mass.).

- The presidency as an institution won't be weakened by the events cul-

See CONGRESS, A9, Col. 1

minating in the resignation of Richard M. Nixon, the first time in the history of the Republic a President has left office before his term ended, except by death. "Will the fact that Nixon resigned enhance Congress' powers too much and make it too strong? By no means," said Sen. Alan Cranston (D-Calif.). "Congress will never be too strong, it will always face a fight because the executive has the advantages of one-man decision-making and public relations."

"What we need is a strong Congress and a strong presidency and that's what we're getting," said Senate Minority Leader Hugh Scott (R-Pa.).

• Now that Mr. Nixon has resigned, impeachment proceedings in the House will cease, according to Albert, House GOP Leader John J. Rhodes (R-Ariz.) and Judiciary Committee Chairman Peter W. Rodino Jr. (D-N.J.)

However, the House Judiciary Committee report explaining why the committee voted three articles of impeachment and detailing Mr. Nixon's wrongdoing will be filed and distributed as an official document. Behind this lies the desire of House and Senate leaders to head off future claims that President Nixon was unjustly driven from office without any evidence against him.

The atmosphere that pervaded Capitol Hill yesterday was one of tremendous relief tinged by sorrow—relief that the deep and painful infection of the Watergate scandal, which had crippled the presidency of Mr. Nixon and threatened to engulf the entire Republican Party and even the whole government itself in a torrent of public disaffection, had finally been lanced and made clean. Sorrow that an administration that started with such hopes and had made such progress in a number of areas had been brought down by its own failings.

On all sides, members of Congress were looking to Ford to help restore a measure of stability and confidence in government, and above all to cure the poisonous relations between the White House and Congress which had flourished in Mr. Nixon's day.

Scott, an old friend and co-worker of Ford's, even though more liberal, who has had his conflicts with the White House from time to time, predicted highly improved relations between the Senate and the White House.

George McGovern (D-S.D.), the man Richard Nixon defeated in the 1972 election, said of Ford: "It is important that the country and Congress get behind him to unite the nation with a minimum of partisanship."

"Ford will do extraordinarily well," said Sen. Charles H. Percy (R-Ill.). "He understands Congress in a way that Nixon didn't."

Rep. Barber Conable (R-N.Y.), chairman of the House Republican Policy Committee, said he expects "consid-



United Press International

Carl Albert: immunity "a matter for the courts . . . not for Congress."

erably improved relations" because Ford, who was a House member for 25 years and House GOP leader for eight years before acceding to the vice presidency, is a "creature of Congress" with great respect for the legislative process.

Conable said Ford doesn't think of Congress as "irrelevant." He said Ford might well be far more successful than Mr. Nixon in pushing similar programs through Congress because Ford "could accomplish what he wants to accomplish with less partisan strain."

Rhodes said, "his relationships would be absolutely great. He'd be his own best legislative liaison man. He has many friends here."

Rep. John B. Anderson (R-Ill.) said a big factor for Ford would be his, "his willingness to listen, to open his doors."

"He wouldn't have a couple of paladins sitting outside his door," he said. Anderson was referring to former White House aides John D. Ehrlichman and H. R. Haldeman, whom members of Congress repeatedly accused of denying access to Mr. Nixon, and of treating Congress as if members were a pack of servants to do as they were told.

House Appropriations Committee Chairman George H. Brown (D-Tex.) said, "Ford is a man of the Congress, very understanding, practical, realistic, approachable. You can talk to him."

House Majority Leader Thomas P. (Tip) O'Neill (D-Mass.) said, "There is no question relations will improve. There never was any warmth between members of Congress and the Nixon administration. I always felt those around him looked down on members of Congress . . . (Ford) can

expect a two-to-three-month honeymoon. Then we'll just have to see what happens."

For two years, Congress and the President have been battling over the relations between the two branches, with Congress complaining that Mr. Nixon was usurping powers which the Constitution gave to the legislative branch, such as the power to initiate war, to withhold spending of appropriated funds and to withhold release of government documents.

A key White House argument during the House Judiciary Committee's impeachment proceedings was that ouster or resignation of the President would irrevocably damage the presidency and weaken it beyond the point where it could carry out its rightful functions.

But members of Congress didn't see that last night as a possible outcome of Mr. Nixon's resignation.

Among dozens of House and Senate members interviewed, only one Delbert Latta (R-Ohio), said he thinks the presidency has been weakened. Overall, he said, "Every President will be looking over his shoulder. They may impeach him for refusing to turn over information. That scares me."

Aside from Latta, there was universal belief that the presidency as such hadn't been weakened, that in fact attempts by Mr. Nixon to stretch presidential powers too much had been stopped and a proper balance restored.

"No, I don't think Congress will dominate," Sen. Brooke said. "I think it will restore some of the balance Congress lost through abdication and usurpation."

Sen. John Tower (R-Tex.), after warm praise for Ford, said, "The balance between Congress and the President depends largely on the personality of the President and the quality of leadership of the Congress."

Mansfield said he didn't feel Mr. Nixon's resignation would unduly strengthen Congress at the executive's expense, because "the inherent presidential powers remain with the President, and emergency powers too. I look for a more understanding relationship."

Rep. Richard Bolling (D-Mo.) said, "I don't think this will weaken the presidency. The case is so overwhelming, I doubt such a quixotic case would hurt the institution of the presidency."

Rodino said, "The integrity of the system is preserved. We see that the country, despite all the anguish, survives."

Conable said Ford, with his good relations with Congress might well be able to "unite members behind a reconstituted presidency and that will mean a more powerful presidency."

Sen. J. Glenn Beall (R-Md.) took the view that whatever advantage Congress has gained, it won't dominate "until it handles its appropriations in a timely and effective manner."

Sen Bob Dole (R-Kan.) predicted



United Press International

Sens. Jennings Randolph and Edward M. Kennedy leave after caucus.

that there wouldn't be any imbalance among the three branches, saying, "I don't see any long-range weakening of the presidency."

Sen. Gaylord Nelson (D-Wis.) agreed. "Not a bit, that's what the constitutional provision is all about. When you have allegations, that's the time Congress should exercise its powers."

Sen. Howard H. Baker (R-Tenn.) said he doesn't expect an era of congressional domination. "There will be continuing undulations among the three branches," he said.

Sen. Marlow W. Cook (R-Ky.) said he doesn't think the events leading to Mr. Nixon's resignation "means the president can be bullied and pushed out anytime by Congress." He said the accession of Ford will "strengthen our institution."

Sen. Percy said, "This won't give Congress the whip-hand. It simply

brings back into balance an erosion of power that's been going on since FDR (Franklin D. Roosevelt)."

The last word goes to Sen. McGovern, Mr. Nixon's losing foe in the 1972 presidential campaign. "Will this cause Congress to overwhelm the presidency? No. I think it's going to make Congress more aware of its constitutional role as a check on the executive branch. "But I don't think it will make Congress too strong."

Then McGovern, who as a candidate for election against a sitting President learned to his unhappiness about the tremendous and magisterial public relations impact of the presidency, added Wryly, "There is little danger of congressional dominance. The dice are loaded on the side of the executive branch."

Staff writer Mary Russell also contributed to this report.