

Senate Panel Clears Ford Unanimously

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The nomination of Gerald R. Ford to be Vice President won unanimous approval of the Senate Rules Committee yesterday, and headed for a Senate floor vote next Tuesday.

The endorsement by all nine members of the committee came after what Chairman Howard W. Cannon (D-Nev.) called "the most exhaustive investigation of a nominee ever undertaken by a Senate committee."

It came a month and eight days after President Nixon on Oct. 12 named Ford, Republican leader of the House and 25-year veteran House member from Grand Rapids, Mich., to replace Spiro T. Agnew as Vice President.

Agnew resigned after being placed on probation and receiving a \$10,000 fine for tax evasion. Ford is the first man ever nominated under the provisions of the 25th Amendment to the Constitution, which became effective in 1967.

The amendment calls for the President to nominate a new Vice President when the office becomes vacant, with the nominee required to be approved by majority votes in the Senate and House before he is confirmed.

The House Judiciary Committee, which has also been holding hearings on Ford, continued them yesterday with closed-session testimony from New York psychotherapist Arnold Hutschnecker and ex-lobbyist Robert Winter-Berger, author of the controversial book "Washington Pay-Off."

The House committee plans to complete its hear-

ings on Ford today, for a floor vote the week after next.

Yesterday the House committee met in closed session to hear Hutschnecker deny, as he had to the Senate, that he ever treated Ford for nervous stress during Ford's early days as minority leader.

Winter-Berger also testified in the closed session. Rep. Jerome Waldie (D-Calif.), who has said he will vote against Ford, called Winter-Berger's testimony "incredible."

Chairman Peter W. Rodino Jr. (D-N.J.) told reporters the House committee will send the Ford nomination to the House floor by the middle of the week of Dec. 3. Both the House and Senate are expected to approve Ford overwhelmingly.

So far, the only senator who has publicly stated he will oppose Ford is William D. Hathaway (D-Maine), who favors calling a special election to fill the presidency should it become vacant, and therefore wants to hold up Ford until the machinery for such an election is in place.

Rules Committee Chair-

See FORD, A10, Col. 7

FORD, From A1

man Cannon said Senate Democratic Whip Robert C. Byrd (D-W. Va.) had made the motion to approve Ford.

Cannon released a statement on Ford's net worth showing gross assets of \$261,078 minus \$4,700 in loans and debts. The gross consists of \$1,282 in cash in the bank; \$13,570 in stocks and bonds, mainly in the Ford Paint and Varnish Co., a former family business, with small amounts in Central Telephone of Illinois and Stein Roe Farnum Fund; \$162,000 in four houses owned by Ford (a \$70,000 residence in Alexandria, a \$65,000 condominium in Vail, Colo., used for skiing, and two houses in Michigan valued at \$27,000); \$49,414 in contributions by Ford to his congressional pension fund; and the remainder in cars and motorcycles (\$6,725), household furnishings (\$19,600) and cash value of life insurance policies on his wife (\$8,487).

At the beginning of the Ford hearings three weeks ago Cannon had stated that the committee in considering Ford might well be acting not merely on a Vice President but on a possible President. He said yesterday he still thinks "that's a very strong likelihood."

In two long days before the Senate Rules Committee and subsequent testimony before the House Judiciary Committee, Ford gave the impression of a man of considerable stability, moderate personal habits, good nature, patience and basic decency, and he won the endorsement of many of his House colleagues on both sides of the aisle as a person of integrity and trustworthiness.

A self-described "conservative in fiscal affairs, moderate in domestic affairs and internationalist in foreign affairs," he gave answers to a long line of questions which bore that description out.

His record showed he had usually voted to save money and cut the federal budget, had usually voted against New Frontier and Great Society social programs, but had backed foreign and NATO strongly most of the time, supported the Vietnam war and demonstrated

strong loyalty to President Nixon on most policy issues.

He told the rules committee he supports the president's moves towards detente with Russia and China and strongly backs the 2.2 billion in aid for Israel.

Ford's record on civil rights was sharply criticized at the hearings by Joseph L. Rauh of the Americans for Democratic Action and Clarence Mitchell, the NAACP legislative spokesman, who conceded Ford had often voted for the final version of civil rights bills but said he almost always voted to weaken or gut them first.

Rules Committee members, however, made clear they didn't believe it would be proper to block Ford for ideological reasons.

More serious were charges put forward by Winter-Berger, who alleged that Ford had accepted an unrepaid \$15,000 "loan" from him and that Ford had visited New York psychotherapist Hutschnecker for treatments for "at least a year."

Hutschnecker, however, told both the House and Senate committees that he had never treated Ford and labelled Winter-Berger's charge "lies." The Senate Rules Committee, moreover, made it clear it didn't believe Winter-Berger, who hadn't any documentary evidence for his charges. It sent his testimony to the Justice Department with a request that it be studied for possible perjury prosecution.

Voting to report Ford's nomination yesterday were Democrats Cannon, Byrd, Claiborne Pell (R.I.), James B. Allen (Ala.) and Harrison A. Williams Jr. (N.J.) and Republicans Marlow W. Cook (Ky.), Hugh Scott (Pa.), Robert P. Griffin (Mich.) and Mark Hatfield (Ore.).

Cannon said Senate debate on Ford might start late Monday afternoon, but the major debate would take place Tuesday, with the final vote probably occurring late Tuesday.