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A Sense of Warmth and Stability

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 6—In a swell of applause and warm feeling that seemed to give a sense of stability to the troubled Administration of Richard M. Nixon, Gerald R. Ford became the 40th Vice President tonight.

"Together we have made history here tonight," he told a joint session of Congress in flat, reassuring tones.

After 13 terms in the House of Representatives, the lawyer from Grand Rapids, Mich., is a known quantity. He is not a Lincoln but a Ford, as he himself put it, not a man of the stature of Abraham Lincoln but only Jerry Ford, who loved his wife and his country and pledged his loyalty to his President.

Measure of Affection

A measure of the affection Mr. Ford has won over the years was quickly clear when he entered the crowded floor of the House. Representatives, Senators, members of the Cabinet and the diplomatic corps and those in the gallery stood in appause.

Standing on the Speaker's rostrum as the applause continued, he raised an arm to the audience in greeting and they roared out. Mr. Nixon raised his arm, too, a moment later, but it was clear from the applause that this was Mr. Ford's night, and the applause did not change.

Mr. Ford stumbled over a word during the swearing-in as his wife held a Bible in both hands and Chief Justice Warren E. Burger of the Supreme Court read the oath of office. And when it was done, he kissed his wife and

then shook hands with Mr. Nixon.

He said he had "no words" to describe his deep feeling for his "dear wife," Betty.

His daughter, Susan, sitting in the front row of the gallery to his left, wiped her eyes.

When it was over, he went immediately to the Senate and began again with a note of humor.

"Senators," he said, "a funny thing happened to me on the way to becoming Speaker of the House of Representatives. . . ."

Most of the Senators laughed and there was some good-natured kidding. He had been the Republicans' token candidate for Speaker in the House many times but there had never been enough votes to elect him.

The Senate majority leader, Mike Mansfield, Democrat of Montana, had begun by reminding him that the Vice President is a powerless figure in the Senate.

"The Speaker's powers are legendary," Senator Mansfield said. "His gavel is a thunderclap."

Passionless Rhetoric

Then he turned to Mr. Ford and said, "As you will soon discover, things are somewhat different on this side."

He said Mr. Ford would soon learn that presiding officers of the Senate are "expected to be seen, not heard."

His nomination had finally cleared the House today, but it had taken some time.

Members of the House began debate in the morning, some picking on sore points, others with brand compliments for their Michigan colleague. The words heaped

upon one another and slid to the floor until late into the afternoon.

For the most part it was passionless rhetoric, prepared in advance, intended for the historical record of this day.

It was difficult to know what obscure use future historians might make of the words, but the compulsion to have remarks spread on the public record is large among Congressmen, and so they spoke on.

When they were done, the sunshine that had cut through the streaked windows on the Capitol dome was gone, ailing with the schoolchildren touring the Rotunda. The police and Secret Service men began to gather by 3 P.M., and the Rotunda was sealed off.

A delegation of friends from Michigan began to gather behind the red velvet ropes in the statuary hall, between the Rotunda and the House chamber. They were unable to get inside because of the crush of visitors, and eight color television sets were set up among the statues for their use.

Although some House members spoke of a "pall of gloom," of a "miasma of doubt" and a "dismal swamp of despair" that gripped Washington during the Watergate scandals, others spoke of Mr. Ford's "brilliant and outstanding role of leadership" and called him "hard-working, fair, incorruptible."

Almost lost among all of it was the name of Spiro T. Agnew, the Vice President who resigned over charges that he received money for years from engineers and contractors while Governor of Maryland and Vice President.