

# Rights Activists Feel Opposition To Ford Is Futile

By Austin Scott

Washington Post Staff Writer

Representatives of two civil rights groups said yesterday they will not necessarily oppose the confirmation of the Vice President-designate, Rep. Gerald R. Ford (R-Mich.), even though they think he has a "terrible" civil rights record.

"He is not a man whom we would have preferred to see in that position because we're in disagreement with him on basic issues of policy in racial matters," said Dr. John Morrell, associate executive director of the NAACP.

However, he said, "We don't plan to oppose the nomination . . . it would be a pretty futile effort."

Clarence Mitchell, executive director of the Leadership Conference for Civil Rights, said Ford's voting record is full of last-minute acceptances of bills he tried to kill.

"The notable illustrations of his equivocation are the voting rights act extension of 1970 . . . and fair housing in 1968," Mitchell said.

Ford supported an administration substitute that would have eliminated federal voting registrars, and it passed in the House.

"We succeeded in changing it in the Senate," Mitchell said. "When the bill came back to the House for consid-

eration he was against accepting the Senate version. But when he lost on that he then voted for the bill on final pass-up voting for it.

In the 1968 fair housing law fight, Mitchell said, Ford lost in an attempt to send the Senate version back to a conference committee, then wound

Also, "He voted rather consistently for all of the very bad antibusing amendments in recent years," said Mitchell.

The Leadership Conference, a lobbying group of labor and civil right organizations, has not yet voted on whether to oppose Ford.

"The trouble is, the chance of getting somebody worse is right in the wings, and at least Ford is a known quantity," said Mitchell. "We could predict just about what he would do on any given thing."

Attorney Joseph Rauh, of Americans for Democratic Action, said ADA will fight Ford "to the full extent of our abilities," and will urge the Leadership Conference to do so also.

"He's voted to gut every bill and tried to cover it by voting for the final product," said Rauh. "I would prefer a straight anti-civil prefer a bigot . . . to a hypocritical guy like Ford . . . On home rule last week, he tried to gut it, and when that failed, he supported it. I prefer honest opponents."

Rep. Parren Mitchell (D-Md.) vice chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, said the caucus has not voted its position either, but he will recommend that "at this juncture we simply lay out as a body Mr. Ford's voting record without making any commitment . . ."

"We ought to talk about his vote against the Economic Opportunity Act in the 92d Congress," Mitchell said, "his vote against federal health benefits legislation, against the emergency community facilities act. . . It's clear he supported a number of amendments, all of which would have nullified good strong civil rights legislation."