

The original documents are located in Box 1, folder “Ford, Gerald - Interview, 3/8/78” of the A. James Reichley Interview Transcripts at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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Interview with former President Gerald Ford, March 8, 1978.

Philosophy

Ford said that there very definitely had been an underlying philosophy to ~~his~~ his administration's program. This philosophy was embodied in the economic plan that he recommended be put into effect in January of 1975, calling for tax reductions and a fifty percent cut in the rate of growth of federal spending. Throughout his administration, Ford said, he had attempted to fight the developing problem of inflation which in the long run ~~x~~ would lead to unemployment. The fight against inflation, Ford said, provided the basic theme for his administration.

Infln.

Tied to this was his energy program introduced in 1975 in which he placed emphasis on stimulating production of domestic oil and gas through increased price levels, which also, he said, hopefully would bring some conservation. ^P His domestic program

Western
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was related to foreign policy, Ford said, through the recognition of the interdependence of the economic world. He had dealt bilaterally with West Germany, France and Britain to achieve improvements in the economic situation of the industrial countries, followed ~~by~~ by the two western-world summit meetings at ^{Rambouillet} ~~A~~ and Puerto Rico.

Through these meetings, an integration of economic policy was achieved, that first with the three countries/he dealt with bilaterally, and then joined to them Italy and Japan and also Canada at the Puerto Rico meeting. Ford said that when he

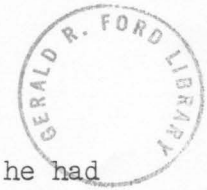
came into office he had found other members of the western alliance to be viewing the United States with apprehension, with concern ^{over} of the functioning of the American government. He had set out to reassure the other industrial democracies through

his economic ^(same) plan, and through improving relationships with the other democracies ~~x~~ by showing ^(He aims to show) that the United States was prepared to be a good partner in the complex

economic situation facing the industrial democracies. ^P I asked Ford if he had backed away from the detente policy with the Soviet Union and communist China? ~~and~~ ^H he said ~~that~~ ^r

Detente

That he had never fundamentally backed ~~x~~ away from detente, but because of the situation that developed in connection with the presidential primaries and the convention fight, ~~that~~ it became necessary for him to deemphasize detente ~~x~~ ^H that ~~he~~ had never backed off efforts to achieve more peaceful ~~with~~ relations with our



communist adversaries, but because of the domestic political situation he had not been able to give as much emphasis to this effort in the final year of his administration. The campaign for reelection had made it necessary for him to make his efforts of detente less visible than had formerly been the case.

R I asked if Don Rumsfeld had been cooler toward detente than Henry Kissinger? and Ford said, "Not in any fundamental way." He did not think that Rumsfeld had been cooler, but that particularly after he ~~xxx~~ became secretary of defense his position in the government had, of course, ~~had~~ required that he support an increased level of defense spending, and ~~was~~ development of our weapons system. Ford said that Rumsfeld had not really taken a harder line toward the Soviet Union, but that his job required him to make certain that ^{our} military capabilities were sufficient to meet any challenge. He said that Rumsfeld did ~~in~~ have some feeling that detente was not ~~in~~ paying off as well as it might, ~~having been~~ which was slowing ~~the~~ progress toward SALT II. Ford said that there was a mistaken impression in some parts

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of the public that Kissinger was a soft-liner toward the Soviet Union. Ford said that in fact on some occasions Kissinger had taken a harder line, had been tougher toward the Soviet Union than anyone else in the administration. Ford said that really no one in the administration had been a soft liner toward the Soviet Union. Brent Scowcroft was not an aggressive hard liner, but certainly not what Ford would call a "soft-liner." He said that everyone in the administration concerned with foreign and defense policy had seen that the benefits of the detente must be reciprocal.

R He said that when he came into office ~~that~~ he had recognized it was necessary to reverse the ^{decline} ~~fall~~ in defense spending. He said that he had increased the percentage of federal spending going for defense, and had ~~to~~ increased the real dollars being spent on defense. The increased Soviet effort for ~~in~~ military spending had made it necessary for the United States to increase its defense budget. ~~and~~ he had project an increase over the next five or six years in defense spending.

Dfns. Spndng.

SALT

Ford said that the SALT talks had been cut-up in the complications of the presidential election year. He said that the negotiations over SALT had been



affected by the events prior to the convention and also by the post-convention events of the election year. P Ford said ~~that~~ when he came into office he had made a deliberate effort to make better use of cabinet people. Particularly after he got his own cabinet members into place, ~~that~~ he had ~~thought~~ ^(SOUZHR) to give more authority to cabinet members than had been the case ~~in~~ ^(under) the former administration. At the outset of his administration, he had determined to have a strong cabinet. He said that he sought to give cabinet members more authority over the execution as well as the planning of policy. I asked if in the latter part of his administration, he had felt the need to draw ~~some~~ ^{to} some authority back into the White House, ~~and~~ ^H he said, "No, ~~the~~ right through ~~the~~ end of his administration he had sought to give greater authority to the cabinet members. He said that ~~he~~ he would have continued this policy if he had been elected to a full term. Ford said that he felt he had a first-class cabinet. He mentioned Carla Hills, Bill Simon, Don Rumsfeld, Henry Kissinger, and Bill Usury as outstanding members of the cabinet. P He ~~said~~ ^{ai} that he could not recall any major problem having arisen because of ~~a~~ cabinet ~~members~~ ^(SITUS) exceeding their authority. I asked if John Dunlop's handling of the ~~situs~~ ^(SITUS)-picketing matter had perhaps been an example of a cabinet member exercising too ~~much~~ authority. Ford said that he would not criticize Dunlop for anything that he had done in connection with the ~~situs~~ ^(SITUS)-picketing matter, ~~that~~ ^T this was a volatile issue, and ~~that~~ he would have to say it was not ~~adequately~~ adequately staffed-out by the White House west wing. He said that ~~it~~ this had occurred in the early part of his administration, and ~~that~~ this was something in which the White House staff had not done a completely adequate job. He said that the domestic council had fallen down on this particular issue, and ~~that~~ he would not criticize Dunlop for anything that he had done, ~~(P)~~. Ford said that the problem was that the Domestic Council ~~had~~ at that point had not adequately firmed-up the process of staffing out issues. P Ford said that the Domestic Council in his administration had a different role than it had had in the Nixon White House. In the Nixon White House the Domestic Council had been very powerful. Ford said that he had used the domestic council to staff-out issues and

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make recommendations to him. The domestic council was not ^Ta policy-organizing body in his administration as it had been under Nixon, Ford said. I mentioned that some people say that the domestic council was not used for long-range planning in the Ford administration. ~~And~~ Ford said he felt that this was a just criticism. ^AAfter all, he ^(only) had 30 months in office, and he had not been able to fully reorganize the west-wing setup in ^{the} ~~the~~ way that he would have liked to have done. He had not had enough time to direct the administration's attention adequately ^(toward) ~~through~~ long-range problems. ^PFord said that when he came into office he had felt that it would be wrong to clean-out the ~~the~~ Nixon appointees on a wholesale basis. He felt that everyone should have four or five months to give them a reasonable chance to find other jobs. ^PFord said that he did not feel that he had made any serious mistakes in his handling of the ~~xxxx~~ economy, ^Hthat he thought that his administration's policies had been successful in reducing inflation to 6.7 percent in 1976, ^(if) ~~and that~~ his policies had been continued, ~~to be followed that~~ ^{would} inflation ~~by~~ now be down to four percent or less. The policies that President Carter has followed have resulted in an increase in inflation, ^(and) ~~and~~ Ford said ~~that~~ there is no evidence that these policies will be changed. ~~And that~~ ^I this is one of the basic causes of the current drop in the value of the dollar, which in the long run is going to ^{lead} ~~to~~ increased unemployment.

Ford said that when he ~~had~~ ^{had} submitted the 1977 budget at the beginning of 1976, ~~that~~ he had/substantive hopes that the cuts in spending that he recommended would be achieved. On the other hand, he said that he had realistic doubts that Congress would be prepared to bite the bullet, at least not in all the cases that he recommended. Ford said that he felt nevertheless that it was his responsibility to lay it on the line ^(to) ~~to~~ point to areas in which he felt that spending could be cut. Ford said that he had not considered in any major way increasing spending in 1976. For one thing, he was not sure that any great spending ^(increase) ~~might~~ would result in ~~any~~ significant reduction of unemployment. Beyond that, he had a concern that any wild increase in spending, even if it did

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win the election, would have the consequence of regenerating inflation which would not have a very happy outcome for the country ~~from an economic~~ standpoint. Ford said that

it was his conviction that a balanced, responsible economic policy would lead to success in ~~xxxx~~ the election, as well, and ~~he~~ said that it had almost worked.

Ford said that he had always regarded inflation as the nation's number one issue, and the polls showed that the public also regarded inflation as the number one

Infln

problem of the ~~xxxx~~ country. He said he recognized that ~~the public~~ in 1976, a majorit

of the public

had felt that the Democrats were better able to deal with inflation than the Republicans, and ~~he~~ said that this was obvious, not true, and the results since

Carter has come into office have proven that it was not true. Ford said that he was somewhat surprised by the pause in economic recovery that occurred in the

ECONOMIC PAUSE

early fall of 1976. He said that it could not have come at a more inauspicious time. ~~That~~ I it was hard to explain why the pause had come at that time. He said

one ~~xxx~~ cause may have been the surprising slowdown in funds appropriated by the ~~the~~ Defense Department, by the failure of the Defense Department to obligate

funds that were committed to expenditure. Ford said that he felt it would have been politically as well as economically unwise for him to have gone on any big spending

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spree beyond the budget in 1976. He said that Vice-President Rockefeller to some extent urged increases in spending, although in most areas he was not for any

sizeable increase over what the budget called for. ~~He~~ Ford recalled one area as the energy independence authority, as ~~a~~ one place in which Rockefeller wanted a large

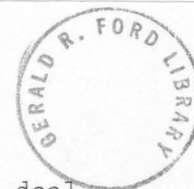
spending effort, but the effect of this spending would have not been immediate. It would not have had a tremendous impact on ~~xxxx~~ the budget. Ford recalled that he

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had approved Rockefeller's recommendation ~~to~~ for the energy independence authority and ~~he~~ had recommended it to Congress. He said that some of the people in the

White House did not favor ~~join in his support~~ for the energy independence authority. As far as he knew, they had not publicly tried to undercut it. He said they had

been good soldiers, ~~at~~ tried to least they had not undercut it in any serious way.



Ford said that he had not recommended a constitutional amendment to deal with the busing problem because he thought ~~the administration's approach to~~ ^(that dealing with the problem legislatively, as) ~~the~~ ^(proposed) ~~administration's~~ approach to ~~the~~ ~~problem~~ was a sound approach ~~to go about it in a legislative way.~~ He said ~~that~~ ^(but) he could not ~~not~~ recall that Senator Tower had favored a constitutional amendment, ~~that~~ ~~he~~ ~~had~~ thought ~~that~~ this was probably so. He said that he had called on the Department of Justice to come up with recommendations for legislation to deal with busing, and also ~~with~~ to pick a case in which the administration could intervene, ~~and~~ ^(take the) ~~to follow this~~ case to the Supreme Court. He said that it was his aim to give the court an opportunity to determine what could be done through the courts. He had given the attorney-general authority, Ford recalled, to pick the case that would make this test possible. The basic approach of the administration ^(Ford said,) was ~~to~~ that if busing were necessary, ~~not~~ ⁽ⁱⁿ⁾ to take ~~an~~ entire school system. ~~That if there were~~ ^(was) a problem of discrimination ~~that~~ this should be dealt with on a school by school basis, ~~not~~ ^(not through) a basis ~~of~~ dealing with an entire system. This, Ford said, ~~he felt~~ ^(he felt) ~~it~~ was a sound policy, and one which he would have pursued had he been elected to a full term. He said he had not given serious consideration to seeking a constitutional amendment because he did not think there was any ^(real) ~~any~~ possibility that such an amendment would get two-third votes in the Senate ^(and) ~~or~~ the House. Therefore for him to recommend ~~xxx~~ ^(substantive) a constitutional amendment would have been merely a gesture rather than a ~~substitute~~ proposal. He felt that the country had had enough of gestures. He felt that his solution was a more practical solution.

Ford conceded that the administration may have been slow gearing up to deal with the ~~(?)~~ ^(challenge) ~~of~~ Reagan. He said that they had always taken the Reagan threat seriously, ~~Certainly~~ ^(to be) they had taken it seriously after the defeat in North Carolina. They had recognized that they they were going to have a serious problem at the convention, and the only question was how was the most effective way to deal with it? He said they had gone about dealing with the Reagan problem in what had seemed ~~to be~~ at the time ~~the~~ most effective way. Ford said that he had to admit that he had felt it to be curious that his conservative credentials could be challenged within the

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Republican Party. He said he thought that Reagen^{probably} was more conservative than ~~he~~ he was ~~and~~ certainly Reagen's supporters were ~~much~~ more conservative than he. When Reagen's call for a ~~nine~~ ⁽¹⁹⁰⁾ billion cut in the federal budget, Ford said, had been a ~~real~~ ^(?) ~~Rockefeller~~ ^{Rockefeller}. I asked if Ford felt that keeping/on ~~the~~ the ticket might have helped him in the election? Ford said that this was speculative, but there were some areas in which Rockefeller might have helped ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ New England, New York, and Pennsylvania, for instance. On the other hand, Ford said, ~~that~~ Bob Dole had done a very fine job as a ~~K~~ candidate for Vice-President, ~~and~~ ^{this} was shown by the fact that the ticket had carried every state west of Mississippi except Texas and ~~Hawaii~~ ^{Hawaii}. This had shown that Dole did have appeal. I mentioned that some people felt that Ford himself had appeal in this area, and that it would have been wiser to get a running mate who had an appeal elsewhere ~~and~~ ^{and} Ford said, "No, he did not have the appeal that Dole ~~did~~ ^{had} in the agricultural areas."

(Real) (Faux Pas.)

Rockefeller

