

The Black Caucus Meets With Ford

Washington

President Ford told the congressional Black Caucus yesterday he is seriously considering public works employment programs for areas of high unemployment, and he does not consider the defense budget immune to cuts to fight inflation.

The President also said his statement in favor of some form of amnesty for those who fled the country to avoid serving in Vietnam should be taken as an example of his flexibility and his willingness to change with changing times.

The 16 caucus members, all Democrats who gave Mr. Ford only one of their votes for confirmation as vice president, said they came away from their first meeting with him impressed by his openness, and hopeful it will continue.

They gave him a variety of position papers, mostly on domestic, urban issues, and said he assured them he would read and consider them.

The only specific promise the President made, they said, was that they would have continuing access to the White House — and, when they felt it necessary to the President directly — to voice their concerns.

"I think it was a good meeting," said Representative Barbara Jordan of Texas. "The lines of communication are open between the President and the black community in a way they have not been open since the caucus came into existence" (in 1969).

"I left the meeting feeling hopeful about the... regard and concern which will be shown by the executive for the light of black people," she said.

The 40-minute morning meeting was requested by Mr. Ford, and accepted by the caucus in a decidedly cautious mood.

Nader Wants to See Ford

Washington

Consumer advocate Ralph Nader, never welcomed at the White House during either the Nixon or Johnson administrations, wants an appointment to see President Ford.

"Ford should initiate a new era where it is not considered a breach of protocol to meet with citizens," Nader said yesterday.

Nader said he hopes to meet with Mr. Ford sometime "during the next three weeks" in an effort to open "communications between the White House and consumer and environmentalists groups."

"As long as presidents can meet with business groups, the consumer and environmentalist movement should be allowed direct access to the President," Nader said.

United Press

The caucus was not able to meet with former President Nixon until March 25, 1971, 13 months and many repeated requests after its members had first asked for a meeting.

Two months later, when Mr. Nixon replied point by point to their set of 60 recommendations, they termed his response unacceptable and the relationship remained hostile from then on.

Mr. Ford, however, telephoned caucus chairman Charles Rangel of New York August 12, a call which an aide noted came as "a pleasant surprise; he had put no signals out."

All caucus members who talked about it said the meeting was good covering a great many issues with the

President frequently interrupting to ask questions or clarify his views.

"Ford told us that his administration will have representation from blacks and other minority groups at all levels including the White House" Rangel said.

Pressed for particulars Rangel said the caucus did not ask and the President did not promise anything as specific as a black cabinet member.

Among the specific requests the caucus left with President Ford were:

- A \$10 billion public employment program specifically for areas of higher than average unemployment. Black neighborhoods on the average have unemployment rates two to five times higher than white neighborhoods in cities.
- More federal money for day care and family planning programs.
- Changes in the general revenue sharing formula so that poor urban areas get a larger share.
- Nearly doubling the \$11 billion for urban mass transit contained in a bill just passed by the House.
- A \$15 billion to \$25 billion cut in the defense budget.
- More money for housing programs.
- An extension of the Voting Rights Act now due to expire next year.
- A revitalized Office of Economic Opportunity.

Washington Post