

# Ford Record Reflects Pragmatism

"He's managed to be all things to all people," says Fifth District Democratic Chairman A. Robert Kleiner. "Take the domestic field; he'll vote against programs—say, hot lunches for school kids—but once it's passed, he uses his influence to get as big a share of the money for the district as he can. He has the best of both worlds. Jerry's been an expert at that."

Jerry Ford, in short, is a political pragmatist, a Republican Party loyalist who could never be accused of voting to weaken the nation's defenses or its moral fiber, but who also knows that too much harping on ideology rarely wins votes.

"Ford's vote record," according to the Ralph Nader Congress Project, "reflects his interpretation of his district's mandate, his frugality in domestic spending to solve domestic problems, and above all, his pragmatic sense of voting for what he sees as the party's interests."

"Members of Congress who have watched Ford operate behind the scenes say he finds out the majority sentiment and adopts that as his view rather than staking out a position and trying to win the troops over," the project's report said.

Over the years, that has earned him a 78 per cent rating from the conservative Americans for Constitutional Action and only a 25

per cent approval rate from the liberal Americans for Democratic Action.

The AFL-CIO's Committee on Political Education has found even less to recommend him. But the national Chamber of Commerce and the National Assn. of Sociated Businessmen, Inc., a coalition of financiers, bankers and businessmen devoted to low federal spending, seem to like him.

For instance, a poll by the American Business Committee on National Priorities in August of 1971 showed most Fifth District voters favoring withdrawal from Vietnam by the end of that year. Ford voted against the deadline. More than half of those polled wanted either to end the draft or extend it only a year. Ford voted to keep it going for two years.

Ford's reputation as a hawk had been established well before that, with steadfast support of Presidents Johnson and Nixon in Vietnam. Yet he could run as "a man of peace" and make the slogan work.

"Where liberals would sneer at that," says his press secretary, Paul Mitchell, "he believes that his way is the way to keep peace—for the U.S. to remain strong. He views things affirmatively rather than negatively. He's always run on his record."

But his profile has changed since his first election to Congress in 1948. He

ran as an internationalist reformer then—and he was elected over a Republican who had opposed the Marshall Plan—with United Auto Workers and Democratic support.

"I can remember a lot of promises about changing Taft-Hartley and all that," one UAW official has said of that campaign. "As soon as he got to Washington, the party got hold of him."

Above all, Ford has in recent years been a supporter of President Nixon's policies. He has opposed Democratic efforts to set up spending for poverty programs, health services, educational aid and the like. He has consistently supported what the Defense Department sees as its needs and he has fought against limitations on operations in Southeast Asia.

"His foreign policy views are very close to Nixon's," On occasion, he has also departed from the administration view, perhaps largely out of a desire to disprove the allegation that Jerry Ford is a rubber stamp. During his 1970 campaign, Ford served notice that he would vote to override Mr. Nixon's controversial veto of a bill limiting political campaign spending for radio and television.

And he once asked the President to slap down an IRS move threatening tax ex-



Vice presidential nominee Gerald R. Ford, left, talks with House Speaker Carl Albert on the Hill yesterday.

Associated Press

emptions of public interest law firms.

Basically, Ford's assignment has been a balancing act, trying to satisfy Republican congressmen, the white House, and the voters back home.

For his constituents in Michigan, acknowledges Kleiner, "he built up the

most finely organized constituent-service operation I've ever seen. That's where Jerry's majorities really have always been."

"He's a very hip guy to changing conditions," one adviser has said. "He's not a statesman. He's a politician."