

President-designate Ford

he never sought under circumstances that he and the country devoutly wish never had occurred. We join all Americans in wishing him success.

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Gerald R. Ford, who said not too many years ago that he would "ten times rather be Speaker of the House than Vice President," now undertakes to unite and lead the nation in the wake of the first Presidential resignation in United States history. The responsibility is heavy and throughout the nation there is a deep desire and determination to be supportive of the new President and to respond affirmatively to his leadership.

Predicting the shape that any man will give to the mantle of the Presidency is risky, but in his quarter-century in Washington, Gerald Ford has sharply defined his public image. He is a plain and simple man from the middle of America. His speech is marked by flat homilies and dreary blandness, and his public record reflects the stolid conservatism of the Grand Rapids constituency which he served so faithfully in Congress for more than two decades.

In the House, Mr. Ford was a predictable, fierce, but amiable partisan; his colleagues on both sides of the aisle like him and respect his integrity. It was said that in the House he had been steadfastly true to his word, that he refused to twist Congressional arms and that he respected the other man's problems and point of view.

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Mr. Ford has gained no reputation for vision, imagination, creativity or compassion. His legislative record—such as it is—is far to the right of center. He terms himself a fiscal conservative and his consistent opposition to social programs bears witness to the accuracy of that self-evaluation. His administrative and foreign affairs experience is negligible. His Vice Presidency—admittedly a difficult time for him—was uninspiring and characterized most deeply by repeated leaden defenses of Mr. Nixon.

Whatever limitations that record may suggest, however, there is little question that Mr. Ford brings a dogged determination to the Oval Office. From the playing fields of Ann Arbor to the grinding hours he logged in Air Force Two serving the Republican party and defending its leader, Mr. Ford has displayed enduring grit.

His record in the House may prove no reliable predictor of his policies as President. Freed of the rigid constraints of his western Michigan constituency, he has given assurance of his intention to take a broader view on civil rights and other issues—in short, to prove that he is a representative of all the people. Mr. Ford has proven over the years that he is a sincere man devoted to his duty as best he sees it.

His roots are deep in the elemental decencies of his Middle-Western origins. His respect for Congress is real. In his confirmation hearings, he said, "I think the President should carry out the law." His qualities should serve him well as he assumes the burdens of a Presidency