



Harriet Van Horne

Gerald Ford—A ^{1/28/74} decent, kindly man

NEW YORK—Comparisons are odious, runs the cliché, ignoring the fact that we all make them every day. How else are we to draw valid conclusions?

Not to compare is not to reason, not to wonder.

And what does each one of us do in the privacy of the voting booth? We make odious comparisons, of course, and step out filled with the dignity of citizenship.

What's becoming truly odious today is the refusal of some citizens to make comparisons in the political realm, weighing the moral values of the Nixon White House against the values generally accepted in other houses of the land.

Worse, these Nixon loyalists, eyes blinkered against truth, assume an attitude that says their patriotism is much nobler than yours or mine.

Recently, that part of the nation that watches television had a rare and highly instructive opportunity for comparison.

ON CBS WE had one hour of President Nixon, a reprise of his anguished efforts to make everything perfectly clear about Watergate.

Then, half an hour later on the Dick Cavett Show [ABC], we had 90 minutes with Vice President Gerald Ford and his family.

Ford is as clear and simple as the clock on the station wall. He is square and sweet and solid.

I don't mean to suggest the new Vice President is a confectionery bar. It is rather to say he projects decency, strength and a wholesome view of his fellow man.

You like him despite his abominable voting record and his churlish conduct in carrying out White House orders to defame Justice William O. Douglas. One has the feeling that Gerry Ford now is ashamed of that episode.

In the course of this 90-minute colloquy and its frequently stiff and pointless questions, the Vice President said little that was newsworthy. But the small asides, the unaffected anecdotes, the obvious tenderness for his family spoke volumes.

Naturally, Ford evaded questions on how he would conduct himself in the Presidency. One would have to call him an arrogant boor had he accepted Cavett's easy assumption that the Fords' address would soon be the White House.

"Would you give executive clemency to Mr. Nixon?" asked Cavett, fairly stunning his prey. "I don't think I ought to comment on that," came the judicious reply.

In entering the Fords' suburban home, where this interview was filmed, Cavett asked, "Do I precede the Vice President?"

"Yes, you do in our house," Ford replied.

HERE IS a man you may fairly describe as decent, kindly, forthright and absolutely certain of his identity.

The Fords' two younger children, Steve and Susan, appeared with their mother near the close of the interview. Nice, unaffected youngsters of high school age. Mrs. Ford, like her husband, is no phrasemaker, but she is real, not a manikin.

As we were saying, a sweet, solid, square man. We can feel safer when he's in the White House.

Bill Vaughan

Medical researchers report that people who drink have fewer heart attacks than teetotalers! However, it may be because they die of something else first.