

Excerpts From Ford Interview

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Aug. 7—
Following are excerpts from
a transcript of an interview
today by The New York
Times with Vice President
Ford:

Q. Are you going to California? A. So far as I know.

Q. Are you going to Hawaii? A. So far as I know.

Q. You met with Mr. Haig this morning, you missed your Chowder and Marching breakfast.

A. Well, you know, the Chowder and Marching meets every week and somehow I did not get the word that I was supposed to be the guest of honor. I'm a member and it's always on my schedule and I either go or don't go, depending on what things have happened. Al Haig called and wanted to discuss with me the situation, so I just called up and told the people at Chowder and Marching that I was not coming. Then, I learned that I was supposed to be the guest of honor.

Q. Did you discuss transition with Mr. Haig? A. I'm not talking about any matters of that kind.

Q. The Detroit paper said this morning that you had made transition plans.

A. I have told nobody on my staff, from Bob Hartman on down, to make any contingency plans.

Q. Do you think the time has come that you should? A. I don't think the time has come for me to discuss it.

Laird on Rockefeller

Q. Mr. Laird, who all the time has been advising you to be quite loyal to the President, was quoted today in The Post as saying that Rockefeller should be your Vice President if you succeed to the Presidency.

A. I think it's premature for me to discuss any matter of that kind.

Q. In a recent interview I asked what this country needs to put itself back together again and you replied that there has to be some lightning strike. That there must be either a more grave crisis than we've had, that that always brings people together again. Are we in a graver crisis?

A. Obviously, in the last month, there have been some very significant changes. I don't want to identify this as a quote grave crisis. I think it depends.

Q. I asked at that same time if you were going to try to get this country sewed back together again, and you said that you sure would like to try, that we've got such a great country. Would you still like to try, and how?

A. (Chuckle) Well, I think it's premature for me to talk about such a matter.

Q. What is your vision for America? Where do we go from here?

A. I think at home, I mean, domestically, we've got 211 million wonderful people. I think most of them have been brought up with great feeling for the country. Most of them have been well-educated. Most of them really believe in the country. I think we have to turn this strong feeling, this capability, into

productive channels to provide, yes, material things, but to provide us all of the other blessings that I think they feel in their hearts and minds.

And I think there's a great reservoir of pent-up feeling that people think we can have more jobs and better jobs and better education. There's really a deep conviction that we can meet all these challenges and I think if we give some direction and some inspiration, this is the kind of vision I feel is right

for America in these next 10 years.

Q. Do you think it's possible under the present circumstances? There are 898 days left in Mr. Nixon's term. A. 898? Q. 898. A. A lot can be done in a hurry.

Q. Under what circumstances? A. (The Vice President did not reply.)

Q. A number of members of Congress have expressed the view, for instance, Jesse Helms . . . that they've been lied to. Do you feel that way, too? A. (Long pause) I don't think I ought to answer that.

Q. Who would you consider your close advisers, aside from your staff? [Melvin R.] Laird? [John W.] Byrnes? [Philip W.] Buchen? [John J.] Rhodes? A. People on the outside, I would say Buchen, Laird, Johnny Byrnes, Bryce Harlow.

Q. Bill Whyte? A. Bill would be an adviser. Now, if you start talking about people in the Congress, I don't want to differentiate at this point. They're all my friends. And hopefully will be my advisers.

Q. Just what did you mean by that? A. (Laugh) Oh, you get me carried away here. Well, they always HAVE been.

Q. If the President did leave office, would you consider a coalition Cabinet? A. I ought not to talk about that.

Q. One Cabinet member suggested the other day that if this did come to pass, the whole Cabinet with the exception of Kissinger should leave, to give you a completely free hand.

A. Again, this is much too sensitive to say anything at this point.

Q. Last October, when we flew back from Ohio, you said that even Presidents can be very human and they are. And I asked "Are you going to be a human President?" "You laughed and said, "I'm not planning to be President." Are you as convinced of that today as you appeared to be then?

A. (The Vice President laughed but did not reply.)

Q. Your words are coming back to haunt you? A. Those damn tapes. (Laughter). Well, uh, I think things have changed, but I still am not anticipating.

Working under Pressure

Q. In that same interview I asked if you felt capable of taking the heat of the kitchen. You replied: "I've always had a lot of experience in that. All my life I've had somewhat difficult circumstances, personally, politically and otherwise. I've never

felt that I couldn't meet the toughest problem." Do you now feel that you can meet what is probably your toughest problem? And is this your toughest problem?

A. This period right now, without speaking of anything that happens subsequently, is a very tough problem.

Q. Would you call it your toughest? A. Yes. But I'm talking about now, not what may or may not happen in the future.

Q. Do you feel up to it? A. I think I've conducted myself properly. At least I hope I have.

Q. You've spoken out to some extent on the economy. Apparently, a number of members of Congress, including the ones you spoke to yesterday, are very dissatisfied with the situation right now. What are your views on what should be done, could be done?

A. I had a very interesting meeting with five freshman Senators [yesterday]. I think there's merit to their idea of

an economic summit. [Pete V.] Domenici, [Lawton M.] Chiles, [Dewey F.] Bartlett Bennett Johnson, Sam Nunn.

Q. A very bipartisan crowd. A. But very smart and very deeply concerned fellows. Oh, [William E.] Hathaway [was there, too].

Q. You met with [John] Rhodes a little while ago. On the situation? A. No.

Legislation? A. No.

Q. You did not discuss impeachment? A. No.

Q. Am I covering the next President or am I not? A. I don't know.

Q. You really and truly do not know? A. I honestly don't.

Q. What is the President's emotional state now? A. I thought he looked surprisingly well yesterday, considering all the trauma he has gone through.

Q. Have you had any private conversations with him? A. (Shook his head)

Q. He has not asked you to stay behind, as he has before?

A. No, and I think understandably. But I have been kept abreast. I've had, as you know, several meetings with Al [Haig]. But just like that meeting with the Senate yesterday, the Senate Republicans, they asked me for a report on the Cabinet meeting, which I gave them in a very circumspect way, and when some of them started talking about certain things, I just excused myself. Being a party of interest, I just ought to leave. And I think perhaps the President would.

Q. Do you feel the work you've done since you've gone in has prepared you for talking over at this point, if it came to that?

A. No question about that. I think I've worked real hard. Aside from all the speeches, I've worked very hard. I've been to every department, met with Secretary and top staff of every department of Government, at their place, not at mine.

I have these regular meetings with [Maj. Gen. Brent] Scowcroft and Henry. I've had three or four or more, breakfast meetings with Jim Schlesinger at the Pentagon. I get daily briefing from C.I.A., the same briefing that the President has gotten, or gets. I meet weekly with Bill Timmons and his legislative people. I don't know what more I could have done.

Q. You've been briefed by [Admiral Noel] Gayler A. Gayler.

Other Briefings

Q. You've been to Los Alamos. Has all this been invaluable?

A. Very, Very, Very significant. I've been to SAC. I had the most detailed briefing at SAC. I had the most detailed, in depth briefing by Admiral [Thomas H.] Moorer, twice. I think I know as much if not more about the Government than any Vice President.

Q. So you would feel prepared, if it did come to that.

3. I think I'm well-prepared for any contingency.

Q. Have you started packing yet? A. (laughter)

Q. I mean, for the Vice President's home?

A. Well, Betty's working very hard on the plans and furniture for Massachusetts Avenue. She's going to make it real nice and keep within the Congressional budget. In fact, the things she's more or less arranged is going to save about \$70,000.

Q. When do you plan to move?

A. Over there? About the first of October.