

“Not a Bad Record”

Interview Date: August 23, 1977

Participant: Donald H. Rumsfeld

Participant Title: Secretary of Defense, Assistant to the President

SCENE SETTER: When Gerald Ford assumed the presidency in August 1974, he inherited a fractious political environment. Divisions increased when President Ford made the choice to pardon former president Nixon in September 1974. According to Ford chief of staff and defense secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, Ford had a solid record regarding national security, the economy, and domestic issues. President Ford was competitive in 1976 against Georgia governor Jimmy Carter and lost the presidential election only by a narrow margin.

Donald H. Rumsfeld: When I think about that big question you asked at the beginning, you know, what did you do well, what didn't you do so well—maybe it's a bias, but when you think he wasn't elected vice president, he wasn't elected President, blew a major fraction of the goodwill that existed with the pardon and with a major misstep as a result of the economic summit where everyone came in and it was agreed that something was right that was wrong in October of 1974—yet generally with the economy, pretty good; generally with foreign policy and national security, pretty good; generally with budget directions and domestic directions, not a bad record. And he came within a small margin of getting reelected, in terms of a public measurement, which is also not an irrelevancy.

End of excerpt.

CITATION: The Ford White House, First Session, April 23, 1977, Gerald Ford Oral History Symposium, Miller Center, University of Virginia.

URL: <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/ford-white-house-restoring-executive-office>