

Firsts recorded in political history

Ford first non-elected President

TAMU political scientists and historians were keeping close tabs on the unique situation Friday when Gerald Ford became the first non-elected Vice President, and non-elected President in United States history.

The situation is one apart in American annals as President Richard Nixon resigned to hand over the reins of power to Ford, who appeared on the Texas A&M campus as commencement speaker in May.

Ford must now name a new Vice President, according to the 25th Amendment to the Constitution, just as he was picked by Nixon when Spiro Agnew resigned.

Strangely, the succession amendment in theory could allow a whole string of appointed, not elected, Presidents and Vice Presidents, but TAMU assistant professor of political science Dr. Jack Woods is quick to point out the built-in check.

Both the House and Senate must confirm any newly appointed Vice President, the only Presidential action requiring both houses to concur. The Congress and people who elect its members would provide a check there, notes Dr. Woods.

But in theory, if the new President were an appointed Vice President before succeeding, as in this case, he would appoint a new Vice President. Under the unlikely circumstances that the man at the top kept being removed from office for one reason or another and the two houses approved each new Vice President, America might see a chain of appointed officials at the top two posts until next election time.

Dr. Herbert Lang, professor of history, adds that Ford, upon succession, becomes the first non-elected Vice President and President in history.

Other unusual developments stemming from the ascension of Ford and resignation of Nixon include:

The first time a President will have been removed from office by resignation or impeachment.

The first time a Vice President will have been appointed by, then will have succeeded, the President.

The first time the government of the U. S. will have had three Vice Presidents in one Presidential term. Ford took over from Agnew and now he must appoint the third Vice President since 1972. Ford's appointment earlier marked the first time there had been two Vice Presidents in the same term.

Powers of the President will largely remain unaffected, feels Dr. Woods. The future Presidents will still be Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces and therefore most responsible for national security.

That was one issue in the articles of impeachment the House Judiciary Committee felt was better left alone as they defeated it.

In addition, Dr. Woods predicts the Congress would not try to destroy future Presidents' powers in foreign relations because of the Watergate scandal.

He feels the power of Congress has reached a high point with the vote to televise proceedings, even though now unnecessary.

The vote reminds future Presidents that Congress can take hearings on any subject before millions of Americans in their homes.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee's televised hearings in the recent past placed great weight on President Lyndon Johnson not to run again, because the hearings made the people more aware of the President's power of decision in

foreign relations and in undeclared wars, he says.

Woods emphasized the importance of the relatively new check on

Presidential power through television and expanded press coverage.

In the past and at the time the Constitution was drawn up, he re-

marked, the office was far from being the leading figure in the world as it is now.

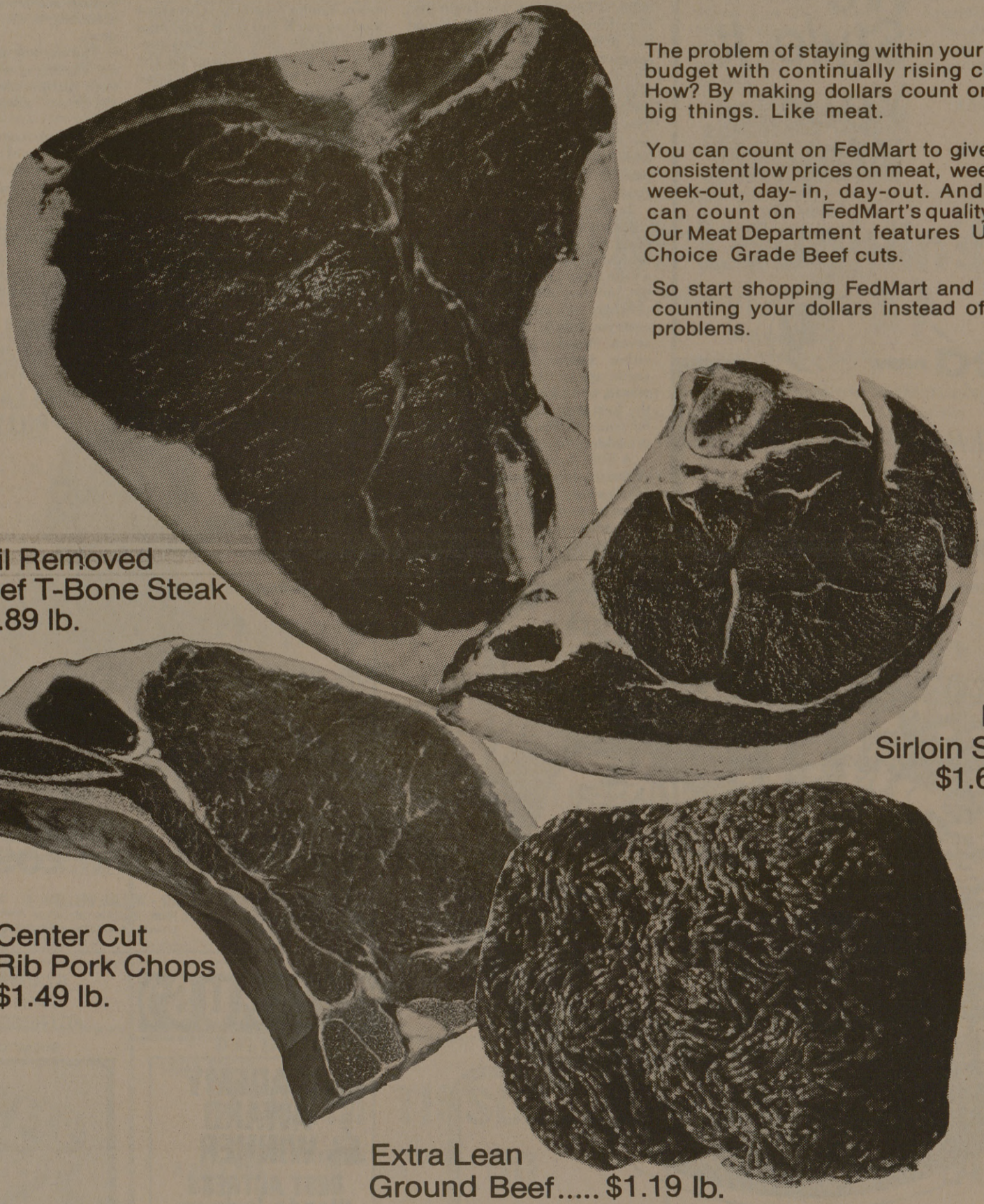
In fact, some past Presidents ap-

proached the office with a slightly flippant attitude, Dr. Woods noted.

But over several wars and the increasingly complexity, the office

gained in power and prestige until it contained powers and duties hardly imagined by the framers of the Constitution.

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Skrivanek urges Czech for schools

Why would anyone want to see the Czech language in the curricula of public schools?

If the anyone you ask is J. J. Skrivaneck Jr., TAMU instructor of modern languages, he will probably tell you that there are at least half a million known people of Czech ancestry in the Lone Star State.

Then he'll add that part of them read at least one of the five Czech language newspapers still printed in Texas and that Czech is the third most-spoken language in Texas behind English and Spanish.

Getting qualified teachers for public schools to instruct Czech has been a big problem and TAMU has again sent a select handful of language students to Prague for a month of studies and tours.

Skrivanek has just returned from the tour, the second year in a row for the journey, and he reports that the trip was educational for all.

"Some of them told me they learned more in six weeks than in a whole year here and not just about the language but about history and traditions," he noted.

Twenty went from TAMU. They attended classes six to eight hours a day and had at their disposal a host of experts in various fields that regularly taught at Charles University in Prague.

Weekends and evenings were spent in every-day activities including tours and attempts to communicate with the citizenry in ordinary situations.

Five of 15 students who went last year are now teaching Czech in colleges. One, James Mendl Jr., is an Aggie.



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