

Ford Backed and Opposed by Liberal Democrats

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 26 —

Gerald R. Ford encountered both support and opposition from Democratic liberals today as a House committee ended six days of hearings and the Senate opened debate on his nomination for Vice President. The Senate is expected to confirm the nomination tomorrow, while House approval is likely by Dec. 6.

The 60-year-old nominee, now the minority leader of the House, appeared relieved as the House Judiciary Committee concluded what one member termed "searching, provocative and extremely personal questions."

"It's taken a little longer than I might have wanted," Representative Ford said, smiling. "But I respect the views of those who don't always agree with me."

Letter in 1971

The committee is expected to vote on the nomination on Thursday, sending it to the House floor the following week. Indications are that perhaps six to eight of the 38 committee members will oppose confirmation.

The final day of House committee hearings found Mr. Ford acknowledging, under questioning, that he once wrote to a close friend that the liberal Democratic viewpoint is "dangerous to our way of life."

This information was brought out by Representative Elizabeth Holtzman, Democrat of Brooklyn, quoting from a letter Mr. Ford wrote in the spring of 1971 to Briton L. Gordon, president of the Blackmer Pump Company in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Mr. Ford, replying to a letter he had received from Mr. Gordon, wrote: "Many of us on the Republican side feel that Common Cause [a citizens lobby group] is simply a means of promoting the liberal Democratic viewpoint and is, therefore, dangerous to our way of life and our political philosophy."

While admitting that he still feels that "extreme liberal views" could be dangerous to the American way of life, Mr. Ford told news reporters that he was merely trying to be responsive to "a blistering" denunciation of Common Cause from an old friend.

Meanwhile, Mr. Ford won the endorsement of a Democratic liberal, Senator Alan Cranston of California, in the opening day of Senate debate on the nomination.

Mr. Cranston told the Senate that he had questioned several hundred persons — Democrats and Republicans, business and labor leaders, elected politicians and party functionaries — in his own state of California in an effort to learn all he could about the nominee.

Only 5 Opposed

Of all those he consulted, he said, only two Republicans and three Democrats "spoke out strongly against Ford and urged his rejection."

He quoted one businessman as saying of Mr. Ford: "He's not an equivocator, or a liar, or a slip-around-the-corner guy." He said that another, a Republican House member from California, described Mr. Ford as "so square I'd be absolutely shocked and astounded if he's ever done anything wrong."

Senator Cranston also quoted a Democratic county committee chairman as saying: "Thank

God he's got character, not charisma. We've had too much of the one, too little of the other. I like his low-key style after all the high, shrill notes others have been striking."

The Senator said that while Mr. Ford might not be "a man for all seasons" he may prove to be "a man of solidarity" in a time of turbulence.

"I vote for Gerald Ford," he said, "with trust in his trustworthiness, with faith in his fairness, with sufficient confidence in his capability — and with great hope."

Urges Delay

The only opposition to the nominee in the Senate debate came from Senator William D. Hathaway, Democrat of Maine, who said he felt that confirmation should be delayed "until questions concerning the President are resolved."

Senator Hathaway said that he felt it would be improper for a President under threat of removal from office to be allowed to choose his own successor.

Critics of the Ford nomination continued to question him closely during the final day of hearings by the House Judiciary Committee.

Representative John Conyers Jr., Democrat of Michigan, expressed concern over what he termed Mr. Ford's efforts to cripple civil rights legislation, and he said he was also deeply concerned over the nominee's conservative associates, including former Representative William C. Cramer, a Florida Republican who is now a Washington lawyer.

Mr. Ford was also questioned by Representative Jerome R. Waldie, Democrat of California, about the nominee's use of information obtained from the

Justice Department in a 1970 inquiry into possible impeachment of Associate Justice William O. Douglas of the Supreme Court.

Mr. Waldie said that he felt that Mr. Ford had been a "handmaiden" of President Nixon and John N. Mitchell, former Attorney General, in an effort to remove Justice Douglas from the Court.