

Ford for Vice President

Heavily beset by the exposure of Spiro Agnew's criminality, by fresh rumors of scandal concerning his own financial affairs, and by the still unresolved Watergate issues, Mr. Nixon has taken the easy way out of his Vice Presidential problem. In choosing Representative Gerald Ford of Michigan, the House Minority Leader, Mr. Nixon settled for a nominee whom he has good reason to believe will gain easy confirmation and cause him no serious political problems.

Notwithstanding Mr. Nixon's self-serving rhetoric last evening, however, Mr. Ford has few visible qualifications as a potential President. He is a routine partisan of narrow views and long but limited experience. He has no executive experience. His expertise in foreign affairs is confined to unswerving adherence to Administration policy, especially on the Indochina war. If he were ever to become President he would be a totally unknown quantity.

Since previous Presidents and Vice Presidents have also started with inadequacies in various fields yet risen handsomely to their new responsibilities, the country will have to hope for a similar expansion of Mr. Ford's capacities and horizons. Regrettably, despite the popularity he enjoys among his Congressional colleagues of both parties, his record gives few signs of imagination, social compassion or broad understanding.

For the Vice Presidency as for the Presidency itself, the controlling considerations are character and competence. From the euphoria with which it greeted the Ford nomination last night, Congress evidently needs a reminder that it is not engaged in conferring an honor on an amiable member of a private club. The Twenty-fifth Amendment calls for a sharing of responsibility between the President and Congress in making this designation.

There is no place for partisan politics by Congress in discharging its half of the constitutional mandate, but it does have an obligation for a careful examination of all the attributes of fitness and personal background of a man who will, upon confirmation, be next in line of succession to the Presidency—a man whose long representation of a safe district in Michigan has kept him from ever being subjected to serious scrutiny in a Presidential context.