

SF Chronicle DEC 7, 1973
Ford Sworn In,
Vows Equal
Justice for All
Americans

Nation's 40th Vice President

Washington

Gerald Rudolph Ford, pledging "equal justice for all Americans," took office as the 40th vice president of the United States just after dusk last night.

With President Nixon standing immediately behind him, Ford was sworn into office in the 116-year-old House chamber, his political home for the last 25 years.

Only an hour earlier, the House had completed action on his nomination by voting 387 to 35 for confirmation. He had been confirmed November 27 by the Senate by a vote of 92 to 3.

Ford, 60, resigned his House seat before assuming the vice presidency. He has been House minority leader since 1965.

The historic ceremony filled a vice presidential vacancy that had existed since the resignation on October 10 of Spiro T. Agnew, just before he pleaded no contest to a charge of income tax evasion.

Ford heard none of yesterday's five hours of House debate, nor did he vote. He arrived in the chamber just minutes after the final vote had been cast and was greeted by thunderous cheers and applause — the first of many such ovations he was to receive yesterday.

Then he went to the White House to tell President Nixon of the vote, and the two returned to the Capitol an hour later for the official swearing-in.

The two men were greeted by tumultuous applause as they entered the house chamber together.

A capacity crowd of 1500 — senators, representatives, members of the cabinet and supreme court, ambassadors and other foreign dig-

nitaries and visitors — witnessed the brief ceremony.

Mrs. Nixon, accompanied

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by White House aides, sat with the four Ford children in the executive gallery.

As Chief Justice Warren E. Burger administered the oath, Ford rested his left hand on a Bible held by his wife, Betty.

The Bible was purchased for the occasion by their son, Michael, a theological student.

Later, in a brief speech, Ford drew a burst of applause from the Republicans as he pledged his full "support and loyalty" to the President. He also bade an almost tearful "fond good-by" to his colleagues in the House.

"I am a Ford, not a Lincoln," he said, smiling. "My addresses will never be as eloquent as Lincoln's. But I will do my best to equal his brevity and plain speaking."

This is the first time that a vice president has been chosen under the 25th Amendment to the Constitution, ratified by the states in 1967.

Yesterday, there were few surprises during the long hours of House debate over

the nomination. Democratic leaders, as expected, accused the nominee of lacking the qualities of leadership. Republicans and other Democrats, also as expected, praised him as a man of honor, honesty, dedication and integrity.

Development came as Representative Peter W. Rodino of New Jersey, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee that handled the Ford hearings, announced that he would vote against confirmation.

"During the weeks that I spent reviewing Jerry's public and private life, I have only grown to respect his character and integrity more," Rodino told the hushed house.

However, noting that his Newark district "typifies the plight which the cities of our nation face today," and accusing the Nixon Administration of failing to meet the needs of the poor and disadvantaged, Rodino said:

"I vote not against Gerald Ford's worth as a man of great integrity, but in dissent with the present administration's indifference to the plight of so many Americans."

The debate was low-key, even on the part of the nominee's severest critics, who knew from the start that they could not block the confirmation.

But the drama of the day was heightened by the realization of those present that with Ford installed as vice president, sentiment for impeachment of Mr. Nixon or pressure on him to resign — would intensify in the weeks or months ahead.

Many Democrats have openly called for impeachment, but until now most Republicans have spoken of it guardedly, and usually only among themselves. Yet, there are strong indications that many Republicans are becoming increasingly concerned over the tarnished image of their party in the wake of the Watergate scandals, the Agnew affair, and allegations of various political misdeeds by the Nixon administration.

The possibility that Mr. Nixon might not serve out his term was raised repeatedly during the day's debate by both Democrats and Republicans.

New York Times