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Interview with Donald Rumsfeld, Jan. 25, 1978.

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Rumsfeld said that in his view there had been almost no thread between the Nixon and Ford ~~and~~ administrations. It was true that both were Republican administrations but the circumstances ~~in~~ which they came into office were so different that there was little to relate them. Every three to five years, ^(and problems) Rumsfeld says, there seems to be a complete change in the situation of the government, ~~and new problems~~ and new policies are developed to meet these problems. After all, between the beginning of the Nixon administration ^(and the) beginning of the Ford administration, ~~there had been~~ the Vietnam War had wound down, ~~the~~ Watergate had ~~not~~ occurred, the economy had changed radically, the energy problem had arisen. ^(feels) There was such a difference between 1969 and 1974 ^(is) that Rumsfeld ~~that it was~~ very difficult to compare the two administrations. It was even difficult to compare '72 with '74, because ^(began) of ~~the~~ Nixon ~~beginning~~ his second term on the basis of his enormous election victory. Rumsfeld saw very little continuity between the two administrations, ~~little~~ even little similarity. It's true, Rumsfeld says, that both administrations were more conservative than their predecessors or their successors, and Rumsfeld says he thinks this was a good thing. ^(was) It ~~was~~ ^{worked(?)} to the benefit of the country that they should be more conservative.

Cms.

OEO

Rumsfeld first joined the Nixon administration in 1969 as director of the Office of Economic Opportunity. He said that he had several times decided not to do this, that he preferred to ~~remain~~ remain in the House of Representatives, but ~~that~~ finally he agreed to make the switch. ^(if was) He said about a 51 to 49 decision on his part with the decision to go to OEO coming down on the 51 side, ~~at the~~ time he decided to move. He said that he did have an interest in the work of OEO, ^(He thought that he might be able to make it into) and the difficulties that the agency was encountering, ~~in~~ an agency to deal with the problems of human beings, rather than simply a theoretical operation. On the other side, ~~he said~~ it seemed to him that he might not be the right person for OEO, or at least not the perfect person. He said the way in which the agency had been ~~not~~ operated had created a great deal of cynicism and hostility among the poor. Not only the poor themselves, but also the mayors and local government officials were disillusioned with the operation of OEO. It ^(was) Rumsfeld's objective at OEO

to develop activities that would merit a degree of support. He said ~~with~~ ^(it was) his aim ~~that would~~ ^(to) do things that would help people, rather than to hire a lot of people, the approach that had previously, he felt, had been taken. Rumsfeld ~~that he~~ found at OEO that achieving results took a lot of time, and even then it was hard to measure the results of his effort. He said ~~that he thought~~ he had ~~discovered~~ discovered no magic wand, but he ~~had~~ thought he had been able to develop some procedures that ~~had~~ helped the poor, or at least they had stopped doing things that hurt the poor. They had stopped doing things that didn't work, that had been shown not to work. Rumsfeld said that ~~the~~ OEO was far outside the ~~xxx~~ mainstream of the Nixon administration. ^(A) After all, Nixon had campaigned against OEO. When he became President, he found that he had the agency, and the question was, what was he going to do with it? Rumsfeld said that he took the job with the understanding that ~~he~~ he would be able to proceed in a sensible way. He said that he set out trying to strengthen the parts of the agency that seemed to be having some effect. Rumsfeld ~~xi~~ said that directing OEO was not a high morale activity, ~~that~~ ^(T) the job tends to imprison the person who has to do it. ^(B) But he had tried to operate the ~~xx~~ agency in a sensible and humane way, ^(f) following policies that he thought would be ~~those that would be~~ ^(favored) wanted by the ~~country~~ ^(publics) if you were able to ~~drop a plumb line through the country~~ ^(you could) and measure popular opinion. He said that he didn't have any clear perception ^(whether) if Nixon shared his values on this matter. ^(H) He said that he very rarely talk to the President about such matters. He said that he had received very helpful advice from Moynihan and Burns in the operation of the agency. ^(P) Moving to his service under President Ford, I asked Rumsfeld if he felt that he had had enough authority when he was the President's ~~xxx~~ chief of staff to operate the White House effectively? He said, "that every President defines that job himself. ^(H) He defines the amount of authority that he wants to put into it and the person who takes the job must conform to what the President wants. ^(IF) and he doesn't feel comfortable with that, he shouldn't take the job in the first place." Rumsfeld said that few people grasp the difficulty of operating a White House staff, particularly under the ~~circumstances~~ ^(time to HC) that faced Ford when Ford came into office. It was a very difficult ~~job~~ ^(and it was)



Ford.
Wh. Hs.

~~difficult for the~~ President. He said he felt that Ford deserved very high marks for doing as well as he had done. Rumsfeld said that he thought the question was, why had Ford done so well? He said that the public perception of ~~the~~ Ford's task was nowhere ~~xx~~ near the reality, particularly during the first six or eight months, ~~that~~ ~~It~~ it was an extremely difficult time for the country and for the president. ~~While~~ Ford had the qualities that were most needed in the presidency at this particular time, Rumsfeld felt. He had the personal qualities, ~~He~~ he was able to bring a tempo, a manner, an approach to the office that gradually won the confidence of the country. ~~He~~ He felt comfortable with the job, felt comfortable with himself, and that began to give off signals to the public, and the public began to feel greater confidence. ~~Since~~ Since Ford ~~k~~ felt comfortable with himself, the public began to feel comfortable with Ford. ~~When~~ When Ford entered office, executive ~~of~~ authority had to a great extent disintegrated with ~~in~~ in the government. Rumsfeld said that ~~the things~~ (had reached a stage in which) ~~had reached a situation in which people within the government~~ if someone said, "Good morning," to them, they'd begin to think, "What does he really mean by that?" Under such circumstances communication becomes impossible. This ~~an~~ attitude of doubt and suspicion had infected the entire country. Not only the White House, but the Congress and the judiciary were ~~affected~~ affected. The attitude of cynicism had developed ~~a~~ momentum, ~~and~~ inertia, ~~of their own~~. The question was, Rumsfeld said, how do you change it? You can't just say, the sky is blue, and people begin believing it again. ~~You~~ (You) ~~you~~ have to figure out ways to develop communication, to send out the signals to the country that things are secure once more. Under our system, Rumsfeld said, the president cannot command. ~~He~~ He said ~~that~~ the country responds like a "wet noodle" if the president tries to command the United States. ~~You have to introduce~~ There has ~~consultation, you have~~ to be an evolutionary adjustment. The problem was that ~~the people were not focusing on what was going on in Washington or rather~~ they were focusing their disbelief, the most basic kind of trust had been



Frd.

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upset ~~x~~ this, Rumsfeld said, ~~x~~ affects everything. Fortunately, Ford was the sort of man who likes people ~~x~~ he likes to reach out to people, ~~he~~ he likes to encourage as much participation ~~x~~ as possible, and he did reach out and people began to respond. With a president who did not have Ford's qualities, Rumsfeld ~~that~~ (said) the country would ~~have~~ not have healed nearly ~~as~~ ^{so} quickly. But Ford was unselfconscious, ~~he~~ he didn't fret, ~~he~~ he didn't worry about things, ~~he~~ he lived in the present and the future, ~~he~~ he did not anguish over the past. By sending out signals of security and confidence, he began to affect those who were working with him. Ford was a man who enjoyed discussion, debate, argument over issues and policies, ~~he~~ he was remarkably aware of everything that was going on in the government. Anyone can send ~~a~~ (to bring in) a one-dimensional memo ~~to~~ in the President, Rumsfeld said, ~~But~~ he Ford liked ~~the~~ he the third dimension of the intensity of feeling ~~the~~ he subtleties of personal reaction, ~~and~~ he therefore ~~he~~ he likes to deal face-to-face with people. Through his service in ~~the~~ he the House, Ford had come to understand the things that make the country go. It's true that this congressional experience had led him to ~~think~~ seek a synthesis of opinion, but Rumsfeld feels that this is the proper way for the President ~~to~~ to behave under our system of government. ~~That~~ he Ford ~~was~~ he sought a product that was representative of the country, ~~that~~ he he had respect for the genius of the system, ~~he~~ he had tolerance and respect for people working for him and for Congress. Rumsfeld said that in the Congress, Ford had been aware that every guy there was there for a reason, ~~and~~ he if you find out the reason why he's there, then you get to know something about America. Rumsfeld said that some people curl up their lips at Congress and at congressmen, ~~that~~ he they have a low opinion of the intelligence and integrity of congressmen ~~x~~ but ~~that this grows out of the disrespect for individuals~~ But Rumsfeld said ~~that~~ he Ford understood that under our system all the ~~the~~ he marbles are not given to the President, ~~that~~ he the system depends on a fruitful mix of the efforts of the Congress and the President, ~~that~~ he each is given its own responsibilities. Ford understood that the President has things



Cong.
Exp.

Cong.
Pres.

that he's given to do, and things that he is not permitted to do. Ford had an innate consciousness of how this interaction works. Rumsfeld disagreed that there is any particular difference between executive and legislative leadership. He said, that both kinds of leadership are aimed at bringing ^{fruition} matters to ^{or a} ~~function~~. Rumsfeld said that getting ^(a) congressional staff to function, congressional committee to function, requires leadership of people in much the same way ^(direction or the) ~~as~~ that ^{branch} ~~an~~ executive requires leadership. Rumsfeld said that Ford had taken a more collegial approach to the presidency than had been done recently, but that Rumsfeld thinks this is the way it should be done. ~~It was~~

Nx.
pp 11

It was a great problem for Ford as to whether or not to clean the Nixon people out, Rumsfeld said. He was subjected to two ^{tups} ~~tongues~~, that one ^{to} ~~tongue~~ told him that it would be ~~xx~~ better for his standing if the Nixon people seemed to be gone, ~~but~~ on the other hand, he recognized that these were decent human beings, ~~they~~ they had never done anything wrong, ~~and~~ In addition, ~~to that~~ they were ~~x~~ skilled people, ~~he~~ needed their skills to operate the administration. His great problem was that the administration under Nixon had come to be regarded as both externally and internally illegitimate, ~~and~~ ^{there} was a need to restore ~~xx~~ a sense of legitimacy to govern. There was a need for continuity but also ^{(a great need} for change ^{for a sense of change}. What was necessary, Ford decided, was to remove the critical mass ^(of Nixon people) that ~~was~~ would allow the government to become legitimate again. ~~he~~ Therefore ~~xx~~ decided to make a minimal number of changes. ~~he~~ did not try to change everybody, but he ^{made} ~~wanted to make~~ sufficient changes to achieve legitimacy. His aim was to create a Ford presidency rather than a ~~xx~~ Nixon presidency over which Ford was now presiding. When Ford first came in, he felt that he was presiding over something that was not his and it was necessary to change this, both internally and externally, so that Ford would be seen to merit trust. At the same time, ^{such change} ~~this~~ would have a cleansing effect on those who ^(remained) ~~were named~~ PI asked Rumsfeld if he and Ford felt the need to move things out to the departments ~~x~~ that Rumsfeld said, "they did not feel the need," but they did feel it was desirable."

army

that
Rumsfeld said/both ~~x~~ he and Ford felt that one problem faced by the
executive branch is that Congress is not properly organized. ~~I~~ It's very difficult
therefore for the executive to fit its activities into the committee structure
of Congress. Rumsfeld ~~xx~~ said that he and Ford do not believe in the concept
of an all-powerful White House. ~~T~~ They did not believe that it was necessary to
draw ~~out~~ all the threads through a single needle head. He said ~~he~~ ^{that} and Ford
recognized the people in the departments and the agencies must deal with
Congress and the public. ~~the~~ ^{therefore} They are somewhat less insulated from interaction
with the people than the White House. People in the White House tend to be
less experienced, to have less interaction with the public than the department
heads. For this reason Ford decided to place great reliance on his cabinet.
Ford ~~has~~ selected a very credible cabinet, Rumsfeld feels. ~~One~~ ^{thing} ~~that~~ that
Rumsfeld detected during the transition period was that there was a great
sense of hostility between the Treasury and OMB, and from other agencies ~~xx~~
toward OMB. The hostility was more directed toward OMB than toward toward
the White House from the agencies. What had happened, Rumsfeld says, was that
Nixon was so busy with Watergate that OMB had begun running "a hell of a lot,"
~~T~~ This had caused considerable ~~x~~ frustration in the department. ~~S~~ Rumsfeld,
therefore, recommended some ~~action~~ ^(limitation) on the authority of OMB. It is not really
a matter of pulling in and pushing out authority, Rumsfeld said. ~~x~~ ^{the} The President
can never give total authority to cabinet officers, but ~~x~~ at the same time
Ford was determined not to delegate authority to the White House staff. The
problem they faced was that so many issues did not ~~fit~~ ^{set up} fit into neat compartments
that are ~~dealt with~~ by the federal government, ~~and~~ ^{the} when there are several
departments and agencies involved, ~~the~~ inevitably decision must pass up to the
White House.

OMB

1. Rumsfeld
2. Trevi



Rumsfeld said that he did not comment on the choice of Rockefeller for Vice President, ~~but~~ Ford ~~had~~ told him at the beginning of the administration that he was considering three possibilities for vice president, Rumsfeld, Rockefeller and Bush, ~~and~~ ^{So} Rumsfeld ~~had~~ very deliberately ^(did) not got involved in ~~this~~ ^(The) selection process. Rumsfeld said that he is aware that Rockefeller felt that he had a problem with the White House staff, ~~and~~ Rumsfeld said that he felt ^(Rockefeller) badly that ~~he~~ felt that way. He said that he respected the way Rockefeller had pitched in and helped the President. He said that the hostility that had grown up between himself and Rockefeller need not have happened, he thought, but he wasn't sure how ~~it~~ he could have avoided it. He said that Rockefeller ~~was~~ became angry when he circulated Rockefeller's proposal for ^{an} Energy and ^(Independence) agency. He said that Rockefeller had said, "that he was trying to sandbag the idea for the agency." But Rumsfeld ~~had~~ said ~~that~~ the President had asked him to do this, and of course he carried out the President's instructions, ~~that~~ ^(He) wanted to get many different points of view on the agency. He said that he himself had been ^(I) against the agency, but ~~that~~ he had not really tried to undercut ^(I) ~~it~~. He said that it seemed only reasonable to him that the people ^(and) that had to budget for such an agency ^(on it) would have to testify ~~in~~ before Congress should be given the opportunity to comment on it before it was proposed by the President. He said that the President did finally send up the ^(proposal for the) ~~energy agency proposal~~ ^(Independence) but ^{Agency} ~~that~~ he had never supported it. Rumsfeld then quickly added, "At least as far as ~~we~~ ^(I) know, the President ^(did) not support ~~it~~ it." ~~Rumsfeld~~ Rumsfeld said that he had ^(purposefully) ~~purposefully~~ tried not to inject himself into the relationship between the President and the Vice President.

Rumsfeld said that he felt Rockefeller and others who had disagreed with the President had directed their ~~at~~ anger at him. He said that he understood this, ~~He~~ thought that his proper function in part was to serve as a lightning rod for ^(against) ~~their~~ ^{their wishes} the President. He said that people tend not to blame the President when things go ~~badly~~ ^(Rumsfeld) they like to ~~to~~ blame the people around him instead, ~~and~~ he was satisfied enough with this. Rumsfeld said, off the record, that, frankly, "one of his major



Rum.

En.
Ind.
Agency.

(against their wishes)

(Independence)

reasons for not supporting the ~~Energy and dependence~~ agency was that he did not think that Ford could not stand ~~a~~ another ~~WIND~~ fiasco. Rumsfeld said that he had strongly disagreed with the President's decision to send ~~him~~ to the Pentagon

Schls. in place of James Schlesinger, ~~he said that he~~ felt that it was too late for the President to change his cabinet, ~~that he~~ had his cabinet and ~~that~~ he should support it. ~~he thought~~ ~~he~~ had passed the point when cabinet changes were

appropriate, ~~he~~ felt it was not ~~the~~ president's interest to ~~make~~ changes in his cabinet, ~~but he found~~ ~~the President~~ to be very stubborn, ~~he~~ would not move on it. ~~He~~

Rumsfeld particularly had objected to placing himself and Bush in positions where they

could not participate in the campaign. He said that he and Bush were both men ~~who~~ who had a background in politics and they should be able to be helpful during the ~~campaign~~ campaign, ~~but~~ by placing them at the CIA and Defense, it effectively took them out of politics. He said that putting Bush at the CIA effectively ruled

him out of consideration for the vice-presidency, and Rumsfeld ~~thought~~ ~~this was a~~ mistake, too, ~~he~~ thought ~~that~~ the President should preserve his options on the vice presidency. He said ~~that~~ ~~the decision to bring back Elliot Richardson to~~ ~~Commerce~~ ~~he thought~~ it was a wise decision, ~~this~~ ~~placed Richardson in a position~~

where he could be selected for the vice-presidency, and also could be helpful in a political year. ~~I~~ I asked Rumsfeld if ~~he~~ had felt when he went to the Defense Department that the defense budget should be increased? He said, ~~that~~ he had opinions,

D & ns: through his work at NATO, and through having worked on the ~~defense~~ defense budget and participated in National Security Council meetings, but he did not have convictions.

After a short period at Defense, in which he did almost nothing but review budget matters of ~~the Defense Department~~ and received intelligence briefings, ~~except for~~

some time devoted to SALT ~~and~~ after going through all this information, it was absolutely clear to him, there was no doubt in his mind ~~that~~ the United States was falling behind the Soviet Union, unless it increased its budget substantially in order to preserve an effective defense system.

Rumsfeld said he did not think the administration had been slow in taking the Reagan threat seriously, ~~that~~ ~~it~~ always regarded Reagan's entry as a serious possibility,

R7h. But, he said, there were various ways to deal with the challenge. One ~~he said~~ ^(Through) would be to confront it directly, and the other would be to deal with it indirectly ~~from~~ the President's incumbency. He said that both he and the President had agreed that the best way to deal with the problem, ~~was with~~ ^(from) both from the country's standpoint and the President's political standpoint, was for the President to carry out his incumbency and not deal with the problem directly. They had decided to take the indirect route, to take advantage of the President's ~~incumbency~~ ^{the}. Rumsfeld said that it was true that Reagan's challenge had some effect on ~~he~~ ^{he said,} policies of the administration. ~~But of course~~ ^{he said,} so does the weather, so does the way the President feels, ~~and he said that~~ ^{he said,} this is all part of the political interaction to which the system operates. ~~the~~ ^{he said,} the President interacts with Congress, he interacts with his opponents within his own party, ~~and~~ ^{he said,} this is the way issues are raised, and the way they are dealt with through our system. He said that he didn't think Reagan's challenge had affected the policies of the Defense Department in any way.

