

Ford wants presidents elected by popular vote

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — The recently concluded campaign presents a convincing case that the presidential election process must be reformed, according to former President Gerald R. Ford.

"I believe that we have to find a better way to elect a president," Ford told an audience assembled on Wednesday night, Oct. 28, in Ingle Auditorium at the Rochester Institute of Technology.

The 38th president of the United States, who was never himself elected, took office following the resignation of Richard M. Nixon in August, 1974. Ford lost to Jimmy Carter in the 1976 presidential election.

The emergence of independent candidate H. Ross Perot in this year's election could have set the stage for a constitutional crisis by throwing the election into the House of Representatives, Ford said. The constitution stipulates that if no presidential candidate draws enough electoral votes to win, an election must be decided in the House of Representatives.

Last summer's polls showed Perot initially drawing an equal and sometimes larger number of voters than either President George Bush or Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton, Ford noted. Had the election been held then, no candidate would have been able to garner the 270 electoral votes needed to win an election, he concluded.

Such an outcome could have spurred two of the three candidates to make a deal in "a smoke-filled room," giving one the presidency and the other candidate some reward in return for throwing his support to the victor, Ford commented.

Instead, presidential winners should be candidates who draw the majority of the popular vote, Ford said, an idea that was proposed and passed in the House of Representatives in 1969. The legislation died in the Senate, however, when it was not acted upon, he continued. Since then no one has resurrected the concept.

In a speech that ranged far and wide over the political and diplomatic



Former President Gerald R. Ford addresses a class of 60 political science students Oct. 28 at Rochester Institute of Technology as part of the institute's Congressman Frank Horton Distinguished Speaker Series.

S. John Wilkin/Photo intern

landscape, Ford also called for reforms in the way Congress is run.

In particular, the U.S. House "is out of control," Ford said, noting that party leaders no longer have control of their colleagues due to the fact both parties revamped their leadership systems in the early 1970s.

At that time, the old system of using seniority to determine committee chairs was replaced by a "democratic" system of electing them. The result is a system in which recklessly indepen-

dent lawmakers cut deals with one another to determine positions on committees, Ford said, undercutting the power of veteran party leaders.

"If you don't have some way of making your troops work with you, you have no way of getting your legislative program in a responsible way," he said.

Ford also called for the elimination of congressional subcommittees and their staffs, which, he said, only serve to add thousands of employees to the

federal payroll while bogging down the legislative process.

He also pointed to the various scandals that have plagued the U.S. House this year as evidence of what happens when one party controls a legislative branch for too long.

When it comes to his own party controlling the White House for the past 12 years, however, Ford asserted that President Bush needed another term. During a question-answer period, Ford likened Bush's possible defeat at the hands of Clinton to what had happened in the 1976 presidential race.

At the time of the 1976 Republican Convention, Ford found himself 35 points behind Democratic challenger Carter, he recalled. By November, Ford had closed to within two points of the eventual winner, and the former president believed he could have won had the election been held a little later in the year.

"We were well on our way to a good, healthy economy, but unfortunately, the best results weren't apparent until well after the election," he said. "I think our policies were good, we just didn't have good timing."

One woman queried the former president about his role on the Warren Commission, which concluded Lee Harvey Oswald assassinated President John F. Kennedy. The woman insisted that there was "overwhelming evidence of a conspiracy" to kill President Kennedy involving the Central Intelligence Agency or the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

As the sole surviving member of the Warren Commission, Ford stuck by the commission's findings, and in particular, he dismissed the Oliver Stone movie, *JFK*, which implied a group of the nation's military, espionage and underworld leaders had all worked together to have Kennedy killed.

"We found no evidence of a conspiracy foreign or domestic," he said, noting that many of Stone's conclusions regarding the assassination lack hard, physical evidence. "Mr. Stone makes a good fantasy story, but it's not a documentary."

Diocese extends deadline for southwest quadrant plan

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

CHILI — The Rochester diocese has extended the deadline for the Southwest Quadrant Governance Board to submit its reconfiguration plan from Nov. 13 to Dec. 1, according to Casey Swanson, the board's chairwoman.

The extension was granted after the board decided it needed more time to consider input from quadrant school parents concerned about the proposed plan's impact, Swanson said in an interview with the *Catholic Courier* on Monday, Nov. 2. The board has slated a meeting for Nov. 9 to discuss its proposal, she added.

The proposed plan would close Holy Ghost and Most Precious Blood schools in Rochester, while keeping open four other quadrant schools as buildings housing kindergarten through sixth grades.

The quadrant's junior high, All Saints, would continue to operate at St. Theodore's in Gates.

A fifth elementary school, St. Monica's, serves inner-city children and would remain open as a K-8 school and receive funding from the diocese because it "serves a special mission," according to the board's proposal.

Sue Cringoli, chairwoman of the board's finance committee, has stated that the closings were proposed because of declining enrollment in the quadrant, and because the southwest may incur a possible \$400,000 deficit if all of its schools remain open through June, 1994.

She also noted that each school suffered budget cuts this year to make up for revenues lost to declining enrollment.

About 300 school parents in the quadrant turned out for a meeting with the board on Thursday night, Oct. 29, at St. Pius the Tenth Church, 3032 Chili Ave.

The meeting was the second such forum to take place since the proposal was released to the public Oct. 21. The first parents' meeting took place at Holy Family School on Oct. 24.

At the beginning of the Oct. 29 meeting, Swanson apologized to parents for not receiving an information sheet earlier in the week as had been promised during the Oct. 24 meeting. The sheet would have answered some of the questions parents had asked at the first meeting, she noted.

Swanson told the *Courier* that the board had given the diocese materials with which to assemble an informa-

tional newsletter earlier in the week, but that the diocesan Catholic Schools Office had decided against releasing the newsletter in time for the Oct. 29 meeting.

Swanson labeled the decision "unilateral" since she was not consulted about it and had learned of it only hours before the Oct. 29 meeting. She said diocesan officials told her that a "communications mix-up" had delayed the letter's release.

Swanson, however, noted that diocesan school officials informed her that a newsletter answering parents' questions about the proposal would be mailed by the end of this week. The sheet was to be accompanied by a cover letter from Timothy Dwyer, diocesan superintendent of schools, explaining the delay to parents.

The board was roundly criticized by parents for not answering questions regarding the proposed reconfigurations at both the Oct. 24 and Oct. 29 meetings. Rather than directly address parents' concerns, board members decided to record questions and answer them through the informational newsletter.

"I really feel that this format is a complete joke," said Frank Narducci, whose daughter attends Holy Ghost

School, 230 Coldwater Road. "What do we have tonight? No answers."

In her interview with the *Courier*, Swanson defended the format used by the board, likening it to public hearings that a city council would use on a proposed bill. Generally, legislators also decline to answer questions during public hearings, but do address them after they have researched the queries, she said.

"To make extemporaneous answers to their questions does not make good sense," she said. "You're really listening to their concerns about what's going to happen."

One concern repeatedly voiced by parents was the potential overcrowding of students at All Saints next year. Currently, All Saints' seventh grade has 105 students. Meanwhile, 142 students are enrolled in sixth grades throughout the quadrant. All Saints, however, has an enrollment cap of 200 students.

Swanson noted that parents' concerns over the issue were legitimate, but she emphasized that the board may look at restructuring the school itself — possibly adding additional classrooms.

"Our plan was not to turn anybody away," she said.