

# On President Gerald R. Ford



Ray Cromley

## Ford: Is There A Saint In Our Future?

By Ray Cromley

WASHINGTON — (NEA) — Anyone who doesn't expect major changes when and if Gerald Ford becomes president has not studied the record.

Of course, the precise changes are impossible to predict today. Whatever his own thinking, Ford in the past has moved slowly, gathering input from colleagues with all shapes of opinion, then welding these ideas into pragmatic programs with enough of every man's ideas to secure his support.

In Congress, Ford moved up every time the Republicans were in disarray and looking for younger blood with fresh ideas to take leadership.

Ford began to fly quietly when Ford surprisingly blitzed into the chairmanship of the House Republican Conference; in a vote engineered by his Young Turk friends. The Conference, powerful on paper as the governing body of the Republican party in the House, was largely ceremonial in practice. With Ford in, ceremony was out. A consensus was found. Positive Republican position papers began to appear, replacing negative GOP reflexes to Democratic proposals.

Ford made minority leader in 1965, which put him at the head of the discouraged House Republicans. The first Ford push here was for "constructive" alternatives to President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty.

Leading a group of young activists, Ford became softly bold in moving into Senate-House meetings through a Republican co-ordinating committee. It was not long before that body's principal proposals came heavily from Ford's men — revenue sharing as an alternative to big federal government, their own health care plan as a counter to President Johnson's medicare, proposals for low income housing aid, disclosure of Congressional campaign finances and new means of preventing strikes which could cripple the nation.

Ford's major achievement in the House lay in changing the Republican party from negative opposition — against everything the Democrats favored — to "positivism," with a 40-plus part program even praised by the liberal opposition.

Though classified a conservative, Ford's overall voting record has made, neither conservatives nor liberals happy. He was an early supporter of foreign aid. He voted for the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Equal Rights Amendment. He favored the District of Columbia Crime Bill providing for pretrial detention and no-knock entry, the 18-year-old vote, prayer in schools and for the election of presidents by direct popular vote. He was against provisions eliminating an independent legal services corporation for the poor. He was for exempting newspapers from antitrust laws, for extra unemployment compensation in areas where unemployment is above 6.5 per cent, for the Tax Reform Act of 1969, for denying food stamps to strikers and families. He was a hawk on the Vietnam war. He voted against repealing the right-to-work provision of the Taft Hartley Act, opposed workmen's compensation for migrant workers and supported "binding arbitration by a third party" in national transportation emergencies.

Ford has been given high scores by the conservative American Security Council, and the Americans for Constitutional Action and low scores by the liberal Americans for Democratic Action and the AFL-CIO Committee on Political Education (COPE).

In recent years, with a Republican in the White House, Ford as minority leader has seen his role as being the President's man. Beginning in 1969 he has voted with the President from 70 to 89 per cent of the time, well above the House Republican average. He has likewise consistently been well above the average in voting with the majority of his party and with the bipartisan majority.

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