



Ray Cromley

President Ford: *Ford*
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By Ray Cromley

WASHINGTON — (NEA) — Honest, genial Gerald Ford is a deceptive man. Says one Ford friend, "If you think he's not very smart and doesn't know what he's doing, look at his eyes sometime when you're dickering with him. You catch on fast."

Ford is quiet, unobtrusive, genial, considerate; but when he hands out a favor he expects cooperation in return. He's a superb technician and a quiet persuader, not an arm twister in the Lyndon Johnson style. In this regard, Ford's mild, friendly, just-a-football player attitude is a "fooler." He's an administrator, a driver. His "not too bright" attitude (people forget his B average at Yale Law School while working his way through) disarms opposition and draws people to him who are eager to aid. But his big "secret" is that he is an extremely friendly, good man, whom everyone likes and respects. Says one associate, "When he gets that hang-dog look on his face, you can't say 'No.'"

More needs to be said about Ford's "not very smart" reputation. This reporter's investigations indicate it is those with "causes" who have fastened this "football player brain" label on Ford, insisting that he doesn't understand 1974's complicated national problems. Perhaps it is because he stays neutral in ideological arguments or because above all he is concerned with pragmatic solutions a majority can agree on — rather than on theorizing.

It's frequently difficult, in fact, to know how Ford himself actually thinks on a given issue though he regularly makes his opinion public on 99 issues out of 100. But are these his opinions or the consensus he has built after listening to all available views? Or are they opinions he expresses because of his determination to operate impartially with the majority of Republicans?

As a congressman, Ford has said he saw his job as getting Republicans to work together. And that he has done more successfully than most, having general respect and warm friendships among conservatives, liberals, middle-of-the-roaders — Democrats and Republicans alike. Perhaps again this is because he avoids biting those who oppose him and because he will go all out to help reelect loyal Republicans with whom he may differ strongly. That straightforward attitude is respected on the Democratic side of the aisle — and Ford is so gentlemanly about his Republican loyalty and so obviously honest that anything he proposes is given serious consideration.

As president, Ford will probably be more partisan than Mr. Nixon in making appointments, preferring Republicans for key posts. Mr. Nixon often chose men more for their loyalty to himself than to the Republican organization.

What is most likely under Mr. Ford, then, is an administration which seems deceptively closer to that of President Dwight Eisenhower than to the presidencies of Nixon, Johnson, Kennedy, Truman or Franklin Roosevelt. The changes will be brought about so smoothly. There will be less excitement, events permitting, than we have had for some time.

President Ford will concentrate on keeping the wheels running smoothly. He will hold off on major actions until everyone on every side has put in his two cents worth. He will work closely with Congress, with the press and with the representatives of foreign countries. His disagreements will be quiet and proper. He will attempt persuasion rather than argument.

There likely will be little complaint from Congress that a President Ford is usurping powers and prerogatives. There may be complaints he is not moving dramatically enough. No one will say he isn't trying.