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NYTimes **The Power Lines**

By William Safire

WASHINGTON—Poking a head into offices in and around the White House, this is what one finds about where the power lines lie:

Donald Rumsfeld has his hands firmly on the levers of power in the oval office, which—if the levers were connected to anything—would make him the second most powerful man in government.

Assistant Rumsfeld's native intelligence and instinct for survival have brought him to the top, and caused him to staff the White House and departments with appointees he trusts. He does not always win his battles.

For example, Mr. Rumsfeld arranged for the appointment of Phillip Areeda, a Harvard product and counsel to the President, to be director of the Domestic Council. After the President offered Mr. Areeda the job, Governor Rockefeller—who had been promised control of the Domestic Council—blew his stack, causing President Ford to reassign the post, giving it to James Cannon, a less qualified man.

Ordinarily, the White House "first among equals" does not mind key staff appointments going to mediocrities, because it means his primacy will not soon be challenged. But Mr. Rumsfeld is in a different position from that occupied by Sherman Adams, Marvin

ship out. If he shapes up, he will take pressure off his White House colleagues, since he is the perfect "black hat" to absorb press criticism.

A favorite target of Mr. Hartmann's scorn-for-background is Treasury Secretary William Simon, a financial Elijah condemning Keynesian idolatry who occupies a post that might be Mr. Rumsfeld's escape hatch. Mr. Simon lost a battle to Henry Kissinger on the Secretary of State's strange scheme to save oil producers from the ravages of competition; he most often finds himself aligned with Federal Reserve Chairman Arthur Burns and Ford Economic Adviser William Seidman. Surprisingly, Alan Greenspan, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, is edging away from these hardliners; Labor Secretary John Dunlap may become the mediator.

A power vacuum is the slot to "handle" the C.I.A. problem. The President had hoped Vice President Rockefeller could commission it to death; when that failed, Mr. Ford offered a post of C.I.A. overseer and shock absorber within the White House to Deputy Attorney General Lawrence Silberman, who evidently rhymed "C.I.A. Czar" with "Caesar" and thrice turned down that crown.

Nobody at the White House will admit that C.I.A. Director William Colby's resignation is wanted, but if he would like to put on a diving helmet and personally search for the other half of that Russian submarine for the next couple of years, his decision would be more than welcome.

Wearing that expression now is Henry Kissinger, who only three months ago was telling sycophants of plans to continue for at least five more years under Ford or Rockefeller, but who now passes the word that he is seeking a note of triumph for his exit. More out of habit than the old power-lust, he is wresting international economic policy away from Treasury, which troubles foreign finance ministers.

At the center of all this Little-League intrigue is the most balanced all-around human being in the oval office since Eisenhower. Shrewder than most people think, he does not fret about these power games since he realizes how much of his power has been usurped by the infant kings of the caucus. President Ford must relentlessly declare his intention to run to avert lame-duckiness, but he will really make that decision a year hence when he can properly assess the physical-emotional effect on his wife.

In all, we see the normal jockeying that goes on in a typical White House in transitional times, with average men displaying the admixture of ambition, jealousy and patriotism so often found at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

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Watson and H. R. Haldeman: He wants to move out into appointive and then elective office some day. "Rummy" would torpedo his own ambitions if he were to be considered irreplaceable, which is why he is pushing forward his capable assistant, Dick Cheney.

Poormouthing Mr. Rumsfeld and most other White House aides at the moment is Senior Writer and Political Adviser Robert Hartmann. When Mr. Ford was Vice President, Mr. Hartmann—a former Los Angeles reporter who was a favorite Nixon newsman—was the top Ford staffer, and hoped to remain close to the center.

To achieve this goal, Mr. Hartmann led the leakage against Al Haig, savaging him mercilessly and perhaps necessarily, but in so doing lessened himself in the eyes of the new President, who respects loyalty. As he has been eclipsed by the "WIN" button of his own design, Mr. Hartmann has grown more possessive, an example of a fairly capable man who is finding ways to make himself useless.

Mr. Hartmann sometimes drinks too much, which may worry the President, who knows how good a speech editor his loyal aide can be. Soon Mr. Hartmann will have to shape up or