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INTERVIEW WITH DR. ROBERT GOLDWIN  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
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Yanek Mieczkowski

Mieczkowski: One thing that has been mentioned to me--I interviewed Barber Conable early last month--he was quite close to Ford, I guess, and one thing that he mentioned to me that stuck out in his mind about Ford as compared to other Presidents that he's worked with is that Ford was a very good listener, and was a master at generating vigorous, broad-ranging, animated discussions. And he attributed it to Ford's consciousness that he was not an elected President, that he felt that he wasn't anointed by God and the American people and felt a little more responsible for hearing all the various viewpoints. And I was wondering if you could comment on that or where you think this ability or trait of Ford's developed, and how Ford manifested it.

Dr. Goldwin: Well, I agree that Ford is an exceptionally attentive listener. But I don't think it was because he was conscious of not having been elected. I think it had to be a deeply ingrained and developed trait. Ford is not an original thinker. He didn't generate new ideas himself, but he was very good at listening to other people's ideas, and in any meeting he seemed to be able to get everybody to speak. And if somebody didn't volunteer, he would seek him out, and get him to comment. And he listened as attentively to the lower-ranking people as he did to the highest-ranking ones. And sometimes after six or eight or ten people had expressed ideas about some complex subject, he would make a comment about, "Well, you know, one thing we haven't discussed..." and he'd bring out something that had not been brought out by anyone else, which impressed me because it showed that he could develop a comprehensive picture and keep all these different parts together, and notice that something was missing. And when you talk to him, or when you spoke at a meeting, it was very flattering to glance over at him and see that he was concentrating his attention on the speaker, and it looked like nothing else was distracting him. He wasn't thinking of the next thing he should say, or whom he should call on next, but just concentrating with full force on the person speaking. In that respect, he was very impressive, and a very good judge of other people's ideas, although he didn't generate new ideas himself.

One exchange with the academics in one of our seminars, Edward Banfield of Harvard, who had written an excellent book on



cities, urban problems. Ford liked him because he said he was the first academic he had ever encountered who agreed with him about urban problems. Banfield was saying something about the character of American cities and why they have been in decline. It was somewhat theoretical, and what you would expect from a Harvard professor who studies urban problems. When he finished making his remarks, Ford started to say, "Well, in 1956, or '58, in such and such committee hearings, in a budget for such and such housing bill, someone said this and someone said that and I said the following. Is that what you mean?" Now, I thought Banfield had given a broad, theoretical [talk]. Ford had given all these legislative details about one narrow piece of legislation, and then he said to Banfield, "Is that what you mean?" And Banfield said, "Yes." Now what it showed was that Ford followed him very well, got the main point, but for him to grasp it, he had to ground it in hard fact and detail. That's the way his mind grasped this point.

Mieczkowski: Especially legislative detail--relating it to a bill.

Dr. Goldwin: Yes. Now, there was one other occasion, where there was a big press conference, in one of the auditoriums, in the old Executive Office Building, with a hundred or more journalists, and Ford was at the microphone and he had people from OMB and the Cabinet backing him up. They were there to help him with specific questions about specific parts of the budget. The questions came from all these journalists, some of whom were specialists in one part of the budget or other, and Ford answered all the questions without asking help from all the people behind him. It went on for about an hour. When it was over, I went to lunch in the White House mess, and some of the economists from OMB were at the table with me, and I asked them, "How did the President do?" And they said, "It's amazing. He answered some of those questions that I couldn't have answered. The parts of the budget that I know, he answered, and he got it right. And there were other parts that I couldn't have answered. I don't know those things. But he knew the whole thing." So there were some things about his intellect that he never got credit for.

Mieczkowski: Yes, I think Ford had a real image problem--unjustly so--about being mentally slow or physically prone to gaffes, or stumbles, or things like that. And I think that was unfortunate.

I had one question about your saying Ford had an ability to see the broader picture. I've gone through some of your files, and I guess



on Saturday mornings or something, you would sit down with Ford and Dick Cheney, to try to get Ford to articulate some kind of a vision for America. I wanted to ask about that. Why did Ford have such trouble in articulating a vision, and did he enjoy these sessions, or did he find them painful, or difficult?

Dr. Goldwin: As I remember, we did it only once. And it wasn't very successful at all. It may be related to what I was just saying, that he was very good at legislative detail, at hard fact, and not good at generating a broad vision. The closest he came, in my view, of something far-reaching and broad was a simple formulation--no new spending programs. He said that over and over again, trying to get a grip on the budget. I think he was appalled at what became obvious once he switched from the legislative view to the executive view, that there was so little room for discretion--entitlements and interest and defense ate up so much of the budget that there was very little room for control, and he saw before anyone realized how really bad things could get that unless there were some powerful restraint exercised, that the budget would just run away without anyone being able to control it. So he was very strict in saying over and over again, "No new spending programs." Of course, there was never any time for it to kick in, because he didn't get reelected. But that's about the closest he came to anything I can remember of something broad.

For instance, it was 1976, and the bicentennial of the Declaration of Independence: He never could deliver the kind of oratory that that occasion might have engendered. Hartmann made a number of stabs at it. I remember on July 3rd or 4th there was some kind of gala celebration, and I was asked to write a three to five minute piece on it, and I had a line something like, "So strike up the band, break out the flags, light up the sky, let the whole world know," something like that. One of the challenges in writing for him--anything that wasn't just setting out straight argument--was that he had no flair for oratory. So you couldn't write anything that was overblown, because it would plod. So I worked on those lines, because I thought no one could flub this, you know, "Strike up the band, break out the flags"--there's only one way to say it! [Laughs]

Mieczkowski: [Laughs] Do you recall how that worked out with him?

Dr. Goldwin: I wasn't there!





Mieczkowski: Going back to what you said about one of the only aspects of his vision that came through was no new spending, do you think that's one of Ford's legacies as President, that in some ways he was an early tocsin of the budgetary deficits we have today. And how would you think his vision of America has changed today given, for example, the budgetary deficits as opposed to 20 years ago?

Dr. Goldwin: I'm not sure, but I think he's one of the supporters of the balanced budget amendment.

Mieczkowski: Actually, I saw an interview in which he said he opposes it. And he said he opposes it because it would tie both the Congress' and President's hands in case of an emergency. He also said he thinks it would be a way for Congress to exploit loopholes.

Dr. Goldwin: Well, I think--I don't know if it would be a catastrophe, but I think it would be harmful to have it in the Constitution. But I didn't know what his position was.

Yes, sure, that was one of the things--he saw early that the budget was going to be a major problem. And of course with Carter we had some serious trouble. One of your questions was about that economic summit.

Mieczkowski: The economic summit conference on inflation. Were you there already?

Dr. Goldwin: Well, yes, I was in the White House, but I had nothing to do with it. A friend of mine, John Robson, organized it, didn't he--do you know?

Mieczkowski: I think Seidman was the executive director of the whole thing. I got the impression he was mostly responsible for coordinating it.

Dr. Goldwin: Well, in any case, the main thing about it--it was in November, wasn't it?

Mieczkowski: September. There was an early summit conference the first weekend in September, and then the final summit conference at the Washington Hilton on the last weekend.

Dr. Goldwin: The main thing about it was that not one of them mentioned a severe recession about to occur.



Mieczkowski: None of the nationally eminent economists there?

Dr. Goldwin: Right. I was at lunch in February with Leonard Garment and a man from Detroit named Max Fisher, he's a very wealthy industrialist from Michigan, Detroit I guess, and a longtime friend of Jerry Ford--they played football together. And Fisher's main interest was Israel--he was used as an unofficial emissary in talking to the Israeli government. And one of my strange assignments was liaison with the Jewish organizations. There's always someone in the White House who's appointed to receive the communications from them, and to deal with them. So that was one of my duties. So I often had Max Fisher [to deal with]. And the three of us were having lunch. And Leonard Garment said to him, "You know, the economy's in such bad shape now, and we don't seem to have any ideas. What can we do?" And Fisher said, "It's February. In February you can't do anything about the economy!" And Garment said, "I can't believe this! I don't know anything about economics, but I can't believe the time of year is [that important]." No one seemed to have any idea what to do with the sudden economic setback.

Mieczkowski: I actually had one question--I don't know if I wrote it in my sheet or not, but I wanted to ask you since you were close to Rumsfeld. Not James Cannon, but Lou Cannon of the Washington Post did a three-part series on Rumsfeld--

Dr. Goldwin: At the time?

Mieczkowski: It was in the spring of '75, I think it was in May of '75, and in it he credited Rumsfeld with being a driving force behind the Administration's taking the--as Ron Nessen said--179-degree turn from anti-inflation to anti-recession policy. Is that accurate, was Rumsfeld one of the prime moving forces behind that?

Dr. Goldwin: I think so. Cannon and other journalists were critical of Rumsfeld because they couldn't get any news out of him. Rumsfeld was always trying to explain to people in the White House how harmful it was to talk too much, and that it usually came about by being flattered by journalists, telling you how important you were, and then to show how important you are you would reveal something, to show that you were an insider. Cannon said to me, "Rumsfeld knows what not to say to journalists. He doesn't know



what to say." I guess in that respect, that was Jim Baker's great skill in Washington--feeding things to journalists and making himself a kind of favorite with them because he gave them so much to write about. But Rumsfeld didn't.

Yes, Rumsfeld was very good as chief of staff and ran a very tight ship. But he always complained about it. He often said to journalists, and they thought it was a joke of some sort, that for some 14 years before [when] he had started in Washington as somebody's assistant, and here he is 14 years later, still somebody's assistant. And they said, "But then you were an assistant to an unimportant congressman. Now you're chief of staff in the White House. How can you make the comparison?" And Rumsfeld said, "You don't understand. I'm still somebody's assistant." So he jumped at the chance to become Secretary of Defense, because he wanted to run something, not be somebody's assistant. He was good at it, but it didn't last long enough.

Mieczkowski: I had a question with regard to this "179 degree" turn. Were you at the planning meetings in Vail at the end of 1974 to plan the State of the Union address?

Dr. Goldwin: I was in Aspen at the time, and I was flown from Aspen to Vail, but not to talk about that. When was it, what time of the year was it?

Mieczkowski: It was Christmas of 1974.

Dr. Goldwin: Was Ford in Vail again the following summer?

Mieczkowski: I think so.

Dr. Goldwin: That's when I was there. No, I was not there then [in Christmas 1974]. Was that the State of the Union where he said when he first came to Congress he heard Harry Truman say--

Mieczkowski: Yes.

Dr. Goldwin: Well, I participated in the sessions at the White House, and right at the end in writing it. That was chaos, again because of Hartmann. One of the few times I saw Ford show anger. He snapped a pencil and got up and said, "This speech isn't ready, and it should have been ready." And he got up and he walked out. So Hartmann had





to keep working through the night to try to give it to him the next morning.

I wrote a section of it, I don't remember what it was. And my part was ready and remained as it was at that final meeting. But Hartmann blamed other people. I thought it was his fault.

Mieczkowski: Yes, in Ford's memoirs he said that Hartmann and then Rumsfeld--the two rival groups--had two rival drafts and they had to be edited and melded together at the last minute and Ford gave the speech on three hours of sleep, or something like that.

Before I forget, I had one more question on the Conference on Inflation. Do you think Ford benefitted from them in any way?

Dr. Goldwin: From the summit? I had no idea. That really was not something I participated in, so I'm not a good source for it.

Mieczkowski: Do you recall much of the WIN speech or that proposal for the 5 percent surtax within the WIN speech?

Dr. Goldwin: Well, what I remember about the WIN speech was that it was a subject of great hilarity and ridicule.

Mieczkowski: Within the White House?

Dr. Goldwin: In the public, press--and people in the White House were embarrassed. It hadn't been staffed properly, apparently Hartmann did it mostly himself.

Mieczkowski: Through back channels, or back-staffing?

Dr. Goldwin: Well, he was the chief of staff at the time. He was not the chief speechwriter, but the chief speechwriter reported to him. And he wrote the speech apparently, and the economists were appalled. I don't know if Alan Greenspan was consulted or contributed to it. Was he yet the head--

Mieczkowski: Of CEA? Yes. He said that--apparently he was consulted--and he said that he--this is in from an interview I read with Greenspan--that he opposed it right from the start, and he got some parts of it deleted or toned down, but it still came out very embarrassing. Did it cause any internal dissension with the Administration, or was it just a source of embarrassment?





Dr. Goldwin: I think it's what led to the emergency call to Rumsfeld.

Mieczkowski: Really?

Dr. Goldwin: I think so, because what was needed was establishing regular procedures for anything to be approved before it was to be presented to the President, and someone who would really enforce those procedures. Before Rumsfeld came, you never knew what the system was.

Mieczkowski: Was the EPB going at full speed then?

Dr. Goldwin: This was what?

Mieczkowski: The Economic Policy Board.

Dr. Goldwin: With Seidman?

Mieczkowski: Yes.

Dr. Goldwin: I don't know.

Mieczkowski: ...I know the EPB was in existence then already, but one view expressed by Phil Buchen is that it wasn't really operating effectively yet at that time. Buchen's opinion is that if it had, it might have forestalled WIN altogether.

Dr. Goldwin: Well, I think if anyone knowledgeable about economics had any real control over serious input and chance to express criticisms of the nonsense in that speech, that it wouldn't have happened. And I'm quite sure that's why Ford realized that if he wanted to have Hartmann around and writing for him, and whatever he thought he could contribute, that one thing is have him in control of--it wasn't that Hartmann controlled things, it was that with Hartmann as kind of a chief of staff, nobody controlled anything. There was no real system. There was lots of talent around: Gergen had been the head of speechwriting under Nixon. I guess Ford didn't use him at all. He went over to Treasury, I think....But Gergen was still in the White House when I arrived, but he spent most of his time--I would pass by a room, I didn't know him at the time, and he was surrounded by boxes, packing up, leaving. The transition was still going on weeks after. Ford didn't want to fire all the Nixon people, most of whom had nothing to do with Watergate because he



thought firing them would put a stigma on them after--all they were trying to do was serve their country for four years. So Gergen was around for a while but not being asked to do anything.

Mieczkowski: Going back to this State of the Union that you were asked to help write--do you remember anything about the tax cut at all, the anti-recession tax cut, or the energy proposal?

Dr. Goldwin: No.

Mieczkowski: Do you the Tax Reduction Act that Ford signed in March, for the \$23 billion tax cut?

Dr. Goldwin: No. I think mostly what I wrote about in the State of the Union address was some part about crime. But I really don't have any--it's 20 years....

Mieczkowski: What do you think influenced Ford's tendency toward compromise with Congress? Was it a congressionally acquired trait?

Dr. Goldwin: Well, there I think the fact that he was not elected, that he lost a lot of influence after the Nixon pardon, that he had a majority against him in the Congress, and that it was clear that he was going to have opposition not only in the general election but also in the primaries....

→ But all those things made it difficult for him to stick to any hard decision. And so he was constantly in a position of having to look for compromise. And about the only effective tool he had was the threat of veto. I think I even wrote a short comment for a response to criticism about a veto.

Mieczkowski: Yes, I've see some of those at the Ford Library.

Dr. Goldwin: It's a constitutional instrument for a constitutional purpose.

Mieczkowski: Yes, that sounds very familiar.

Dr. Goldwin: And that there was a very good reason that the Founders put it into the Constitution. And he was doing his duty as President. But that was one of the few effective tools he had, and I think there were occasions when he used the veto when it was clear



he was going to be overridden, by an overwhelming majority. But all those things made it necessary for him to be looking for compromises all the time. It might have changed if he had been elected. I don't think that was so much a character trait as just a recognition of the circumstances.

Mieczkowski: When he vetoed acts that he was afraid of [the veto being] overridden, why did he do that? Did he [not] fear the loss of influence after being overridden, or was he sticking up for principle?

Dr. Goldwin: I think it was conviction on his part. There were some things he wouldn't sign his name to. He thought they were wrong and he knew it was going to be enacted whether he signed or not. He wanted to voice his objection to it. How many vetoes did he--

Mieczkowski: 66. Twelve were overridden.

Dr. Goldwin: Because I remember one where he got only 2 votes?

Mieczkowski: That was probably the Railroad Adjustment Act, early in his term.

Dr. Goldwin: I don't remember what it was. Was there a Veteran's?

Mieczkowski: Oh, yes, there was one like that. That might have been an even worse defeat than the Railroad Act.

Dr. Goldwin: But every once in a while he just wanted to take a stand.

Mieczkowski: I had a question about Ford's limited legislative agenda. Was this something that was deliberate and designed to keep Ford's rate of legislative successes high--proposing a few number of programmatic initiatives and concentrating on getting them passed, or was Ford afraid of dividing the country during a period during which he felt the country needed healing by proposing initiatives that might have resulted in divisive battles with Congress. Why was Ford's agenda so limited--was this something that was deliberate, that he was conscious of these possible repercussions, or was this a reflection of his philosophy?





Dr. Goldwin: Well, again, I'm not really sure. His position was not a very strong one for major initiatives. That was one aspect of it. Another--I think he had a strong sense of priority, and wanted to concentrate on the few things that he thought of greatest importance. I don't know what he might have done if he had been elected to a full term. But he wasn't in a position where there was much likelihood of success with an expensive legislative program. So that might have been a major consideration. Also there was a lot of foreign policy and defense considerations which are not so much legislative as an exercise not so much of executive power but of the foreign policy power, which has to be conducted without legislation. That took a lot of his attention and time. There was Vietnam, the *Mayaguez* matter. Kissinger, I'm sure, absorbed a lot of his attention. With the Cold War, there was the Middle East. I don't know if it would have made sense for him to have an extensive legislative program. He was very concerned about the crime problem, which was becoming severe. And Edward Levi was the Attorney General. We're both from the University of Chicago.

Mieczkowski: Yes, he was a very capable Cabinet member.

Goldwin: I forget who it was, maybe it was Levi, who wrote him a note after his first Cabinet meeting, it was more illustrious a group than any faculty he had ever belonged to. I think there were seven Ph.D.s in the Cabinet. Even the Secretary of Agriculture, Butz, had a Ph.D. in agriculture.

Mieczkowski: I had one question about the conservative challenge. What did you see, or what did the Ford team see, as the big difference between Ford and Reagan, in the primaries, in the political philosophies, now that Reagan has been President?

Dr. Goldwin: Well, you know, it was Reagan before people saw him as President, and he was somewhat in the way that people would view Pat Buchanan now--not sure what he could run, what he knew about government other than making speeches. But he had a lot of support from Republicans who are active, doctrinaire conservatives, and Ford, given the realities of his presidency, couldn't follow a doctrinaire conservative line, so it was easy for Reagan to be luring away Republican support on the promise of being really true to Republican principles....Ford couldn't follow a course in the presidency that would be satisfying to doctrinaire conservatives, because the realities of the situation were that he had to deal with





an opposition Congress, he hadn't been elected, there was very little discretionary power anyhow, and so it was easy for Reagan in the same way it was easy for Buchanan with Bush to spout straight, orthodox, pure Republican positions and make it seem that this President was a false Republican, not true to the real principles. But there was no way for Ford to act that way, and so people could compare what Reagan said with what Ford did, and that made Reagan a much more "Republican" Republican.

Mieczkowski: Do you think Ford was getting the worst of both political worlds, in that his rhetoric was often very hard-line, fiscal conservative, but subsequently, like in these tax cuts I'm studying, and in the Energy Policy and Conservation Act, he would end up signing, and thereby compromising, and with the rhetoric he would inflame liberals and by compromising he would inflame conservatives. Did Ford show any feelings about being stuck in that kind of a pickle?

Goldwin: I'm sure he felt it! But no, he didn't say anything to me. Sure, that's the price he was paying for being President--unelected President at that time.

Mieczkowski: How do you think Reagan benefitted from Ford's presidency, or Ford's legacy in office as such?

Dr. Goldwin: Well, I think his real benefit was Carter's performance. That's what guaranteed his success.

Mieczkowski: Do you think he was able to build on anything Ford did?

Dr. Goldwin: I don't know that he used anything about Ford's presidency when he ran himself. He had his own, clear message--get the government off your back, and make America respected in the world again. Those were the themes, and they were very effective against Carter, who had the hostage problem, and seemed to be in favor of all kinds of regulation, and gave us 20 percent inflation, terrific interest rates. I don't know how much Reagan benefitted, if at all, from his opposition to Ford. But I think he did gain a lot of loyalty among Republicans from his campaign against Ford. But that's not what won the election for him.

Mieczkowski: Do you have any feelings about what were the most significant factors in Ford's defeat?



Dr. Goldwin: Well, I think the way the pardon was given to Nixon was *extremely* damaging, and then a gaffe at the end in the debate with Carter when he seemed to be confused about Poland, and whether they were under control of the Soviets or not. As I remember it, the polls showed he was gaining steadily against Carter up to that point.

Mieczkowski: Yes, he made up a huge gap.

Dr. Goldwin: Yes, and then his advance stopped.

Mieczkowski: Yes, it kind of levelled off right after that second debate.

Dr. Goldwin: And resumed again, but then it was too late. So if the pardon of Nixon had been handled better, and if he hadn't done that, he might have won by a narrow margin against Carter. The Nixon pardon, that happened during the first few days I was here at temporary assignment, and as soon as it was done and Hartmann wrote the statement, and the main thrust of it was that Nixon had suffered enough, I called Rumsfeld, who was in Brussels, told him that I thought that that was extremely damaging, and that what he should have said and might still say was, "The country had suffered enough, and we just want to get this issue out of the way and turn to the real problems that we face. And we're not doing it for Nixon's sake, we're doing it for the sake of the country." Rumsfeld encouraged me to speak, I think to Arthur Burns, but I'm not sure...no, it must have been someone else. I wanted Rumsfeld to call the President, but for some reason he didn't. And he urged me to speak to someone. And nothing ever happened as a result.

If you look at the Washington Post of about that time, you'll see David Broder, for instance, who was in all other respects critical of Ford, said that he thought that the pardon was the right thing to do. And a number of people would have supported it if it had been done the right way. What happened was that they wanted it to be extremely limited to just a few individuals, so it wouldn't leak before it was issued. One result was that the press secretary didn't know about it, remember Jerry terHorst? He resigned a few days later because he had in ignorance misled the press, telling them there wasn't going to be a pardon, or something like that. Phil Buchen, who's a wonderful man, had no experience at this level. They had some lawyer who's not part of the government, I don't know anything about him, was the negotiator with Nixon. They didn't get



Nixon to admit any sort of wrongdoing. Nothing about giving up tapes. So the whole thing was done very badly. And I think that was something that Ford never really recovered from.

There was one other really damaging thing, and that was the dumping of Rockefeller, and the search for a vice presidential candidate, and then they came up with Dole, who didn't do well at all.

Mieczkowski: Yes, back then he was too vitriolic.

Dr. Goldwin: And then he gave a bad performance in his debate, speaking of Democrat wars. So there were a number of things. Given the fact that the outcome was close, you can see that these few damaging things, if they hadn't happened, might have made a difference. I couldn't believe that Carter was going to beat him, he seemed like such an improbable President of the United States.

Mieczkowski: ...I have a couple more questions about economic policy, before I forget. Who among Ford's economic advisors do you think Ford listened to the most, or which advisor do you think he esteemed the most?

Dr. Goldwin: Well, Greenspan and Seidman. He and Greenspan were good buddies, they played golf together. He really liked Greenspan, and I think Greenspan was an effective advisor to him. And Seidman. Seidman and I never hit it off too well.

Mieczkowski: Really?

Dr. Goldwin: Well, he had some animosity toward Rumsfeld, and I was always thought of as a Rumsfeld person. But Seidman was definitely close to him. And Roger Porter was a key aide to Seidman at the time....

Mieczkowski: What about Bill Simon? How did he fit into the picture?

Dr. Goldwin: Well, Simon was Secretary of Treasury. He used to come to the senior staff meetings just about every morning. He was the only Cabinet member who did. I think he was close to Ford.

Mieczkowski: He seemed to oppose some of Ford's initiatives in the State of the Union address that I'm studying. And there were





rumors, when he did this, that he was going to be dismissed, or he was on his way out. Do you recall any of that?

Dr. Goldwin: Well, there was always talk about the animosity, conflicts among the chief personages. That's a necessary part of the system. The President, under the Constitution, has all of the executive power. The executive power is invested in the President of the United States. Anybody else has his power derivative from the President. The government is so complex that the President has to have very capable, energetic, assertive people with lots of initiative as the heads of different departments. If you get such an assemblage of people and add in ambition, you've got to have conflict. They have their own ideas, they have rivalries, they're tough as can be, they have lots of their own entourage, staff, feeding them with ideas and having conflicts in connection with their ideas. So any White House is sure to have all kinds of internal conflict. And a President has to try to keep them all happy enough so that they continue to be helpful to him.

That's been the situation from the very beginning. Like George Washington had Hamilton and Jefferson--they were at each other's throats the whole time. Washington insisted on getting an opinion on everything from both of them. He almost invariably went with Hamilton's advice. Jefferson submitted his resignation over and over again. Washington always persuaded him to stay on--and continued not to take his advice. When Jefferson was Secretary of State and had only four employees in the State Department. One of them was hired as a translator. But his real job was to run a newspaper which had no job other than to attack Hamilton on every issue. And Hamilton spent all his time, as Secretary of Treasury, trying to be Secretary of State. So it's just built into the system. And there was plenty of rivalry between Seidman, and Simon, and Rumsfeld, and Hartmann, and probably some others.

Mieczkowski: Do you remember Ford's Revenue Adjustment Act of 1975, the one with the matching dollar for dollar cuts in taxes and expenditures--the one that he vetoed and then signed just a few days later after compromise language was written into it?

Dr. Goldwin: Well, I remember his statement of principle that there shouldn't be a dollar-for-dollar of expenditure unless there's a dollar for revenue to match it, but other than that I don't....





Mieczkowski: What do you think was Ford's greatest strength and weakness as President?

Dr. Goldwin: Well, the weakness was the impression people had that he was slow or confused, not especially intelligent. I always thought what was needed was some PR genius who could show him in public as he was when he was at his job. When he ran a meeting with Cabinet officers, for instance, there was never any doubt about who the commanding person was. He really ran it in an effective way, and it would have made a very good impression if there were some way to show him in public as he was in private. Usually the PR man tries to conceal what a politician is like in private and make some false public image! But what was needed was something to show him as he really was. But that's not the way he came through in public.

His strength was that he really had a good understanding of the American political system, a good understanding of the legislative process, and a sense of the possibilities and the limitations of the executive power. He often said privately, and I think sometimes publicly, that the problems he had now he had inherited from previous Presidents and Congresses. And the decisions that were being made now were decisions would be something that future Presidents would have to live with. And so his concern was to try to see what the future consequences would be of his actions and the things that he wanted Congress to do. The weakness was that through a combination of his lack of a personal flair and persuasiveness, combined with really adverse circumstances of not having been elected, following a disgraced President, facing a hostile Congress, and uncertain prospects of election--all weakened his hand as President.

Mieczkowski: He was a President with a long-term perspective of his actions.

Dr. Goldwin: Yes, he was acutely aware of the fact that the problems he had to deal with were things that had been decided five, ten and more years ago. And the big problem was trying to conclude the Vietnam War, and all the negotiations. Well, that was all inherited from two previous Presidents--three previous Presidents. And he had the same sense that the decisions he would be making now about expenditures, the deficit, the national debt, the state of the economy--these decisions would be things that a future President, 5, 10, 15 years from now would be trying to deal with. So in that



sense, yes, he did try to think about the future. Whether he had a vision of it or not--I don't think he ever used the phrase "the vision thing," which was good!--but he was not the sort who could draw a verbal picture of a future America that would stir the hearts of the American public.

Mieczkowski: Did he see the mid-1970s as a new era in any way, like there was the onset of a new economic phenomenon--stagflation--there was severe crisis in energy, which was a phenomenon heretofore unforeseen in American history, especially in the postwar era of plenty and abundance. Did he see himself at a critical juncture in American history, or at the cusp of great changes--was he conscious of that at all?

Dr. Goldwin: Well, he was certainly aware of the severity of the energy problem because of the oil crisis, which grew out of the Middle East conflict, and the oil boycott, and the OPEC cartel. Whether he thought of that as some sort of turning point of American standing point in the world--that I don't know. He saw it as a major problem to deal with, and that took a tremendous amount of attention and time....

Ford may have seen it as some sort of turning point in the fortunes of the United States, but I don't recall his speaking of it that way. It was mostly in terms of stockpiling...

