

Rockefeller Close to

By Frank Lynn
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Nelson A. Rockefeller should have little trouble making the transition from New York to Washington and, judging by his recent record, should be in tune with President Ford on the key issues facing the nation today.

Since he resigned as the nation's senior governor last December, the 66-year-old Rockefeller has devoted virtually full time to his role as architect, prime mover, financier, and chairman of the Commission on Critical Choices for Americans, which has provided him with a vehicle for deeply immersing himself not only in national but also world prob-

lems.

He has also used the commission as a channel to national leaders by including then vice president Ford, Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger and the majority and minority leaders of the Senate and House as ex-officio members.

Some Rockefeller associates contend that the commission work actually represents a return to Rockefeller's first love, international affairs. In that context, his 15 years as governor of New York was viewed as an overly long rest stop on the way to national office.

In fact, a strong case can be made that he is considerably more conversant with international affairs than Mr. Ford and could become a rival to Kissinger, a long-

time Rockefeller associate, as the foreign affairs expert in the Ford administration.

Rockefeller's complete preoccupation with affairs national and international has also been evident in his recent speeches, in interviews and his hands-offs attitude toward New York state politics and government that he dominated for 15 years.

The same speeches and interviews have also provided ample clues to his thinking on various issues and evidence that he, with his reputation as the liberal Republican maverick, and Mr. Ford, with his image of middle American conservatism, have much in common.

Rockefeller, a longtime hawk on Communism, has,

for example, repeatedly exhibited skepticism about detente with the Soviet Union.

"In the enthusiasm to encourage detente — and I'm for it — I have a feeling that some of the longer range security problems are being ignored," he said in an interview earlier this year.

If Rockefeller has been a consistent internationalist in foreign affairs and consistently wary of the Soviet Union, his domestic record, primarily as governor, has been far from consistent.

The Nelson Rockefeller of the 1960's assailed any attempts to undo social welfare and civil rights programs; but in the 1970's he proposed residence requirements for New Yorkers on welfare and prison senten-

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ces for drug addicts.

Politically, the Nelson Rockefeller of the 1960's who frequently and often bitterly opposed Barry Goldwater and Richard Nixon, in the 1970's praised Goldwater as a "great man" and declined to attack Mr. Nixon even in the final hours of his presidency when he had few defenders.

Nationally, he worked closely with two Democratic "old pros" — President Johnson and Representative Wilbur D. Mills, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee and the man to see on a Rockefeller pet project, federal revenue sharing with the states.

Rockefeller mounted a national campaign for revenue sharing because he contend-

ed that the states could no longer cope with inflation and built-in costs that increased state spending at a rate of 15 per cent a year while revenues increased at only half that rate.

It was this arithmetic, rather than any ideological change, that he said impelled him to crack down on welfare and education spending in New York. This was done through the appointment of state inspectors general who scrutinized the once sacrosanct welfare and education spending at the local level.

He contended that without such hard-nosed economies, the state would not have enough money to support social welfare programs.

Critics contended that Rockefeller's turn to the

right was motivated by a desire to join the national Republican mainstream and thus advance the presidential ambitions that had been so often thwarted by his image as an Eastern liberal.

In any event, pragmatism, whether economic or political, prodded him. He is, in the view of many politicians, the complete pragmatist rather than a liberal or conservative ideologue.

Rockefeller describes himself as "a centrist with a progressive point of view."

The 42 members of the critical choice commission reflect that centrist point of view. Almost all are politicians, academicians and businessmen who are not likely to espouse any radical new courses.

All of which would seem to make him a President Ford kind of person, politically and philosophically.

However, those who know Rockefeller see one possible cloud on the horizon — the New Yorker's penchant for being his own man, a leader, an activist.

Until the last year, he had repeatedly brushed off any talk of the vice presidency by noting that he was not the type to be "standby equipment."

With the presidency blocked off, at least temporarily, he has decided that politically his best course of action is to be standby equipment. But many politicians wonder whether Rockefeller the person will agree with Rockefeller the politician.