

Rockefeller

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'Enough Is Enough'

We tend to regard our political leaders as having hides so thick that they are impervious to slings and arrows which would outrage normal men.

And so the moment Nelson Rockefeller delivered a letter which took him out of contention for the Vice Presidency in 1976 everybody assumed that he must have been fired. "When did Ford ask Rockefeller to write that letter?" It was the first question reporters asked themselves. A second thought occurred. Perhaps Rockefeller was planning a race for the top spot. Reporters asked Mr. Ford and Mr. Ford said no, that Rockefeller had promised to support a Ford campaign.

What didn't occur to anyone is probably the truth. Which is that Rockefeller was sick and tired of being chivied about by men of far lesser experience and knowledge; that he is, in short, like all the rest of us, quite capable of having his feelings hurt.

There is a little of the Hamlet in us all. When Rockefeller came out of retirement a year ago last August, wearing his sports jackets and pointing out that he was "totally relaxed," he really believed that he was performing a service to his country at a time of dangerous disunity and lack of faith. Is it surprising that he should have reflected often since then upon "the spurns that patient merit of the unworthy takes."

First, there was that long hearing before a Senate committee chaired by Sen. Howard Cannon (D-Nev.), who had promised Rockefeller that certain confidential details of his personal finances which he had turned over for the judgment of the committee would not be made public.

But as fast as Rockefeller gave the information to the committee, the committee did make them public, to the embarrassment of Rockefeller and his family and to the delight of the media which treated the leaks as though they were equivalent to the exposures of Watergate.

After that there was Donald Rumsfeld. Who was Rumsfeld—a jolly former congressman with no more administrative experience up to then than service as public relations director of a sham price-control organization under Richard Nixon—who was Rumsfeld to order Rockefeller around?

For that matter, who was Gerald Ford? A former congressman from Grand Rapids, Mich., with a lifelong penchant for the embarrassing gaffe. Who was he to tell Rockefeller what ought to be done about New York?

And there was Bill Simon, the former bond salesman. Did he really know more about energy and finance than a man who had studied both all his life?

Finally there was "Bo" Callaway. Talk about "the insolence of office." Here was a man with no greater claim to worth than the title of "campaign manager" telling Rockefeller he ought to step aside.

Rockefeller took the Vice Presidency

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because Gerald Ford said he needed him, wanted his experience and his advice. But while Rockefeller was working on his advice, Rumsfeld was making it clear that Mr. Ford didn't really want it, and Bill Simon was making it clear that he wanted Rockefeller's job, and "Bo" Callaway was making it clear that Rockefeller should go, and Ronald Reagan was making it clear that Rockefeller was the issue.

So Rockefeller decided to make it clear. He wrote the letter himself, as the careful reader may see. He wrote it in some haste and very likely in some anger.

If Gerald Ford should lose a few primaries and retire from the race, Rockefeller will have to decide whether to permit Ronald Reagan to take over the Republican Party.

But that is a decision for the future. For the present, the decision is clear. Enough. Rockefeller has obviously decided, is enough.