

President Urges Congress to Become

Some Democrats Viewed As Pleased but Dubious

TUESDAY, AUGUST 13, 1974

Working Partner'

By MARJORIE HUNTER

Special to The New York Times

L + +

21

and 'Constructive Critic'

WASHINGTON, Aug. 12—In calling upon Congress tonight to become "my working partner as well as my most constructive critic," President Ford appeared to signal an end to nearly nine years of what was widely viewed here as White House disdain for the legislative branch of government.

"My motto towards the Congress is communication, conciliation, compromise and cooperation," the new President told his former colleagues in the Congress.

"I don't want a honeymoon," he said. "I want a good marriage."

His remarks, greeted by loud applause, bore out his earlier promises to repair what, only a few short days ago, appeared to be an almost permanent estrangement between the White House and Congress.

Skepticism From Albert

But while obviously pleased at the new President's promises to bring Congress into a full working partnership with the White House, some Democratic leaders were dubious about Mr. Ford's broadly sketched economic policies.

"It was the sort of speech that had to be made," House Speaker Carl Albert said. However, Mr. Albert was somewhat skeptical as to how the economic situation would specifically be brought under control.

Another Democratic leader, Representative John Brademas of Indiana, observed: "He [the President] wants to balance the budget but he doesn't want to cut defense spending. Where is the money to come from?"

Senator Mike Mansfield, the Democratic leader of the Senate, expressed pleasure that Mr. Ford had adopted his call for an economic summit conference.

Senator Henry M. Jackson, Democrat of Washington, termed the Ford speech "just what the doctor ordered." Senator Barry Goldwater, Republican of Arizona, said, "I think that's what the country needs."

But Senator Russell B. Long,

Democrat of Louisiana and chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, said he was "dismayed" that Mr. Ford felt he could solve inflation primarily by domestic budget cuts.

"That," said Senator Long, "is only a small beginning."

'Scalpel and Meat Ax'

The House Republican leader, John J. Rhodes of Arizona, appeared to express the reaction of House Republicans when he said that solving the nation's economic problems would not be easy.

"It will take both a scalpel and a meat ax" to bring Federal spending in line and help stop inflation, Mr. Rhodes said.

It was in the middle of his inaugural speech on Friday that Mr. Ford asked to speak to a joint session of Congress tonight. And, only minutes after the inaugural ceremony ended, he huddled with Congressional leaders of both parties to arrange for such a session.

President Ford is a product of the informal give and take of the House in which he served for a quarter century. He has said, in recent interviews before becoming President, that he thinks it is essential to bring Congress back into partnership with the White House.

This attitude is in sharp contrast to that of former President Nixon and his top aides, who viewed Congress as little more than a nuisance. It is also in contrast to the latter years of Lyndon B. Johnson's Presidency, when the White House and Congress were at sharp odds, in part, but not entirely, because of the war in Vietnam.

Congressional Liaison

The White House disclosed today that President Ford had asked William E. Timmons and his veteran six-man White House legislative liaison team to remain in their jobs. At least initially, though, President Ford is likely to serve as his own chief of Congressional relations. For instance, just this

morning he interrupted a busy schedule to telephone Representative Charles B. Rangel, chairman of the 16-member House Congressional Black Caucus.

After answering the telephone, a startled secretary turned to Mr. Rangel and said: "I don't know if someone's trying to put us on, but the President's on the phone."

"Hi, Charlie," President Ford said, as Mr. Rangel picked up the receiver.

The President was calling to ask whether he could arrange a meeting with the Black Caucus to "work out problems of mutual interest."

The fact that Mr. Ford made the overture, instead of waiting for the Black Caucus to ask for such a meeting, has impressed caucus leaders. For it was only after repeated requests by black Representatives that former President Nixon finally agreed to meet with the caucus several years ago.

Such a personal approach to old colleagues on Capitol Hill is typical of the way Mr. Ford has operated through the years.

One of his aides observed recently that Mr. Ford had "one of the best polling operations in the country."

"All he needs to do is pick up a phone, call people in the House, and find out what majority sentiment is on any given issue," the aide said.

Several days before he became President, Mr. Ford was asked in an interview if he felt that he could work with Democrats in the Democratic-controlled Congress.

"No question about it," he replied. "It's not only one part of the political spectrum of the Democratic party, but I can go from Joe Waggoner to Tip [O'Neill] to Mo Udall. I have yet to have anyone turn me off, regardless. I've talked to them about some pretty tough

matters."

Joe Waggoner is an ultra-conservative Democrat from Louisiana, and unofficial head of the bloc of Southern Democratic conservatives. Thomas P. (Tip) O'Neill of Massachusetts is Democratic leader of the House, Morris K. Udall of Arizona is a liberal Democrat.

Long-time members of the White House staff predict that Mr. Ford will eventually have to curtail his "old buddy" approach to former colleagues in Congress.

"He'll find out soon enough that everybody on the Hill will be asking for five minutes here and five minutes there, and he just won't have the time," one of these staff members said today.

But members of the Timmons legislative liaison staff agree that Mr. Ford's close ties with Congress will make their jobs infinitely easier.

"It's never easy," Tom Korologos, chief White House lobbyist in the Senate, said. "But it's going to be a lot easier now."

For one thing, most of the people Mr. Ford is bringing with him to the White House came off the Hill. They know about sewer grants and how things operate around Congress."

Max L. Friedersdorf, who is in charge of White House relations with the House of Representatives, said today he had already noticed a marked change in Congressional attitudes toward the White House.

"It's not just that we don't have this Watergate thing hanging over us," he observed. "A lot of the guys are coming up to me and saying they want to work with us wherever possible. I think there will be a lot more negotiating and less vetoes."

"For one thing, most of the

dorf believes that Mr. Ford, because of his years in the House, will be more likely than some of his predecessors to "test the waters" before proposing legislation.

"He'll think of the effect on Congress, and what he's likely to get," Mr. Friedersdorf said.

The likelihood of such an approach would seem to be borne out by comments Mr. Ford himself made during an interview several months ago, when he was asked what he thought his principal attributes were for the Vice-Presidency or even the Presidency.

"I think I have a reputation for understanding individual attitudes, party problems, and the need to solve these problems without abrasiveness, without narrow partisan conflict," he replied.

"I've always had the view that regardless of your party affiliation or personal attitudes, if you've got a problem, people of good will can sit down and solve it," he continued.

"If I have any qualities in the political arena or public service," he said, "it's a capability of getting a solution, rather than a conflict."

President Ford is aware, however, that a too genial approach to Congress has its potential pitfalls, that by tailoring requests only to what he thinks he might reasonably get could erode the power of the Presidency and give Congress the upper hand.

But he feels that in the initial stages of his Administration, he must first repair the damage done by the Watergate scandal, and restore at least some working relationship between the White House and the Congress.