

Mr. Hutchinson: Mr. Chairman, I rise to support the confirmation of Gerald R. Ford to be Vice President of the United States.

After the most intensive, exhaustive, thorough and complete investigation to which any nominee for high public office was ever subjected, Mr. Ford has been found to be the same man he has always appeared to be, a decent man, a good man, an honest man, a man of great integrity, of high character. The facts support his good reputation.

He is eminently qualified to become perhaps the nation's finest Vice President, and, indeed, if fate decrees, to assume the awesome responsibilities of the office of President.

Soon the country can breathe a sigh of relief. For nearly two months we have lived with the sword of Damocles overhead. Fate had only to cut one fragile lifestring to effect a political revolution - a peaceful revolution, yes, but nonetheless a real revolution - in our government. But now in a matter of hours, that crisis will have passed.

The next Vice President is a man of whom we can all be proud. He is a man of this Chamber. He is a man whose life, both political and private, was meticulously examined by the Committee on the Judiciary - at times almost to the point of exhaustion - and found not wanting. The report of our Committee stands as testimony to the fact that after the most thorough and exhaustive inquiry ever undertaken with respect to a nominee for one of the two highest offices of our government, nothing was discovered that could even arguably disqualify Jerry Ford for the office of Vice President.

It is most appropriate, Mr. Chairman, that a vacancy in the office

of Vice President be filled out of the membership of this House. Of the 39 former Vice Presidents, 20 - a clear majority - have served here, and only one has served in this House longer than has Jerry Ford.

Of the 39 Vice Presidents, 30 have served in the Congress, either here or in the other body.

Of the 36 citizens who have served as President of the United States, all but 8 have been Members of Congress.

Our history confirms that our people have most often entrusted the stewardship of government to those political leaders who have had experience as Members of Congress. It is most appropriate, Mr. Chairman, that the President should have turned to Congress for his nominee to fill the existing vacancy in the Vice Presidential office, proposing one of our colleagues who has a brilliant and outstanding record of leadership in this House.

Jerry Ford is known to all of us. Even the newest Member has seen him in action in his role as minority leader. Some in this House have served with him during all of the 25 years he has been here. I have known him in Michigan politics for all of those 25 years, and I have known him personally for all of that time. I have worked closely with him as a colleague since I first came to Congress eleven years ago. He is a man wealthy in experience and knowledge of American government, a man of the House who deeply appreciates the necessity of separated powers and the genius of divided powers in our federal system. He is a man who loves the American people and respects what they think. He is a man of decency committed to traditional values. He is a man of integrity. And he believes in himself. Yes, as most of us in this Chamber know from our own experience,

Jerry Ford is a leader.

When the 89th Congress convened in January, 1965, the Republican Members in that Congress chose him to be their leader. The contest for this position was spirited and hard fought, and he won by a mere 7 votes. The test of leadership in a legislative body lies as much in holding on to a position once obtained as in achieving it initially. It is not without consequence that Jerry Ford has been 5 times chosen his Party's leader in the House.

Starting in 1965 with the acknowledged support of only a majority of the Republican Conference, Mr. Ford worked diligently and effectively to unify the minority. By the time the 90th Congress organized in 1967, he was chosen again to lead the Republican Minority, that time without opposition. Nor has he experienced opposition since then within the Republican Conference.

We on the Republican side of the aisle know of his long time ambition to preside over this House and how well he prepared himself and how hard and how honestly he has worked to achieve the post of Speaker. He is a man worthy of advancement to the Office of Vice President. He is a man of stature who could well have been chosen as a Vice Presidential or Presidential nominee by a Republican National Convention.

A different test of leadership came again for Jerry Ford in the 91st Congress. From 1965 to 1969 he had been the leader of the loyal opposition. Democrats controlled the Executive as well as the legislative branch of the government. In those years his role was to lead the Republican minority in opposition to majority Democratic proposals on issues where the two political parties were at variance, while supporting the

majority on issues where both parties concurred, or where the national interest required political unanimity.

With the coming of the first Nixon Administration in 1969, however, the role of the minority leader abruptly and materially changed. Instead of dealing with a Democrat Administration, he was called upon to lead in support of a Republican Administration's proposals, and to seek assistance in the enactment of the President's program from the Democrats who controlled the Congress.

So great a change in a leadership role would be an adjustment many men in political life could not successfully make. But Jerry Ford accomplished it with ease and in the process even strengthened his position. He demonstrated his capacity to grow, to accept greater responsibilities as they were thrust upon him, and to discharge those new responsibilities with ability. This is one of the merits of true leadership.

Some have remarked that the Vice President designate has had no experience in the executive branch of Government. Neither did 16 of his predecessors as Vice President. Neither did 15 Presidents, among them some of our greatest. Although there is truly no adequate training for the awesome responsibilities, throughout history Presidents have risen to meet the burdens cast upon them. I am confident that the man we confirm today as Vice President will likewise fully meet those responsibilities, should he succeed to the office of President.

Mr. Chairman, this marks the first occasion for action by the House pursuant to the 25th Amendment. As I stated in 1965 during our consideration of the Amendment, procedure for confirmation of a nomination by

both Houses of Congress is unique in our experience. Never before has this House had the constitutional function of confirming any appointment made by the President of the United States. Never before has a Vice President of the United States been appointed. History is devoid of precedent to guide us. We are totally inexperienced in the confirming process, quite unlike the other body, which has been advising and consenting to - or rejecting - Presidential appointments for 185 years.

But if the past be a measure of the future it will be necessary under the mandate of the 25th Amendment to fill a vacancy in the office of Vice President on an average of one term out of three. Eight Vice Presidents have assumed the Presidency, leaving vacant the office to which they were elected because there was no machinery to fill it. Another six Vice Presidents have died in office; two have resigned. That makes a total of 16 out of 47 terms, one out of three.

Our proceedings will be precedent setting. The occasion is historic. The new Vice President we will install later this afternoon in this Chamber is a man of this House, eminently qualified to preside over the other body, signally able to perform such duties as may be delegated to him by the President of the United States, and if it becomes his lot, to assume the awesome responsibilities of the office of the Presidency itself.