

Ford's Civil Rights Record Hit

By Richard L. Lyons

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Clarence Mitchell, senior civil rights lobbyist in Washington, said yesterday he could not "remember any effective thing" that Vice President-designate Gerald R. Ford has done for the cause of civil rights.

Mitchell said his view of Ford on civil rights is that "in generally accepted areas of what is fair, he would be fair," but that "when it comes to a crunch, when you have to take a stand because it is right, I think he falls short."

But Mitchell also recalled that in 1937 he was ready to picket against the Supreme Court appointment of Alabama's Hugo L. Black, who he conceded became one of the staunchest civil rights supporters on the court.

Mitchell told the House Judiciary Committee considering Ford's nomination, as he had told the Senate earlier, that the NAACP, which he represents, considers that Ford cast 28 pro-civil rights votes and 26 anti votes during his 25 years in the House. Mitchell neither supported nor opposed Ford's confirmation.

Members noted that Mitchell's list included votes against public housing and

minimum wage legislation, where opposition need not have a racial motive. Mitchell conceded that this was arguable, but said most poor people in public housing were black.

Mitchell had three main complaints against Ford's voting record, all of them arising after he became minority leader of the House in 1965. In that year, said Mitchell, Ford supported an amendment that would have restricted the effectiveness of the Voting Rights Act. In 1968, Ford cast a vote that civil rights groups considered would have weakened the fair housing bill. Last year, during an anti-busing fight, Ford voted against an amendment specifying that nothing the House was doing was intended to violate the Constitution.

But as for Ford personally, Mitchell said: "He's the sort of man I'd be glad to go on a hunting trip with. I know I wouldn't get shot in the back."

Rep. Michael Harrington (D-Mass.) urged rejection of Ford's nomination on grounds that he lacks the qualities of Leadership required if he should become President. "Honesty and decency are not enough," said Harrington, a staunch lib-

eral who has opposed President Nixon on the Indochina war and most other controversial issues.

Rep. John Seiberling (D-Ohio), a member of the Judiciary Committee, observed that Ford "strikes me more a messenger for the White House than a man coming to grips with big issues."

Several members of both parties said that Harry S. Truman had shown no great capacity for leadership when Franklin D. Roosevelt's death elevated him to the presidency, but that he had risen to the occasion and Ford might also.

Rep. Lawrence Hogan (R-Md.) contended that Ford has exhibited outstanding leadership qualities in the House and is "extremely intelligent."

Rep. Edward Boland (D-Mass.), a liberal like Harrington, testified in support of Ford as a "competent, vigorous, sincere and honest man of unswerving integrity." He said that Ford while serving on the House Appropriations Committee showed "heart" year ago in helping Boland get a small sum for a public works project.

Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.), a black member, asked were Ford's "heart

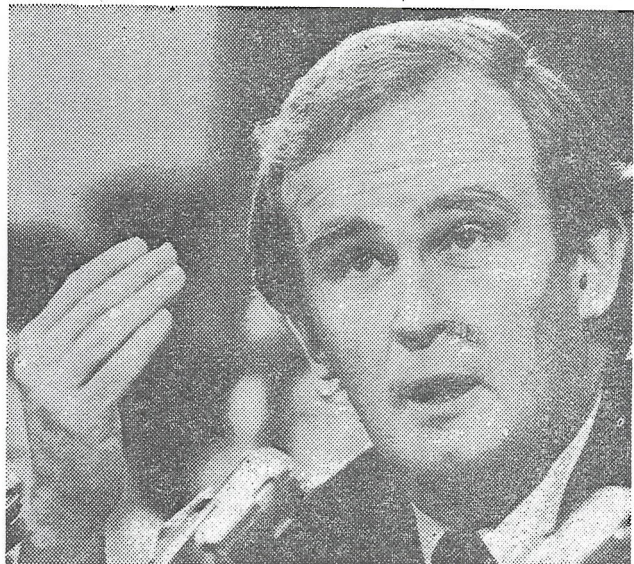
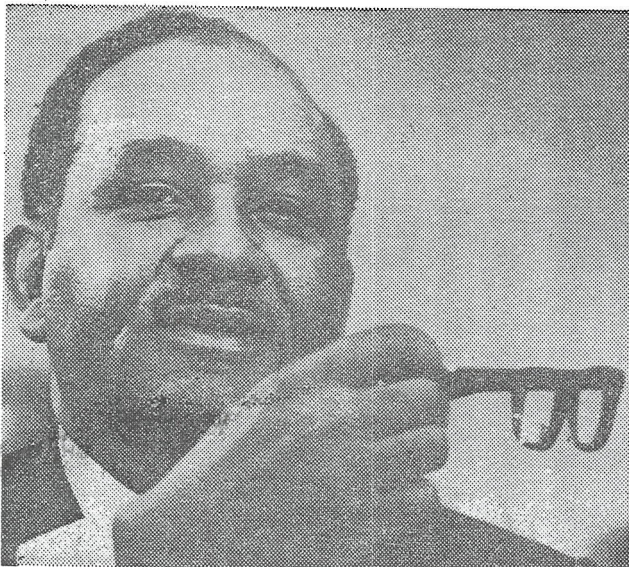
was when he was voting to gut civil rights bills."

Joseph L. Rauh Jr. opposed Ford's nomination on behalf of Americans for Democratic Action, saying Ford has demonstrated by his civil rights votes and other actions that he is not qualified to be President should the office become vacant.

The National Lawyers Guild also opposed Ford's confirmation. The guild said it will soon file a court suit asking that President Nixon's election last year be declared invalid because of various alleged crimes committed. If the election is set aside, a new election for the two top posts should be held, the guild said.

The House committee will meet in closed session today to hear from Robert N. Winter-Berger, who charged at Senate hearings that he loaned Ford \$15,000 which was not repaid and that Ford had undergone treatment for nervous stress while Republican leader. Ford denied both charges.

The Senate Rules Committee, which sent Winter-Berger's testimony to the Justice Department for possible perjury action, is to vote today on Ford's nomination.



Photos by Craig Herndon—The Washington Post

Clarence Mitchell of the NAACP and Rep. Michael J. Harrington (D-Mass.) testify against Ford nomination.