CARTER PRESIDENCY PROJECT

FINAL TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW WITH ANNE WEXLER WITH MICHAEL CHANIN, RICHARD NEUSTADT, AND JOHN RYOR

February 12-13, 1981
Charlottesville, Virginia

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Young: We are very pleased to inaugurate this morning what we plan to be an extensive series of visits at the Miller Center with former members of the Carter Presidential staff. Our project on the Carter Presidency has three main objectives. One is to help set the record straight on the Carter Presidency at a time when the media portrait of this Presidency still dominates public thinking and before more in-depth research can reach the archives to revise and refine that portrait. The second objective is to establish a dialogue that allows people who have been inside the office to educate those who study it from the outside, and to give the insiders a chance to learn what's on our minds as we view the office from the outside. Third, we would like to give the people who have worked in the White House an opportunity to share the research agenda of the people who will be studying the Carter Presidency in the future—historians, political scientists, and others.

A possible spin-off from some of these sessions would be to help build an "institutional memory" so that people coming into the White House in future years can have the benefit of learning something from the experiences of those who went before them and perhaps shorten their own learning period.

I would remind you about the ground rules and the uses of the information obtained in these sessions. The discussion is off-the-record, not for publication at this point or for reporting to others. We did this as a normal practice here to encourage candor and frank exchange. The session is being taped. The transcripts of these tapes will be given to Ms. Wexler, Mr. Chanin, and Mr. Ryor for their editing. Their edited transcripts will be returned to us and made available to researchers. We would also like to ask our three guests for permission to place those edited versions in the public domain. We have not just a scholarly purpose in these sessions, but also a desire to help in creating greater public understanding about the problems and the nature of the Presidency and Presidential leadership in our time.

I think it would be useful for each of our guests to begin this morning's session by talking about what their job was, how they were recruited, and what they were asked to do. Anne, it's all yours.

Wexler: Thank you, Jim. Let me thank you all for giving us this opportunity. As you can imagine one does not have a great deal of time to reflect on what one is doing when one is in the White House. Through these sessions, not only are you giving yourselves the opportunity to get some perspective on those years, but you are giving us the opportunity to do it as well. Generally, it is difficult in the hectic pace of the White House to ever look at what you are doing or what you

would do differently if you had the chance. So, this is the beginning of a process that we hope will broaden our own interpretation of what we did and help other people in the future.

Let me tell you a little bit about my own background and how I was recruited to the White House staff. I was the associate publisher of *Rolling Stone* magazine. Some of you may be familiar with it, and some of you may not. [*laughter*]

Young: Yes, we all know.

Wexler: My position with the magazine was Washington-based and I was responsible for the business operation of the magazine. I also handled that part of the magazine which addresses itself to political issues and I did a great deal of work with political writers.

Hamilton Jordan asked me to join the transition team about a week after the election in 1976. On the transition team I worked with a group of about ten people under Hamilton Jordan's supervision. The purpose of this group was to determine or to help the President choose the Cabinet Secretaries in each Cabinet agency. We arbitrarily picked the agencies on which we would work. I worked on the Commerce Department and became totally fascinated with it.

After the Inauguration I went to the Department of Commerce as Deputy Under Secretary, which was not much of a job in previous administrations. However, we built the position into a major kind of coordinating function for the regional operations of the Commerce Department and for offices within the Department. These offices had existed for many years without ever knowing what other agencies in the Department were doing. We brought them together and facilitated, I think, a far more efficient delivery of services.

About fourteen months into that operation, when we really had it humming along and nearly turned the corner in terms of making it work and having an impact, I received a call from Vice President [Walter] Mondale asking me to come to the White House. Mike Chanin was my deputy at the Commerce Department, and when the call came I looked at him and he looked at me and we both knew what it meant. So we decided to take a trip to California! On the trip we talked over our response to what we thought was going to be a call to come to the White House. We came back after about five days and I went to see the Vice President, and sure enough, he said to me, "We really need you to come over here and help us."

The problem for the White House was that they had developed a very ambitious and complex legislative agenda, yet there were no mechanisms to blend that agenda with all the processes and issues with outside support. Such a blend would have made it possible for the White House lobbyist and issue groups to go the Hill and demonstrate to the members of Congress that not only was the White House in favor of an issue but also that there were armies of people behind the White House lobbyist who could demonstrate strong public support for those issues.

It had become apparent during the fourteen-month period between the Inauguration and the time we came to the White House that there was a very specific need to build coalitions of public support behind issues. The White House had found that without those coalitions it was very hard to pass legislation. It was not enough to go to the Hill and say, "The President wants this bill."

Support had to be demonstrated and manifested in many ways. The Office of Public Liaison had been defined in the early days of the Carter administration as a much more "responsive" office than an "initiative" one. Interest groups based in Washington felt that they could come into the White House with their particular agendas and problems and the door was always open, but there was essentially no follow-up and there was no structure to the operation. So all the issues, problems, and complaints were pouring in, but very little was coming out. There was no attempt to organize the people who represented the interest groups around issues at the top of the President's agenda.

By the time we came to the White House it was May 1, 1978, nearly fifteen months into the administration. There were two major examples of success and failure in the White House that we had to look at that point. This is a very complicated issue and I could talk for hours without ever getting to an answer for a single question, but I'll try to keep my remarks brief.

The first example was the energy policy that the President introduced to the country in April of 1977, a policy that was, in effect, conceived in secret, presented to the country as a *fait accompli* without the consultation of interested parties, and handed to the Department of Energy for handling the legislation and implementation. The whole package sank like a stone out of sight. As you know, the Speaker put together an umbrella committee to pass the energy program in the House. It passed through the House in fairly rapid order without much outside lobbying because they pushed it through with what [Thomas W.] Ashley had on that task force. The bill went completely to pieces in the Senate, and it was the end of 1978 before we were finally able to pull it together and pass the Natural Gas Policy Act and a few other bills. That is another long story which we might get into later on, but the energy bill was one example of "how not to do it" right from start to finish. And, by the way, I can say that this style was never repeated in the four years of the Carter administration.

The other example that we saw almost immediately upon our arrival at the White House was the Panama Canal Treaty effort. The work behind the treaty was completed before we started and we used this case as a model for at least half of what we finally conceived to be our job in the White House. I say "half" because that is about what it was. The Panama Canal effort was a well-organized, well-conceived, and well-executed campaign which heavily relied on outreach efforts to organize people both in Washington and at the grassroots. Systematic outreach at these two levels paid off in terms of votes in the treaty ratification.

I say that this was half of what we did because we used the Panama Canal model repeatedly to form a system to deal with issues. But we also added extensive consultations and participation by interest groups on the policy development side. This was done on all the major priority issues of the President and before we ever got to legislate language. We tried, in very general terms, to be sure that people who were going to be helping us sell the President's program to the country and to the Congress were in on the take-off as well as the landing. It was pure self-interest on our part because we could not get people to work with us unless they felt they had a piece of the action. They consistently and enthusiastically helped us, although as you can imagine, the entire process of developing policy, drafting legislation, and working your way from the subcommittee, to the full-committee, to the floor, and finally to the conference was a constant process of negotiation, consultation, and in some cases, of real head-to-head screaming and yelling.

We also shifted strategies, changed alliances and so forth until we finally got what we wanted which never, of course, looked like what we had introduced. Nevertheless, we found ourselves in a position of being able to put together alliances and maintain those alliances, or the broad boundaries of those alliances, from the beginning to the end, and it helped us enormously. We were then able, when necessary, to target grassroots efforts in particular Congressional districts or states, or to call up twenty-five lobbyists to go to the Hill because we needed their help with a subcommittee or full committee. Quite often we needed to do things like that. Of course, it took us a good while to get sophisticated about it, but we learned as we went. We had an idea of what we wanted to do when we joined the White House staff. We did not try to do it all at once.

Let me just describe to you what I found when I got to the White House in May of 1978. We were about to do the same thing with the urban development program that we had done with the energy program without really knowing it. The White House, working very closely with a whole handful of agencies, had developed a very comprehensive and inclusive urban policy. This policy had been announced in March of 1978. A task force led by Pat [Patricia] Harris did the preliminary interest group consultation and the policy development. It was done extremely well and with a broad-based outreach effort.

The President's announced urban policy included fourteen separate pieces of legislation, and about one hundred administrative changes. We saw that problems of the energy program were about to be recreated. The whole issue shifted back to the agencies and the White House went on to other things. When I came, nothing was happening on the urban policy, so the first project that we undertook was organizing a very complex legislative and public strategy around those fourteen bills and one hundred administrative changes. With a very limited staff in the early days it was a very tough job, and we did it, first of all, by establishing a task force that included every agency that had a piece of that legislation, and then by breaking the task force down into subgroups and working groups. These groups would deal with each one of those pieces as they made their way through the legislative process.

As you know, I think we ended up passing eleven bills in that session. We had a working coalition behind each one of them and I had flowcharts, charts of all kinds, in my office where we constantly tracked. Well, it was a very difficult job; the meetings all day long with interest groups, while holding the agencies together. In spite of the demands, however, it became the model for us and we used it for virtually every issue that followed. This model was essentially a task force model. It usually included those agencies that were involved in developing the legislation, and they were equal partners with us in everything that we did. We found that this partnership was an absolute necessity.

We also included those staffs in the White House that had to be involved in every attempt to pass a piece of legislation. This group included the Public Liaison staff, the Domestic Policy staff, the Congressional Liaison staff, the Press staff, the Intergovernmental Relations staff, and very often OMB [Office of Management and Budget]. After our experience with urban policy we added to that group and we began to expand our staff work in civil service reform, energy legislation, hospital cost containment, and other major bills in which the President was involved.

I would like to add a final point. I suspect we will get to the details as we respond to your question, but generally, coalition building was the primary responsibility of our office. Our secondary responsibility was handling the case work by meeting with interest groups on their particular needs. So, in addition to trying to organize people, getting their policy input, and drawing them into coalitions on issues, we were also dealing with groups on an item-by-item basis. For example, we handled the steel group, who were very upset because the President lifted the trigger price mechanism. Similarly, when a Texas group worried about how the administration was negotiating a multi-fiber agreement, or a Black group did not like OMB's handling of a particular issue of social policy, or a gay group wanted us to change the literature in prisons, or whatever it happened to be, we had to deal with those pleas as well. We tried to keep them to a minimum, but I do not want to de-emphasize the fact that they were there.

Mike Chanin was responsible for keeping this very complex, and often disorganized, organization in shape, and he did it so superbly that he acquired the reputation of being the best organizer and the most extraordinary detail person, I think, on the White House staff. He was a lawyer in Atlanta and came to see me when I was at the transition office. We talked for five minutes and I offered him a job. I knew immediately that the chemistry was right and it has been right ever since. We were able to do a good many things together because our talents complemented one another's very well. Mike will probably have a totally different perspective on the nuts and bolts of the everyday operation as well as the complexities of our operation.

John Ryor is a former president of the National Education Association, and as such has many, many talents. Among the most superb, I think, are his rhetorical skills and his great organizing skills. John joined our staff in late October 1979. John was responsible, primarily responsible, for revolutionizing the outreach efforts on the budget process, which literally have changed the way the country and interest groups, especially, view the federal budget. This is one reason why I wanted him to attend this session. Because of the way John organized the outreach efforts on the budget in the fall of each year we were able, by the time the budget was announced, to defuse most of the yelling and screaming that normally follows such an announcement.

There were no questions about people's expectations about the budget because they had been informed. They had been in the White House time after time after time to establish not only their priorities, but to understand what ours were. They may not have liked all the decisions, but they were certainly not surprised by them. As I said, it was a major shift in the way the budget was handled, at least in the Carter administration, and I think it will be a long-standing change. It enabled people to take part in the discussions, on the one hand, but not to be surprised, on the other. I know we'll get into those issued as we go along.

When we left the White House we presented the President with a computer tape containing approximately 39,000 names of people with whom we had consulted on regular basis. That will give you some idea of the dimensions of our task. Of course, those names represent all kinds of interest groups, small or large, Washington-based and grassroots. So, we did have a big network by the time we left, and I will tell you that our brains were thoroughly picked by the incoming administration. Apparently, they heard enough from the lobbyists around town about the importance of the Public Liaison office, and they are trying, at least I think, to structure it pretty much as we have done. One major difference is that we started with a staff of eight and they have

begun with a staff of eighteen. This finally gives the office the kind of recognition that I think that it truly deserves. Let me stop at this point and introduce Mike and John and we'll go from there. Okay?

Young: Fine.

Chanin: Let me talk about two things. One is my background and how I came into this thing and the second is our work and our operation within the White House. I will try to describe a typical day and list the kinds of people and meetings we were involved with on a regular basis. Anne was correct. I was involved in state and local politics in Georgia and Atlanta and I was not that involved in the 1976 Carter campaign. Since I had just returned from managing a local campaign, my law partners felt it would be a good idea if I spent some time earning money rather than just running political campaigns. I came to Washington very innocently. My clients were putting on a number of parties during Inauguration and I felt that this was a good opportunity for a young lawyer to meet people who might become clients.

Anne Wexler is very persuasive. To give you an idea of how Anne works (and it is something we learned to do at the White House later on) by the day after she had offered me the job, I could not go to a cocktail party or a reception running into somebody saying, "Are you going to take that job with Anne Wexler? You ought to take it. You're crazy if you don't." It was so bad that I stayed for the swearing-in and caught the next plane out of town. But it didn't stop there. She seemed to know everybody in Atlanta and organized a coalition there as well.

Wexler: The third part of the model!

Chanin: Yes. How to recruit staff; that's a very important part of it. She did that to a couple of other people also and they ended up with her at the White House. I'll cover the White House day, and I'll do it from a deputy's perspective because we really ran the place. That's a joke! You take me so seriously.

Wexler: I bet you thought the President did.

Chanin: Yes. Over the last eighteen to twenty-four months the day began at 7:45 in the morning for the deputy. We met in the Roosevelt Room and it usually was a meeting of more than just the deputies. Most of the Congressional Liaison staff were there, and various members from other White House offices also attended. Those meetings lasted between thirty and forty-five minutes with an agenda composed of what was going on at the White House that day, what was coming up during the week ahead (if it was Monday), and Fridays often looking a little further ahead. During the Friday meetings we would attempt to identify where decisions had to be made, making sure that everybody knew that major events were coming up, what the various staff people needed to be ready for. A major memo, listing what would be coming through and need quick action would be drawn up. (You ought to be aware that it's coming tomorrow and you might as well go get started on what you're going to have to say on it. These kinds of things.) The 7:30 meeting was usually followed by a meeting of the senior staff at approximately 8:30, which refined the agenda that we had put together earlier in the deputies' meeting. Usually the senior staff meeting expanded the

agenda with items that members of the senior staff wanted to bring to the attention of the rest of the senior staff.

I normally met with the rest of Anne's staff around 9:00, although we sometimes met during the senior staff meeting. Almost every day we went through the day's agenda as well as the agenda for the next two days, which is sometimes all the lead time you can get at the White House. Occasionally, if there were any major events involving our group and the President, we would stretch this planning period to a week. We would carefully consider what the logistics were, who the necessary people were, what we needed to do in preparation, and get some sense about what other things were going on in the White House, particularly, what things Anne needed to know. Anne and I usually tried to catch some time in the morning between the deputies' meeting and the senior staff to talk about items on her mind for her staff. That usually led to some discussion between Anne and myself on broader topics. At 10:00 Anne met with the President along with Frank Moore, Jack Watson, or Hamilton Jordan, Stu Eizenstat, and some others. The agenda for this meeting was the issues coming out of the 9 A.M. senior staff meeting as well as other issues that they wanted to raise with the President but did not raise in the senior staff meeting. It also provided the President with the opportunity to discuss things that were important to him. For the deputies this time was a chance to get some work done in the office or to meet individually with various members of our own staff or other staffs on specific problems.

By 10:30 or 10:45 or so most of us were usually into one or more meetings having the following characteristics. First, meetings of task forces on specific issues. Task forces were usually made up of the offices which Anne mentioned—Congressional Liaison, National Security Council or Domestic Policy staff, OMB, the Chief Economist, the Media office, the Press office, the Chief of Staff's office, Al McDonald's or Staff Director's office, and the Vice President's office. (On a side note, and we can get into this some more later because it is an important thing to understand about the Carter Presidency, there was virtually little to distinguish the Vice President's staff and the President's staff. The people were interchangeable at the working level, at least from my point of view. Of course, this did not include the people who immediately staff the Vice President.)

The second type of meetings concerned particular issues and involved sessions with interest groups or with individual leaders of interest groups. These meetings were more discussion-oriented than briefings. We would usually establish our views on the issue itself, the needed political strategy, and the problems of getting the policy enacted, whether it was a policy struggle internal to the executive branch or it was a legislative initiative on the Hill. These interest group meetings were the follow-up to having started out by getting people involved in the issue in the first place.

There were other kinds of meetings as well. Special groups coming to the White House might require the traditional kind of tour, where you might get up there and tell them about the White House and what is done there.

Wexler: Don't forget the East Room.

Chanin: Oh yes. A fourth type of meeting included very large sessions in the East Room with the President speaking on a particular issue. At the deputy level this required you to watch the logistics. We had an excellent bunch of people to handle this area on our staff. As you know the mesh of

logistics with politics happens very quickly. So-and-So has shown up, should they be put down front, should the President be told, should he mention them? Such sensitive problems became routine occurrence for us when "meetings with the President" happened five times a day. But someone's got to make a decision and you've got to make it on the spot. You must sort out when dealing with the politics of an issue or with the personality of an individual who's fairly prominent and powerful. With several such people in the room these protocol problems become very complicated!

Finally, at the end of the day there was a meeting for a variety of topics ranging from the anti-inflation program to budget issues and so on. This meeting included the group of deputies and began at 5:30 or 6:00 P.M. It was 6:30 or so before you finally wandered back to your office and found out what had happened during the day, and tried to return some phone calls. The typical day ended somewhere between 8:00 or 8:30, after final conversations with people stationed in the West Wing.

Holding aside the organizational structure, much of your effectiveness depended on brief interchanges with various members of the senior staff and their deputies. Often, as we passed in the hall, I would say, "Hey, we've got this problem. What should we do about it?" "Okay, fine," and off you went to do it. Organizational structures were very important for the overall management of the White House, but the real operations at the White House, whether it involved Anne, Stu Eizenstat, or anybody else, very much depended upon this ability to walk into each other's office and communicate quickly. In spite of the formal meetings I have described—the senior staff meetings, the deputies' meetings, the 10:00 meeting with the President, Cabinet meetings, whatever meetings—the really important issues found their resolution in that collegial give-and-take process. Formal meetings seemed less important on most issues, although perhaps budget decisions and certain foreign policy decisions would be an exception to this rule.

In addition to this regular schedule of meetings—and this should put our operation into perspective in terms of the rest of the White House—we also worked with individual interest groups by bringing them into the policy-making process early and involving them in the legislative drafting and even negotiating the legislation, if necessary. For example, in the early stages of the urban policy package we exposed community leaders around the country to the issue, and let them ask him questions. This give-and-take was part of his concept of an open White House, and for legislative purposes it proved to be very important. If you correlated the community leaders you chose with a very good assessment of what your strengths and needs were on the Hill, you could do very well.

We did this correlation in a number of ways. Obviously, the President could raise a subject in a town hall meeting, but that was not a major part of our approach. We placed great emphasis on the East Room meetings with leaders from around the country. Here they would receive a solid presentation from the White House staff or an important senior official. They might be briefed on SALT [Strategic Arms Limitations Talks] by Secretary Vance or Secretary Brown or Brzezinski or a combination of secretaries. For economic matters they might hear Charles Schultz, Stu Eizenstat, or Secretary Miller. The President would often follow, make a brief presentation, and answer their questions. Often, the press would be invited, especially the local press from the same communities as some of the invited local leader. This resulted, of course, in a local story of a local leader at the

White House and a "what do you think?" segment. We didn't always select people that we knew were going to be positive in their response. They were picked in a variety of ways. People around the country whom we knew frequently recommended names. Congressmen and Senators wanted to have their constituents on the invitation list, particularly when the Representative himself was undecided or even leaning against our position. The wanted their constituents to understand an issue because it gave them room to maneuver, and make their decisions free of some pressures.

I can go on about the East Room operation: we did it in the Cabinet Room with smaller groups; and we did it in the Roosevelt Room with the President or with the Vice President. It was not a simple thing to put together, and it meant a lot of teamwork at the White House. First, the local press required very careful work by the White House Press office. Second, the White House social secretary became involved so that the presentation was meaningful, and the people were not there too long to be bored but they were there long enough to feel like they were really involved. These groups were not brought in and herded out; they had a very meaningful experience. Third, the agenda substance of the presentations meant careful coordination with relevant policy offices and relevant agencies and our office. To develop a presentation that people could listen to, wasn't boring and got to the point, and that they understood was a time-consuming and complicated task. On the preparation of materials, we followed a rule that any politician does, I think. If you meet somebody in a campaign, don't let them walk away without your fan, your card, your nail file, or something in their hand to remind them that they ought to go vote for you. Our approach was the same. We wanted them to walk away with something that they could keep, something that could remind them about the issue and inform them, something that went into more detail than could be done in the East Room. But this meant very careful writing and very careful coordination between the speechwriters, the Media office (which did some of the writing), the substantive people, and the people in the agencies who had the experts for detailed materials that you might need. We needed careful coordination with the social secretary, with the Office of Administration, and with the gate guards. The last thing you need is a person who has been invited to the White House and is kept at the gate for half an hour, particularly if you want to convince him that SALT II is in the interest of our national security and he's from an area that happens to be military oriented. So, that all meant very careful interaction in the White House. Finally, there was the work with the President's scheduling office as to how and when he would come, and who would cover his briefing about what had been said by Harold Brown, or Charles Duncan, or Stu Eizenstat, before the President walked into the room. (I think I failed to mention that category of meeting earlier.)

Wexler: I'm going to pass around for you a chart of a typical week for our staff. It should give you some idea of the diversity of the things that we did. Basically this was a list that was put out for us only—the Office of Public Liaison and our staff—every morning and it changed every day as events were added. But it gave everybody on the staff a picture of what it was that we needed to do in the course of the day or week. Usually at the end of the time period it looked even fuller than what you see here. At the end of each week the President received a copy of the weekly report. I brought a copy with me for you. This report gave him a sense of the things that had been done both with and without his participation in the course of any given week. I'm sorry, Mike, I didn't mean to interrupt.

Chanin: No, that's quite all right.

Wexler: There is one other point I would like to offer about what Mike Chanin has said so you can get a sense of the complexity of what we were doing. There was nothing random about the development of those invitation lists, either small or large, either East Room size or Family Theater size or Roosevelt Room or room 415 in the Executive Office Building. Those lists were most carefully constructed. Hours were spent to ensure that the names were right and complete. It takes that kind of attention to detail and persistence to be sure that you've got the right people in the White House on a particular issue.

The only time that we did not select and carefully review the names on those lists was when we went to members of the Senate and the House for their input. Sometimes we would say to a Congressman, "We know that you have a problem with this and we know that you're having trouble trying to make up your mind whether you want to vote for it or not. We are going to have a briefing in the East Room with the President and Secretary So-and-So. Would you like to give us a list of people in your district whom you think would benefit from coming to the White House? It might make it easier for you to make up your mind."

And they, of course, were grateful for the opportunity to get the credit for having invited community leaders from their districts to the White House. They always provided lists, and later those people helped change votes for us because once we got them there we did a pretty good job on them. We did change many votes as a result, but we also got into trouble on several occasions. One time I needed a vote from Jim Jeffords, who was a Congressman from Vermont, but I can't remember now what the issue was. We called him and said, "Give us a list of people you'd like us to invite to the White House for a briefing."

Well, he included the names of the entire Vermont Republican hierarchy! There were stories in every newspaper in Vermont about all the Republican folks who were coming to the White House. Of course, Jody [Powell] was ready to kill us all and especially me because we had made him look bad by inviting Republicans into the White House. But this is a topic we can get into later; the partisanship and politics involved in building coalitions on issues that required both Republican and Democratic votes.

This area really provides an interesting contrast to some of the other activities at the White House and to some of the more routine functions of our own office. You will notice on the weekly calendar that there is a lunch scheduled with Mike Chanin and the head of the National Taxpayers League. He was not exactly someone philosophically in agreement with everything that Jimmy Carter did, but this kind of thing was helpful to us in sustaining the veto on water projects legislation. He helped us tremendously on our anti-inflation program. So, one of the things that we also tried to stress, both to our staff and to the other White House staffs, was that you needed to have the capacity to work with virtually every interest group. Even people who fought you very strongly on one issue could become your allies on the next. It was terribly important not to burn bridges and to be the kind of operation that was always open to both the ideas and the concerns of everyone. Because we knew full well that our opposition on one issue might be our ally on the next.

Chanin: I would like to return to an earlier point. I told you how the typical day evolved over the last year and a half or so, and since some of you are studying the style of the President, I think it

would be relevant to note that when we first came to the White House the only regular meeting among all the staffs was a deputies' meeting held every morning. When Hamilton Jordan became Chief of Staff he instituted daily staff meetings, but he didn't become Chief of Staff until July 1979.

Wexler: Actually, they had been held intermittently before then, usually twice or three times per week. Sometimes a week would pass without a senior staff meeting. When I first came to the White House I went to the deputies' meeting regularly for nine months, and I think I was the only member of the senior staff who did. I felt that it was the only way I could get everything I needed to know to do my job effectively. Even Frank Moore did not go to the deputies' meeting, although they were attended by and held for his Congressional Liaison staff. Really, I could not have done my job in the White House if I did not attend those deputies' meetings every day, at least until the senior staff meetings were instituted.

Chanin: Let me just briefly outline the task force arrangement and then I will let John Ryor go into a more detailed explanation of them. John participated fully on a number of task forces, whereas I, unfortunately, was the guy who went occasionally went and kibitzed. We organized task forces at the White House around Presidential priorities. There were two processes utilized in developing these Presidential priorities. In the early months of the administration, at least as the press reported and as we saw it from our vantage point in the Commerce Department, the administration put a bowl of spaghetti on the Hill filled with much more than anybody could digest in a short time. The bowl was filled with anything that we felt needed to be done and hadn't been done for the last eight years, or longer in some cases. In the first year of the administration there was no sense of priority, other than perhaps the energy package and the Panama Canal Treaty, coming from the White House or from the President. This was recognized by insiders and outsiders before we joined the White House staff in the fall of 1978. There began a process, under the Vice President's leadership, of explicitly identifying what our legislative priorities would be for next year. This task was done by a group of deputy staff members who met several times as the legislative session was ending and analyzed just what we had accomplished. Almost every office that I've mentioned—the Media office, Policy staff, the National Security Council, the Vice-President, et cetera—had representatives at those meetings. Eventually, a list for the President's approval was developed wherein certain issues were categorized as very important to the President and where he would be spending a lot of his time. We tried to limit that category to central issues. Other issues, where the President personally would be involved in a small way but the White House would be significantly involved, received a lower priority. Some issues that should have been high priority, in our opinion, but looked as though they would not move very far that year (and we did not want to keep pushing them at that point), became agency-led issues. When it became necessary for parts of the White House or the President to intervene we would become involved in those issues as well.

Light: Did this process begin in the fall of 1977 or 1978?

Chanin: I don't know if they did it in the fall of 1977 because we were still at Commerce. Maybe Anne can tell you.

Wexler: I don't know if they did it before we got there, but I have a sense that they did not. To my knowledge it was done for the first time when we arrived.

Chanin: At the same time we were doing a similar kind of thing with the budget process. We tried to identify the issues and our priorities as well as to give interest groups an opportunity to be heard. The budget was an issue on the priority issues list, but it was so important in itself that it needed a special task force and an outreach program.

The priorities list thus became an agenda for our office in the beginning of the year. Obviously things changed during the year—vetoes came up, new issues arose, policies we desired but thought unachievable suddenly came alive, and national conditions changed. Issues fluctuated in importance and they would at times require the President's attention, or the White House's leadership, or further coordination with the relevant agencies. We built around issues as they arose, and as they began to move through the Congress and became more salient. We used task forces for this. They differed in degree; some were more formal than others. Some were convened with regular meeting times, daily or weekly. Other groups were more informal and met sporadically with only a limited number of people involved. The lifespan of a task force varied from a week or so to two years.

Wexler: The Civil Service task force met every day for two years!

Chanin: The makeup of the task force included at least two people from the relevant agencies, the Assistant Secretary who was substantively responsible and the Congressional Liaison person. Usually, but not always, the lead press person from the agency was also included. There were several reasons for the inclusion of those three people. First, it gave substantive backup to the Domestic Policy staff and enabled the Domestic Policy staff to generate the data they needed. Second, the press person's attendance was important because for every department and every broad area of issues there is a specialized press and somehow they must be tied into the mainstream. Third, the Congressional Liaison person, who was responsible for the daily burden of the agency's relations with Congress, had to know where we stood and where we were going. Often, the White House Congressional Liaison staff was heavily involved in other issues, particularly when a Congressional vote was at hand, so much of the day-in-and-day-out routine was left to these agency people. If a particular issue was hot and the White House staff was tied down, then someone from the agency was designated as the full-time initiator of the legislation. Obviously, this worked well because the agency's Congressional Liaison staff knew the membership and the staffs of the jurisdictional committees in Congress as well as anybody.

Task forces also included several people from the White House. There was a lead person from the Congressional Liaison office as well as a person from the Media Liaison office. (We've been saying "Press office," but the group that really worked on these issues was the White House Media Liaison office. It should not be confused with the White House Press office, although it is part of it.) The function of the Media Liaison was to deal with the press around the country and prepare "media backgrounders," which were simplified fact sheets for the press's use. It also did radio shows and helped place speakers on talk shows and those kinds of things.

Young: The Office of Media Liaison was established at what point?

Chanin: It existed all the way through.

Wexler: Right, but it became important when we got to the White House and started to use it. It was lying fallow before them.

Young: I remember seeing it written up in the *New York Times* at mid-term in the Carter administration.

Chanin: Pat Bario became deputy press secretary at that time. She had been an associate press secretary responsible for this area and they consolidated things after two years. This is an area I would like to pursue, but I should finish the overview of the task forces first. Several other officials in these groups were the Domestic Policy staff, the associate director responsible for the particular substantive area, or the equivalent person from the National Security Council. If the issue happened to be in foreign policy and under consideration by the National Security Council, then a Congressional person also attended and participated as a member of the National Security Council staff. Eventually, when Al McDonald's office was created, there was an additional person from his staff, particularly, as Al took on more and more of the responsibilities of the day-to-day scheduling. He was concerned with questions like, "How are we doing on that thing; what are the next steps of it?" The Chief of Staff's office, when he came, was fully involved here too. The Intergovernmental Relations office participated when the issue concerned mayors and Governors and other local officials, or whenever issues dealt with the other side of their responsibilities, the Cabinet. The Cabinet Secretary's responsibility was not just calling Cabinet meetings, but also the handling of grants, of interagency coordination, and of state and local governments.

Wexler: The Intergovernmental Office was also being used whenever we would have a big blitz on an issue to get Cabinet Secretaries on the road for a big two-week media campaign. We used Jack Watson's office to coordinate the Cabinet Secretaries' schedules during those campaigns. One thing we ought to discuss later is how we handled a big announcement after the policy had been decided. Sometimes there was as much as a week or two of intensive interest group work that preceded a major policy announcement, including enormous educational efforts with big media clips and lots of briefings.

Chanin: The task force's responsibility was to design that kind of program: to design the media strategy that was necessary; to look ahead at the Congressional strategy for the legislative program and to identify what was necessary to be successful; and to manage that program from start to finish. That is essentially what the task forces did in an overall sense.

Wayne: Are these what were called the PRM [Policy Review Memorandum] task forces?

Wexler: No.

Wayne: That was a different set entirely?

Wexler: The PRM task forces were for the development of Policy Review Memorandums and they were done both in domestic and foreign policy. We had nothing to do with those task forces. Our concern was operational in the sense that we organized and coordinated an effort to finally produce a legislative policy result.

Chanin: If you look at any Presidency you might see this pattern, but it was almost our third year, or the President's third year, before our staff organization matched those PRM task forces' level of coordination. Although the last year and a half to two years was a fairly organized period at the White House, routine essentially grew out of experience of the first couple of years. The task force process was, to a great degree, one of the driving forces behind the coordination that eventually developed. Of course, the evolution of the decision process also resulted from the interaction and changes of the senior staff members, of the deputies and people in the West Wing, and from the nice organizational charts that were drawn for the White House.

Wayne: Who chaired these task forces? Did your office?

Chanin: No, various people from the White House did—the Congressional Liaison person in some cases, a substantive person in some cases, a senior staff member on very important matters, or deputies on less important issues. The lead was given to those who had the time to undertake the job and who had the ability and an interest in the substantive area and the politics. The person's experience and ability had to relate to the subject.

Ryor: [redacted]

Wexler: In the beginning Hamilton Jordan felt that it would be useful for different members of the senior staff to chair task forces simply because it would give them broader experience and a feel for the way these things worked. The result was that some task forces were chaired much better than others. The people who had a talent for it did a very good job, while people who didn't sometimes fell down on the organizing and follow-up that was necessary. The follow-through is what really makes these things go, by not letting anything fall through the cracks. Some people did this type of thing well, and the work was given to them.

During the last nine months of the administration, Al McDonald and I did most of it. By that point other people had been filtered out of the process. Al and I had co-chaired the MTN [Multi-lateral Trade Negotiations] tests much earlier in the administration, and in spite of its complexity, it was the most successful one in terms of the vote results. The task force process was a mixed bag from the beginning because of the different personalities of people who chair them. It also made a difference if a lower-level official chaired a task force, which happened sometimes because people were so busy. These task forces didn't get the attention from the agencies that a task force chaired by a senior person could get. Senior members could demand that everybody come to a meeting and get the work done. So, the evolution and administration of a task force in the White House is a story in itself.

Chanin: I would like to close on two points. One was made at the very outset of the meeting about the learning curve in the White House. There is indeed a learning curve. Every President seems to have said, "There's no way to learn to be President except by doing it." I think this can also be said of the White House staff, given the continually changing nature of the relationship of the President to the Hill, to the bureaucracy, and to the public. From our view this was particularly true of the

White House relationship with the interest groups in Washington, who may or may not reflect the mind of the public but who are generally the voices most heard in matters on the Hill (unless they're true national issues.) Things changed while we were there, and things are changing now. All those relationships change constantly, and it means that you only get to the level of, as Anne says, "really clicking along," by experiencing it yourself and doing it. My point, then, is that organizational charts, management charts are good because you can say that this is what everybody's supposed to be doing. But the pace of the Presidency really doesn't allow itself, on big decisions, to flow through any chart. If you flow through a chart on important decisions you'd never make them in time because you would become so bogged down with involvements that you would have no time to act outside.

Wexler: Let me say one thing before John begins. He has a unique perspective about this area because initially he was with an interest group, and then he managed interest groups for us. So he came to us more than halfway through the whole experience and was able to see it from both sides, which makes this perspective unique and more interesting than our own. We were always on the inside trying to sort out this whole thing.

Ryor: [redacted]

[redacted]

Wexler: Let me just make two other comments and then we'll take your questions. Quite simply, they were based on self-interest. You could, if you troubled yourself to do it, take an issue and define it in terms of how many interests are affected and in how many different walks of life and areas of interest. You could find extensive lists of people who would be favorably impacted by a particular legislative issue. We always tried to define our interest group coalitions on the basis of how much we could sell them on our plan by demonstrating that what we were doing would help them individually. In many cases we were very successful because they were very eclectic groups, but we enhanced their compatibility by defining self-interests. It was not the only way you could get people to work for an issue. Sometimes you could get them to work because it was in the national interest, but for the most part, they worked because they could help their own cause on whatever the issue happened to be.

Ryor: [redacted]

Wexler: That's right. We were very creative in trying to define that self-interest and it was a lot of fun at the time. We ended with religious groups and multi-national corporations working the Senate together on foreign aid. These were groups who had never spoken to each other before. Steel companies and environmentalists sometimes worked together on steel issues. These were very interesting combinations, but you can do it if you apply yourself and think about it a good deal.

Jones: Anne, as you were describing this coalition-building process, it struck me that in addition to building coalitions from existing interest groups, you thought it was important to create interests on certain issues as well. The Panama Canal Treaty seemed to be an example of the latter, while the hospital cost containment issue was a case where interests already existed. Is that a valid distinction?

Wexler: Yes, we sometimes piggybacked on, or added to existing coalitions of interest groups. Hospital cost containment provides a good example because there were many health interest groups lobbying Washington and we merely had to assemble them. They were already working together on many other issues, such as agriculture issues, food issues, or children's issues. We piggybacked on existing coalitions in labor issues too. On the other hand, there were occasions when we created interests. We did not work on the ratification of the Panama Canal Treaty, but we worked very hard on the implementing legislation, which almost lost until we established a stronger base in the House.

Mike and I did that with people on the outside. We noodled out everybody who had some interest in keeping the Canal open—people in the oil business, people in the grain business, port cities that would be impacted, all the Gulf Coast cities, and anyone who did business in Latin America. We

made an alliance with the Council of the Americas, which was a very large organization of multinational corporations and really a Republican-oriented interest. They proved to be extremely important in lobbying for that implementing legislation because it meant dollars and cents to them. Everybody that we could identify as having an interest in good relationships with Latin America was contacted. As an ideological coalition we sought a diversity of groups from the liberal church groups to the Council of the Americas. The grain people, the oil people, and everybody else in between. So, sometimes we created interests, and sometimes they already existed and we simply expanded them.

Jones: Can you give us other examples of the creation of these interests?

Wexler: We handled many issues where there was virtually no radical constituency, like Presidential vetoes. The defense authorization veto over the nuclear carrier issue and the water projects veto were cases where we built a coalition to sustain those two vetoes. In the first case we were able to build a sound coalition very quickly. The defense authorization veto coalition was based on the issue of inflation, and we were able to bring together a very large group of people who were willing to back the President's inflation-fighting position. On the water projects issue, the President didn't veto that bill until mid-October, and we started working on the first of August with a task force. It was not highly publicized in any sense, but we met every day from August 1st until the 15th of October and built a coalition from scratch for the water projects. So, there were numbers of times when we created interests. Aside from the existing base of disarmament groups, SALT was a similar issue. We expanded SALT's base enormously through our coalition-building efforts and finished with people like (and I hesitate to use his name) Justin Dart actively supporting us financially and otherwise. "Americans for SALT" became the umbrella organization for these supporters.

Chanin: If I could expand upon what Anne has said. The implementing legislation of the Panama Canal Treaty required approval by the House, which meant essentially a rehashing of the debate that occurred in the Senate. Since the House had not considered the Treaty, we had to start the process over again. We had to educate, build a set of constituents, and consider these new perspectives. We were successful because the outreach effort moved far down the political hierarchy. At the beginning one state delegation was estimated to be 70 percent against us. Over time we developed an awareness that the maritime people had an interest in the Treaty, but we had not really recognized their political potential at that point. Eventually we were able to maximize the role of port authority officials supporting the legislation. As you know, these authorities differ in political structure, but in this particular state the person who ran the port authority of the state's largest port was one heck of a powerhouse in state politics. We provided him with a little explanation of what closing the Panama Canal meant to that port, and the vote tally in that state delegation changed very quickly.

A second case in the Panama Canal legislation effort involved a particular Congressman who was against us. A key financial supporter of this Congressman, as we discovered, managed a subsidiary of a national corporation which owned two plants in the Panama Canal Zone and could not afford its destruction. The business leader learned from his parent company of his company's vested interest in passing the implementing legislation, and the Congressman was soon informed and changed his vote.

Wexler: As you can see it gets quite detailed!

Chanin: And it is a typical example of our attempts to broaden perspectives on what a group's real interests were. Initially, the gut reaction might be "it's a giveaway," but when you see the other perspectives on the issue you may see things quite differently. American business in the Panama Canal Zone is very much interested in the level and quality of our relations with Panama and many jobs in the U.S. are affected.

Wexler: Another good example is the draft registration coalition, which John built from scratch.

Ryor: [redacted]

Wayne: There has been no mention of implementation or management once the legislation was complete. Should we assume that once the President's policy was established and passed through Congress, your involvement ended?

Wexler: Yes. The last contribution we made on a particular piece of legislation was managing the bill signing. After that we did two things. One was to make a list of outside people who had worked the hardest on the bill and who then received red-lined copies of the bill and signing pens. If their work involved a major piece of legislation, we would take a picture of the bill signing, sometimes as many as 150 or 200 copies, and mail it to the lobbyists or coalition members who had been the major players. We might also send them a letter from the President saying, "Here is a picture of the bill signing. Thanks very much for your help," with a little more eloquence, of course. The pictures were often inscribed by the calligraphers and then signed by the President.

So we always found a way of acknowledging the work of outside groups on a piece of legislation, but after the President's approval it went to the agency for the regulation writing or implementation. We never had a major role in this area unless there was an important regulation that had to be sold to the country, but this was a rare occurrence. A good example would have been the superfund legislation. Once the Executive order was signed, we probably would have been involved in its implementation. However, since the President did not win the election, we did not pursue it.

Wayne: The only mention of the President in your discussions thus far was when you brought him into the East Room and when he was signing a bill. In what other ways did you use him? How involved was he in the intricacies of your operation from the initial Vice President's meeting to establish the priorities, to the task forces, and to the coalition-building efforts?

Wexler: It would be a misconception to think that the President's participation on an issue, from our perspective, was limited to the East Room briefings and the final signing ceremony. He

participated in all kinds of meetings, and as a matter of fact, in terms of the White House staff, my office has more of the President's time than any other staff office in the White House. He worked with us in small meetings, in big meetings, at strategy sessions at different levels, and in all stages of the process. In addition to discussing the issues of the day during the ten o'clock meeting with the President, we met at times throughout the day to talk about strategy on specific issues, especially the Panama, SALT, energy, and economic issues. He participated, of course, very actively in major strategy decisions and finally made them all. He always asked when there was a major decision to be made.

Let me give an example of a very controversial issue, reorganization. Basically, there were two controversial items in the reorganization issue: the economic development reorganization and the natural resources reorganization. At the time, the President was being pressed to make a decision on these two very important questions, and he wanted to be very informed as to what the interest group reactions were on the various options. Our office gave him reports on what the interest groups were thinking of on these issues and they proved to be a very important part of his decision-making. He knew what the interest groups were thinking and saying at every stage of the process because of the written reports he received, and he would often comment on those reports. Many of his decisions were based on two factors: Congressional input and interest groups.

Chanin: I might add that he met almost regularly with several different representatives of interest groups. They were like a Cabinet Room meeting consuming a half-hour to an hour of his time, sometimes even more.

Wexler: These meetings did not appear on public schedules.

Chanin: These meetings included women's groups, environmental leaders, Black leaders, business leaders, and labor leaders. The agenda depended upon the cycle of issues as they appeared during a Congressional year or a fiscal year. Early in the year such a meeting would obviously involve general discussions of their priorities and concerns, while later meetings would get into more specific discussions of strategy on specific issues. Those were continuing meetings in which he was involved in great detail; they were not turned over to his staff when substantive discussions arose with the people involved.

Wexler: In the Presidential Papers you will see notebooks that we gave him on various interest group reactions to major issues. The last of these books on what interest groups wanted him to do was prepared for the August 25 economic revitalization package announcements.

Young: You said, "We met with the President." Did you have direct access to him in addition to group meetings?

Wexler: Yes. If I had something that I wanted to say, I would go in and say it. As you know, he had very particular ways in which he liked to communicate. If we were going to have a substantive discussion about something, he would always like to have a memo in advance. He preferred to see something in writing before he heard it. There was also a lot of spirited give and take in those ten o'clock meetings.

Rourke: When you would have these meetings with interest groups was it a case of just reaching out to particular groups or constituencies, or would you develop it as a media event to reach a broader audience directly and to convey the general impression of a President who was interested in consultation?

Ryor: [redacted]

Wexler: When we were putting together a major program and it was in our interest for the press and the public at large to know that the President was consulting, then the President met the group in the Cabinet Room in much the same way that President Reagan is going now. The press would be called into the Cabinet Room to take pictures and film the President saying his introductory remarks. We did that more often than not, and as Mike mentioned, in the larger East Room briefings where press coverage was absolutely essential. The national press always covered the East Room briefings, because they were on a public schedule. For our purposes, however, local press coverage was far more important.

By the way, that was an innovation we brought with us. It has never been done before in the White House, and to a certain degree, it scared the hell out of everybody else. At least, until they became accustomed to it. It was extremely effective though. We really didn't care if the President's meeting with people from ten states appeared in the *Washington Post*, but it was very important to our Congressional effort that it appeared in the Corpus Christi paper if we were trying to get the vote of the Congressman from Corpus Christi on the defense authorization veto, for example. We brought a group from Corpus Christi to the White House because we wanted their Congressman's vote. The next day the Vice President went to Corpus Christi for an event of some kind and the headline that he met when he got off the plane was: "So and So's Mind Changed by Visit to the White House." So this made us look very good and it changed the White House's attitude toward local press participation in briefings.

Rourke: There is one related question that I wanted to ask about patronage. It is a way through which Presidents traditionally built support. Unfortunately, for every appointment you make nine enemies and one ingrate.

Young: One ingrate and one hundred enemies is what Jefferson said.

Rourke: Were the invitations the "moral equivalent" of patronage? Certainly invitations make a lot of enemies as well as friends. People who don't get invited, et cetera.

Chanin: Well, in answer to your question I might mention a few things about the White House, a mansion but relatively small. It is the smallest residence of a head of state among the major states of the world. It is also more than a showplace because, unlike many other countries, it is his residence. Further, it is open to the public almost every day of the week, so the use of the residence,

unless you stop the public tours, is limited to the afternoon hours, and you can only do one or perhaps two events if you really squeeze. Generally, we were limited to one event in the afternoon and maybe one that evening. There are other logistical problems too. As you know, the kitchen is on the ground floor below everything else—which means that any food has to be moved from dumb waiters. Set-ups are time consuming. In short, it is a very complicated house, and we were very limited in the number of people we could invite. There were two hundred fifty seats in the East Room. You could, if you really had to, squeeze in three hundred. But then there were problems with hot camera lights. Therefore, there were people who had to be excluded, but we tried to get everybody. Sometimes Congressmen would call up the day before and say, "I have ten friends who are on their way on the airplane, do you have room?" We generally had people standing, and for those who couldn't come, we tried to get them into later events. Over time we developed a feel as to what every audience was going to be like. As we examined lists or as we talked to the people around the country who were providing us with the names, certain guiding factors became obvious for those times when you had to make cuts. It would be hard to explain, but there was a general intuitive sense about each meeting.

Wexler: It really is an art and it will be interesting to see how the Reagan administration handles that problem. We examined every single name. An event like the Pope's visit, which included some thousand people, created a great deal of "patronage" trouble. The Olympic athletes' session and the Israeli/Egyptian peace treaty signing were similar and they were included in our responsibilities.

Chanin: During the three-plus years of our operation, we accidentally [had] only one gas station owner and one hooker from Indiana! [*laughter*]

Magleby: From your discussions so far, it is clear that a large part of your operation involved Congressional votes, either in terms of a bill or a veto. I am interested in hearing a little bit about the coordination within the White House between your office and the Congressional Liaison office. Your presentation has included several examples of instances where you developed or created constituency pressure on a particular piece of legislation or where you determined the distribution of ceremonial plums, like which Congressman would be pictured behind the President at the bill signing. It seems to me that a substantial amount of interaction must have taken place between yourselves and the Congressional Liaison. Did this coordination take place mainly in the early morning deputy sessions and the senior staff meeting, or was there an ongoing, less-formal process?

Young: If I might, I would like to expand on your question. As I listened, Anne, to you describe your work and your functions, I was thinking that there are parallels between what you did as the Public Liaison office and what the Congressional Liaison office did in many previous administrations. The coalition-building, the outside work in connection with work on the Hill around Presidential priorities, was done by Congressional Liaison staff. The [Dwight D.] Eisenhower people did this. To some extent, [John F.] Kennedy's liaison staff did this. On foreign aid, for example, they went to all the constituencies with figures on how many jobs would be affected by a cut in aid. So, it is not only a question of coordination with Congressional Liaison but it appears as though your office was performing functions that were performed in an earlier time by Congressional Liaison people.

Wexler: Well, I suspect that coalition-building might have been easier at an earlier time. But with the proliferation of interest groups in Washington during the last fifteen years, it is unrealistic to expect a Congressional Liaison staff to manage Congressional relations and simultaneously be responsible for organizing interest groups and building coalitions. This first area alone demands full-time attention, especially when you have six or seven hot issues developing at the same time. I think the liaison role has become more complex; the issues are more difficult to manage and the interest groups are more active. To be more specific, it was probably easier in the earlier days to identify people and their interests. Secondly, the reorganization of Congress has made a major difference in the way Congressional issues have to be handled by the White House. Each subcommittee now has its own staff and its own particular set of issues. The legislative process is more specialized and more fragmented with everybody having their own constituency. Therefore, the White House needed a staff to handle those groups outside of the Congressional Liaison office's first responsibility.

Chanin: I would like to add to what Anne has said about the changing nature of Congress. Beginning in the mid-Nixon years, the sunshine issues, the less-inhibited participation of younger members, the proliferation of subcommittees and oversight committees developed in the Congress. Virtually every program began to have its own Hill constituency, as people on the Hill depended on it for their job and Congressmen depended on a set group of programs for their power. As a result, the White House Congressional Liaison function became more complicated, and this can be seen in our handling of the energy legislation. There were conflicts between the energy committee and natural resources and environmental committees as to who really had the lead on this issue. The struggle between Congressman Dingell and Congressman Udall was typical of these kinds of problems. Coordination of the White House operation occurred formally through the task force framework informally within the collegial system of the White House. We had a lead person in our office on every major issue and Congressional Liaison did the same. Our lead person was in constant contact with the interest groups, the lobbyists and the people around the country. While Frank Moore's person was getting vote lists, watching and working with the membership and staff and giving them guidance, our people worked with the leadership of a particular group of Congressional people who were supporting our position. They might be Democratics or Republicans. Vote counts were established by Congressional Liaison, by the agencies, by outsiders, and by our office, and this information was then exchanged. We would also share about who could influence a particular Congressman. On one issue Congressional Liaison needed some bankers in Arizona to speak out, and we contacted them.

Information came from a variety of sources: an agency staff member who was friendly with a Congressman or somebody on his staff; an outside group that was friendly with a Congressman or somebody on his staff; or our own people from the White House who talked to a Congressman or his staff. Information from the Hill came as a quick phone call either to our lead staff person or to Anne or myself. As we received the information we usually checked it for reliability by going to an outside person, and immediately began to follow up on it. However, in the day-to-day operations we did not decide which Congressmen should be targeted, and we were very careful about this. In addition, signing ceremonies were managed by two people, one from our office and the other from Frank Moore's office. Frank's person was responsible for getting the document and the necessary lawyers to the ceremony as well as deciding which Congressman would stand where. Our staff

person handled the interest group people and other outside leaders who had contributed to the bill and had been invited to the signing ceremony.

I should also mention that these ceremonies varied in size from Oval Office ceremonies with ten people, to Cabinet Room ceremonies with up to fifty people, to one thousand people for the big energy bill on the South Lawn.

Ryor: [redacted]

Magleby: I am not clear on this division of labor. Was your office responsible for having a labor leader call the Congressman while visits to the Congressman were handled by Congressional Liaison?

Chanin: It depended upon the circumstances and the nature of the issue. Information comes from the Hill to the White House through a variety of channels. On vote counts, for example, we received information from the lobbyists, and Congressional Liaison obtained by staff work on the Hill or from the agency lobbyists who were there. Usually the task force group or a subgroup met at the end of the day to exchange and compare notes. Discrepancy became apparent quickly and we then developed a strategy to handle it. Should the President or Vice President call the Congressman? Should we try his constituency, or should we try maybe a friend of the Congressman? The lobbyists might give us a reason for his position, should we try it their way? The decision is made at the deputy staff level, and it could be made on the telephone or during the task force meeting at the end of the day. But it was a joint decision. If it involved the President or it involved a major White House effort, Anne Wexler and Frank Moore would work it out. Generally, if pressure was needed from home, we would be responsible. In an easier situation where a Congressional lobbyist needed only to go back to the Congressman and really talk to him about the issue some more, Congressional Liaison would carry the load. If the situation required a call from the President or the Vice President, Frank Moore would take over. Sometimes we worked with Cabinet members or their Assistant Secretaries by giving them lists to call. At other times Frank's office handled the logistics for that operation.

Magleby: You have given us a great deal of insight into the coordinative function of the task forces, the hallway communications, the collegiality, and so forth. But was there a distinct zone of activity left to Congressional Liaison in which you were not involved? If so, beyond the context with the Congressman, what was that?

Chanin: Yes, there were a couple of areas. First, the Congressional Liaison office made the final decision on Congressional strategy. When we were working with interest groups we tried to encourage them in a manner and toward a direction that was consistent with Frank's strategy. Their expertise often gave guidance to our efforts. For example, they might recommend, "Don't let environmentalists near this particular Congressperson on this particular issue," or, "Don't let

business near him or labor near him because he is ticked at them now." Timing and legislative strategy was controlled by the Congressional Liaison office. Of course, the extent to which we could control this interest group pressure was very limited.

Ryor: [redacted]

Chanin: But, essentially the final decision was theirs, and that game plan was not uncommon. The entire area of legislative strategy—how you wanted to do it, when to step up, when to make more use of media or less use of media—was under the purview of the Congressional Liaison people. However, the making of that strategy involved everybody, including the President and the Vice President in many cases. We were quite successful. By the same token they did not get into our area of expertise. They offered ideas, recommendations, and sometimes help, but the strategy and work of keying a particular outside group to a state delegation or issue was our mission. They offered suggestions when they were seeing things on the Hill that we weren't seeing. It proved to be most helpful to our operation because we did not have the resources to continuously work the Hill. Generally, we incorporated our efforts with a little bit of give and take.

Jones: I would like to return to Jim Young's formulation of this question. I can imagine Lyndon Johnson and Larry O'Brien reacting to the increase in single issue groups and the reorganization of Congress by expanding the Congressional Liaison office. Indeed they may have concentrated the functions you have described within one office. So, the expansion of the workload wouldn't necessarily explain the division of responsibility along the lines you have described. Do you think it was the President's preference to have a division of labor? Was it Frank Moore's preference? Or, was it an historical development before you arrived?

Chanin: I think there were two factors really, historical developments and the preferences of President Carter. As I mentioned earlier, in addition to our role in Congressional relations we were also involved in the development of policy. We brought interest groups into the policy process in great numbers. For instance the development of the synthetic fuels financing plans required carefully planned, privately held meetings in the Roosevelt Room with people from around the country who had the interest and resources to support that policy. This occurred sometimes before the public knew of our interest in the area and always before we announced our policy or went to Congress. This involvement in policy development was not a traditional function of Congressional Liaison. But whoever was handling the legislative aspect of policy development needed the expertise and the understanding of the history of interest group involvements in the issue. It was crucial to an effective Congressional Liaison strategy. So, while the Congressional Liaison office did control the Congressional strategy, they needed to have people working with the outside groups as well. It prevented a potentially damaging shift of people when the bill went to Congress. The expansion of the Congressional Liaison staff with fifteen new members to meet this change in interest groups and so on would have been less effective than putting the Public Liaison office to work on the problem. We preferred to put a new guy to work on it. I think that might explain the functional problem to some extent.

A second factor was President Carter's desire for an open White House. There was a change in the definition of the open White House as it moved from traditional Public Liaison, the dog-and-pony-show kind of Public Liaison, to the involvement of outside people in the development of issues and strategy. The President wanted a mechanism that kept the White House open for him, something more than an adjunct to Congressional Liaison. He wanted an office to focus on Public Liaison at all times and to constantly kept him informed. It was a separate area of responsibility.

Wexler: On this matter of dividing labor, the obvious end result of our work in many cases was a legislative victory. But to get a victory, you had to establish the necessary level of policy acceptance, and this was always a lengthy process. The legislative victory might come two years after we started working on an issue. The ancillary benefits and dividends that resulted from our two-year effort, as well as our duties during that time, might be better termed "public relations" than "Congressional relations." Although our aim was always to influence Congress, if it were a legislative issue, we usually completed a fairly sensitive and complex public relations campaign in the process.

In addition, we also worked very hard on issues that had no legislative content. I chaired task forces on inflation, which was a euphemistic way of describing the President's outreach effort to keep the inflation program in the public's mind. It involved everything from the activities of the Council on Wage and Price Stability to the things we were doing with the press in regulatory efforts. I also chaired the task force on energy conservation, which had, I think, a massive impact on the energy conservation efforts in communities and industries. The hardest thing I have ever done in my life was pulling the energy task force together! It was a bureaucratic mess, and it had nothing to do with legislation.

Thompson: Could I ask the same question in a different way? Previous visitors to the Miller Center have said that what determined organization on an issue like this was an interplay of two different factors. One was the style of the President, and you have talked about that as the open White House. The other factor, regardless of the organizational structure, was that power flowed toward people who wanted to exercise it.

Wexler: Well, it is absolutely true, and I think you are seeing it now in the Reagan administration with Al Haig and Dave Stockman. The activists in the Carter administration, both in the White House and the agencies, were the ones who got the job done and had the power and the clout. Do you have a particular example on your mind?

Thompson: Well, I think from the outside it looks as though your energetic group, particularly after 1978, took hold of certain things more aggressively than other groups might have had the function in earlier years or administrations.

Ryor: [redacted]

Wexler: To put it in very concrete terms, in our early days I think we had kind of a love/hate relationship with Frank Moore's staff. They needed us, but they didn't trust us. As we worked with each other more frequently and got to know each other, however, it became a very good working relationship, a complementary one. It worked out very well in the end, but it was rough going in the beginning.

Chanin: In the first few issues we undertook, we decided that our staff would work the Hill with interest groups when the vote was close at hand. Our people were working the doors and making sure that the right lobbyists were outside the doors, and that the Congressmen were going in the direction we wanted them to go. The Congressional Liaison people got on the phone to Anne and said, "What are your people doing up there on the Hill? Get them off the Hill, they're getting in the way." We explained our position. The test came about a year and a half later when a House vote was coming up, and the person from our office responsible for the issue also had a bill in the Senate. I got a call from a White House lobbyist at the House who said, "Are you guys serious about this or not? Why don't you have anybody up here on the Hill working with the interest groups?" So, it worked out very well once we reached an understanding.

I would also like to point out that we would not have been able to do the kinds of things that we did without the President's full knowledge, encouragement, and in many cases, participation. I don't think any previous President tried as actively as Jimmy Carter did to seek the opinions of people outside of government, of his immediate family, of Cabinet members, and of White House staffers. They all participated in the policy development process. And I am not being judgmental. I do think that was the way he preferred to operate. I don't know whether the driving force was our activism or simply his desire to be involved in those things. Whatever, it required an office to do the logistics of just involving him and allowing him to meet his desire to be involved in an issue.

Young: Tomorrow I am going to raise the question of why he waited fourteen months!

Wexler: You will have to ask him that. [*laughter*]

Again though, in response to your basic question about the role of Congressional Liaison versus Public Liaison, I would like to offer another concrete example on how we worked on the Hill. Usually we would work out of the Vice President's office in the Senate with the Congressional Liaison staff. They would be visiting Senators, counting votes, and bringing the vote counts back to us. In response, we would be deploying the interest groups to go back to Senator X or Senator Y to try to change their mind on a vote or shift them on an amendment. Literally, it was like a general moving an army around. Congressional Liaison would be moving out and finding out where the concentrations needed to be made, and then we would be moving the people to the designated area. The Vice President's office became general headquarters and our people were working hand in glove with Frank's people on many issues.

When we finally got over the turf problems, we could work together to build a coalition with all the health people, for instance. John worked the hospital cost containment issue from the Vice President's office, the interest group representatives asked John which staff person or which Senator they had to see next, and John would get the information from Dan Tate who was the Congressional Liaison. Arid that's the way it worked.

Ryor: [redacted]

Young: Good point.

Kettl: Going back to your initial description of your role in the White House, you talked about at least two different roles. One is the casework role, a lightning rod for anybody who had something to say to the White House. The other was an organizational role in mobilizing support for issues that the President felt were important.

I sense, from what I have read, that in the Carter White House your predecessors placed more emphasis on the lightning rod/casework approach. It was a much different approach from the one you have characterized at this session. Specifically, I am curious about how that transition took place. Was it something that was made plain to you when you arrived a year and one half into the Presidency? Did the White House want your office to be more outreaching, or was it something that you saw as more properly your role?

Wexler: First, when I came there was clearly a perceived need to fill the legislative strategy component and to involve the public in the White House. There was also the need to deal with the interests at the individual level. At the same time that I arrived, the White House started looking for a Special Assistant for Blacks, a Special Assistant for Hispanics, a Special Assistant for women. Esther Peterson was already there handling consumers. Nelson Cruikshank was handling senior citizens. CEQ [Council on Environmental Quality] handled environmental groups as a kind of front line Special Assistant. Eventually, we added a Special Assistant for ethnic affairs.

It was originally suggested to me that, in addition to my role in developing the Public Liaison's contribution to the development of Presidential priorities, I should also be responsible for the special assistants to deal with these particular interest groups. I turned that down. I did not want to do that because l felt I did not have the staff or the structure to do both. There was always a filter between me and those special assistants who essentially were advocates. My role was essentially being the President's advocate, and I had to protect that role to be able to work substantively with the interest groups. The minute that they perceived me as a consumer person, or an environmental person, or a person who was pushing Black issues, or whatever, I was finished as far as anybody else was concerned. I always had to be only one person's advocate, the President's advocate.

We tried to insulate my particular role by having special assistants. I was often able to use the advocates for lobbying purposes and for helping us on policy coalitions, but they took their own day-to-day problems and the interest groups usually directed their individual concerns to the person who was perceived as being their advocate. Where there was no special advocate we would handle their casework as appropriate and shift as much of it as we could as quickly as we could to the agencies. Some of these interests were urban groups, Indian groups, and business groups.

So, there were many cases when somebody had a particular problem and said, "I must have this energy tax credit from the Department of the Treasury, but I can't get anywhere with Treasury. Would you help me?" Our office would make a phone call and at least get them another appointment. But that was about the extent of our role in casework, and I don't want to leave the impression that our casework deeply involved major segment interest groups, like Blacks, Hispanics, and consumers. It did not. There was a special person who handled their day-to-day problems and we used them as parts of our working strategic coalitions when we needed them.

Kettl: Did I understand you to say that originally, there were people at the White House who expected you to fill both roles?

Wexler: Oh, yes. They wanted me to exercise oversight over the whole cadre of special group assistants. Al McDonald will say repeatedly to you when you meet with him that it made sense to do it that way from a management standpoint, and that is the way Elizabeth Dole is doing it in the [Ronald] Reagan White House. But it didn't make any sense to me because I knew I would be buried! Even if a specific person from my staff was designated to deal with a constituency on a day-to-day basis, and I had access to the President, then I would be the person who eventually became the arbitrator or referee of their problems. Our arrangement gave each Special Assistant access to the President, and it filtered out the involvement with that last senior staff member. I just would have been buried regardless of how hard I tried not to be. As it was, we had a casework load that I couldn't handle along with the other work that I was expected to do. I said to the group very early, "If you give me another full deputy assistant to the President and some staff, I'll take that job on. But without it, I won't." And I never did.

Chanin: We were very clear in our office when we worked with groups that there was no quid pro quo. When we worked with coalitions we were not in the business of saying, "You helped us, now we'll help you with the agency." And there were many meetings about a specific problem with three or four interest group people where they would say, "We have to leave for another meeting to talk about how to beat you on this next issue." The Taxpayers Union was involved with us when the balance-the-budget amendment appeared. Yet they were still working with us even though we were in very strong opposition to each other on that particular issue. They subsequently helped us on the Public Works and Defense Authorization vetoes.

The second point was that we tried to avoid very difficult situations with these groups by being very direct. I remember a meeting we had on a supplemental budget request with Black leaders. The bill was hung up because of our opposition to the budget resolution. There was some very important social legislation funding involved in that supplemental request, like food stamps. I overheard before and after the meeting in discussions around the room, their discussions of specific kinds of issues unrelated to the one we were concerned about. But as far as their conversations with us were concerned, when the meeting convened, they were limited to the supplemental budget request. We were clear about why we were there, and about what the President wanted. There were no trade-offs. There was no quid pro quo. The coalition was built because we needed their help on one issue, and they needed our help on that same issue. After establishing our rationale for working together we determined what needed to be done and how to go about doing it. But I should also say that they realized they could go to Anne on other issues later.

Wexler: Any major interest group feels that they must have a special person in the White House, and the person has to have access to the President. Such a person allows them to feel as though they are talking, in fact, to the President of the United States. If you begin to build barriers between the advocate and the President, it just makes it much tougher to govern. It is politically stupid in my judgment. That's why I didn't want to get into an advocate position, and I think anybody who has my responsibilities and does it is making a big mistake. There are other ways of meeting both the President's and the interest group's needs. I think we did it in a way that made it possible for us to complete the job without ever making those interest groups feel as though they were being cheated.

McCleskey: I am interested in the functioning of the task forces, and I have several related questions. One concerns the role of the chairman of the task force. How much latitude, how much responsibility did he or she have? Further, who designated the chairman? The second question concerns the agency representatives on the task forces. Who were these people? Were they political appointees or were they civil servants? In any case, were they effective, did they function well in that situation?

Wexler: The chairman of the task force generally had blanket authority in running the operation. The format was such that the chairman of the task force was responsible for developing a written plan for the task force. This plan encompassed the functions of each unit within the task force: the media people were to do the following; the policy people were to produce x-number of materials; and the Congressional people had this particular responsibility. This written strategy was then submitted to the President, and the President usually signed off on it as a formality. It was more for his information than anything else.

After the plan had received the President's approval it was the responsibility of the chairman of the task force to implement that plan. The implementation and the follow-up really depended very much, as I said earlier, on the quality and dedication of the chairman. If you were a real autocrat, which I thought you had to be, and demanded accountability, you would have a damn good task force and do a good job. If you were kind of loose about it and not terribly demanding, you would find that the people who sat on the task force did not respond.

The issue really dictated the type of people who served on the task forces. Often, the program's Assistant Secretary, a political appointee in the department, would defer to the career person who happened to be in charge of that issue. Sometimes they both participated. There was certainly a large participation on most of the task forces by career people, all of whom responded extremely well to strong leadership. When we had a real crash going on some of those task forces, those people would work nights and weekends and produce incredible materials and do a very good job. But it was a mix and it included policy people, media people, Congressional Liaison people, usually OMB personnel as well.

The number of specialists included depended on what the issue was. The task force of the water projects veto, a long and very complicated effort that resulted in great success, had a number of career people from OMB, the Interior Department and the Army Corps of Engineers. The engineers provided us with detailed information on each project to support our case before Congress. Similarly, the Multi-lateral Trade Negotiations task force, one of the most comprehensive task forces, included fourteen government agencies. In that task force the White House developed a

strategy for every Congressional district in the United States as it related to trade issues. And each strategy was different. Yet, the trade agreement was the big sleeper of the Carter administration!

Chanin: One of John Kennedy's most recognized accomplishments was the passage of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. The Carter administration's trade bill was easily ten times as complex, but no one has recognized it as an accomplishment. Perhaps it was handled too skillfully!

Jones: There's such a thing as too much success! [*laughter*]

Wexler: I do not take the credit for the MTN. I give it to Bob Strauss, who did an incredible job of working the Hill. Al McDonald and I organized that task force and gave Bob the backup he needed, but it was Strauss's consummate political skill that made it look so easy.

Chanin: At the beginning of the Carter administration people were claiming that the MTN was dead. It could not get through because everybody had an ax to grind. Each Congressman wanted protection for the products of his or her district. Moreover, the negotiations in Europe just couldn't reach a conclusion. Somehow Strauss tied everything together.

McCleskey: President Johnson had outsiders on his task forces; people not from the agencies but private experts in the area. Should we assume that this was not your practice?

Wexler: Private experts did not participate in the development of legislative strategies, but outside groups did work on the legislation itself. They did not attend the task force meetings. The task force spent roughly an hour a day on an issue. The members of the task force spent an equal amount of time, if not more, working with outsiders on the same issue. But the outsiders never participated in the same meeting.

Ryor: [redacted]

Wexler: By the way, we have not mentioned the computer we used to run our task forces. We programmed every task on the computer by assigned person, and then ran the program by assignment, by task, and by date. At each meeting I would go around the table and give specific assignments to each individual. Meanwhile, the computer programmer was writing down everything. By the next morning we would have the printout, which listed everybody's assignment. At the end of the day before the next meeting, somebody on my staff would call everybody on the task force saying, "I have your assignments in front of me; did you do one through eight?" This is how we tracked task forces, and the computer was essential because there were so many agency people involved.

Light: How specific were the tasks?

Chanin: Very specific. The printout might list "A Presentation to the Democratic Study Group by this office on this issue, date 1, followed by a meeting with the leaders on the DSG to develop a strategy for maximizing DSG support on date 2."

Wexler: It might also list "the production of fourteen charts to illustrate the following points," or a "special media piece."

Ryor: [redacted]

Wexler: We discovered that kind of late. We wished we had discovered that earlier.

Ryor: [redacted]

Chanin: Let me mention one thing about task force coordination. There was a gap in the White House for whatever the reason, perhaps because they didn't have a person with the time to do it. There was nobody in the early months responsible for looking at each of these task forces and evaluating their activities and progress. Nor was there a person to assess their overall effect on the President's time. Things really did change and improve in the way the individual task forces were run and in their overall coordination when Al McDonald came into the White House. His management techniques filled some of the gap.

His appearance provided a very important change, the designation of a senior person with the time and authority to call people together and to get action. Al McDonald brought coordination by asking, "How does this all fit at the top?" He was concerned with the use of Presidential time and the number of briefings we held at the White House. He noticed that three press briefings on three different subjects in one day did not seem to make much sense. He wanted to spread them out. He wanted a justification and coordination of the time frames we were using.

Wexler: Al McDonald was a great addition to the White House. He was a great boon management-wise and he changed a lot of things. Among other things, Al created a system of accountability. Prior to his coming everybody had his or her own empire in the White House and there was no overall coordination except whatever we happened to create among ourselves. Al pulled it together

and made it stay together on a daily basis. In other words, Congressional Liaison, Policy, Public Liaison, Press, Intergovernment, and staff work came together only when they had to and when we pulled them together around issues. But everybody was on their own track; no one paid attention to what anyone else was doing. Al McDonald transformed the staff into a working unit.

Wayne: In previous interviews, particularly with EPS people and Congressional Liaison people, I noticed a fair amount of animosity to Al McDonald and his management language and to what they feared were his attempts to intrude on their turfs. Did this present any problems for you?

Wexler: I think it did to some people, but it didn't to me. I thought McDonald was a tremendous help. McDonald was a new addition to a group of people who had never had that kind of supervision before, and I think they felt threatened by it. They were absolutely dead wrong in feeling that way. Al was a caricature of the organization—throughput, inputs, outputs, and things that they had never heard before.

Chanin: He could do a chart that would dazzle you!

Wexler: He provided an element that was very much needed. They made jokes about Al, but I think Al made a big difference.

Ryor: [redacted]

Wexler: Al established an accountability mechanism—here's your job, have it done by noon tomorrow, and if not, why not? People were not used to that approach!

Ryor: [redacted]

McCleskey: Is it correct to say that you used task forces to implement policies that the White House had agreed to pursue rather than to develop policies? In other words, the content of what you were trying to do was not developed by the task force?

Wexler: That's correct. Task force would come after the policy announcement.

McCleskey: Again, going back to Lyndon Johnson's practice, was there never any use of the task force to develop policy initially?

Chanin: It involved a different kind of task force depending on the issue. The issue task force would involve more leadership from the Domestic Policy staff and/or a Cabinet secretary. Urban policy, for example, was a task force utilized [as] such.

McCleskey: [Stuart] Eizenstat would have a task force—

Chanin: The chairman might not be Stu. In that case it was Pat Harris who chaired the task force, but Stu was obviously involved in the development of urban policy.

Wexler: The youth employment task force spent six months traveling around the country trying to develop a new policy. It was chaired by Vice President Mondale.

Young: I had understood you to say earlier that prior to your arrival (using your energy thing as an example), there were no outside groups involved in the development of policy.

Wexler: In the energy policy—

Young: I think we understand that—but what specifically changed? I'm trying to get a handle on how you involved groups in the development of policy.

McCleskey: We're all confused. And I think the record should be made clear.

Ryor: [redacted]

Young: So, in a sense you started with the policy goad and then involved the outside groups to determine the specifics. Is that correct?

Chanin: Not completely. As we indicated, the President met periodically with numbers of interest groups to discuss their feelings about where the White House should move. In addition, the Vice President's group and our continuing discussions with interest groups gave us a general feeling of their sentiments and priorities. So, input did not always arrive via a task force.

Young: I'm trying to get an idea of what role you played in the development of policy and how you involved outside groups in it?

Wexler: It's not that neat. I don't think that there were ever two issues that were done in the same way. It really depended on how they were first conceived and the type of timing that was needed. The President had promised in the 1976 campaign to do something about energy. He hired Jim Schlesinger, before the Department of Energy was created, as a Special Assistant on energy policy. Schlesinger went into a room, closed the door, and wrote the energy policy, literally. It didn't involve the Treasury Department. He peripherally involved some of the OMB people, but not very many. He included few people from the agencies that ultimately became the Department of Energy. And he certainly didn't ask anybody's opinion. I don't know to this day whether he ever consulted with the President or not. [*laughter*]

On the other hand, it was determined very early in the Carter Presidency that a comprehensive urban policy for this administration should be developed. But it was done through a very open process conducted by Pat Harris. There was a task force that included Pat Harris, Juanita Kreps, the heads of GSA [General Services Administration] and EPA [Environmental Protection Agency], and members of other agencies. They did a tremendous outreach job in developing these policies.

In the 1978 priority-policy setting operation it was determined that it would be useful to introduce some legislation that addressed hazardous waste problems, the superfund legislation. There was a tremendous amount of outreach to chemical companies, environmental groups, cities, and the people who were being affected by waste issues before that legislation was drafted.

But you can name dozens of pieces of legislations that were handled differently. For another example, we needed to do something very substantive on the youth employment issue in relation to the present structure of the CETA [Comprehensive Employment and Training Act] laws. There was a large body of opinion holding the view that a great many of the programs presently on the books just didn't work. The result was a six-month study chaired by the Vice President, which literally traveled the country to determine what was right and wrong with the laws on the books and to make some suggestions for changes.

So no issue was handled exactly like any other issue. But in almost every case, once we had gone through the priority-setting exercise with the Vice President and determined that there were going to be some new policy initiatives, we would then work with the Domestic Policy staff and outside groups to get their input as to how that new policy should be structured. But as I said, it was not a neat operation in any case. It was done in an ad hoc way with Stu Eizenstat, the OMB people, and the agency people. We tried to determine the best approach to the particular issue. We were deeply involved in some, and where there was a more formal structure, like the task force on youth employment, we were not involved until they had written their report and announced it. When they wanted to begin drafting legislation, our office would be brought in to structure and organize the process. The latter process would be handled in more formal way with expanded White House participation.

Young: Was there ever a case where policy initiative was rejected in this later process? As the circles of consultation expanded, did you ever reach the conclusion that an initiative should not be pursued and you dropped it?

Wexler: Yes, reorganization. The major reorganization plans were dropped because it became apparent that there wasn't anything practical that could be done to bring them to fruition. As a compromise, we dropped the economic development reorganization, and for cosmetic purposes, went ahead with the natural resources proposal only to drop it six weeks later. The economic development plan was dropped before it went to Congress.

Chanin: A second example was real wage insurance. It was clear that we couldn't build a coalition, and the bill was dropped.

Wexler: As I recall, we couldn't write the legislation. That was the problem.

Chanin: But that became obvious from our work with outside groups and their experts.

Light: It was an on-again, off-again event through the first two or three months of 1979, wasn't it? During that time we were dragging all kinds of experts into the White House, to try and write that legislation. But they could not write it.

McCleskey: I hope this is not a case of academic obsession with trifling details, but I'm trying to get it clear in my mind the sequencing of policy development and its relationship with outside groups. The initial idea might originate from a variety of sources. Eventually, it gets to the right channels, and there would have been some preliminary program or policy proposal roughed-out by either Eizenstat's operation or another. At that point, your people might get involved, talking with, negotiating with, working with the outside groups. Is that correct so far?

Wexler: Yes, but not without Stuart.

McCleskey: Then, having finally settled upon the program or policy, the task force would be formed for implementation. Is that more or less the way it happened?

Wexler: Yes.

Chanin: One of the better examples of how this whole process works and what it can mean is the development of policy on oil. We finished the Natural Gas Act in 1978. Shortly thereafter, a series of meetings initiated by various people (and I don't think this is public knowledge) inside and outside the White House began discussions on pending oil issues. These meetings considered the decontrol issue, its timing, excess or windfall profits, taxes, and what to do with this added income. They also considered substitutes for oil, like synthetic fuels, gasohol, and solar. The meeting included energy consumers ranging from major industries to household consumers. A series of meetings, very much behind the scenes, led to the design of the phased oil decontrol, the windfall profits tax, and S932 [Energy Security Act of 1980] eventually. In the end this consultative process led to the quick passage of that legislation because large industrial consumers became interested in alternative energy resources. They realized that these alternative energy supplies could only be financed with a windfall profits tax, even though they philosophically disliked an excess profits tax. Actually this group avoided the debate and left it free for others to work for it. Before these meetings, many legislators opposed the windfall profits tax. After the meetings they supported alternative energy development because they wanted to see private sector development of energy but knew it couldn't happen without some kind of public financing. The billion to three billion dollar per plant costs, the risks involved, the time lag between construction and start-up prohibited private development. This switch of opinion occurred through a very careful series of negotiations between consumers, environmentalists, business, and labor which began very much behind the scenes. There was no task force per se. The President announced his policy as the options went to him. A task force was then very carefully constructed between the Department of Energy, OMB, the White House staff, and the other agencies that essentially oversaw the completion of the delicate negotiations that gave the balance to the policy process. The delicate negotiations that gave the balance to this inclusive approach allowed you to have mayors at the White House to get their support while others were off worrying about something else. Maybe the mayors didn't quite oppose your policy, so you could get one part through. At the same time, they were ready to help

you on other stuff that maybe some of the environmentalists didn't like (although they helped on earlier parts of the policy). There was that kind of delicate negotiating all the way through it. It was outreach or involvement that began very early, perhaps before the public really understood what was going on. I said, "before the public understood." But knowledgeable people writing about oil decisions were coming to those meetings. This process lasted a year or so and led to the formation of some very successful lobbying groups at the end. These groups were crucial to that legislation.

Sabato: If I can switch topics for a minute. I'm wondering, first, how closely you coordinated your coalition-building activities, your public meetings and so forth, with local, state, and national party leaders; and secondly, the extent to which you feel that your operation or your office was really a substitute for a weak Democratic Party organization. I ask you this in part because I had the pleasure of attending one of your SALT II briefings in the East Wing in January 1980. I was so impressed that you had managed to assemble virtually the entire team of people who normally run and observe election campaigns in the state of Virginia. I gathered that it was done in every state, and it occurred to me then, and it occurs more to me now in hearing you describe your office, that you're in a sense running a whole series of campaigns. Was your office a permanent campaign?

Wexler: Well, it was in a sense. One difference is that we ran campaigns on issues. If you wanted to take a shorthand way of describing what I did, it was to conceive, develop, and implement campaigns around issues. A second difference is that the issues were in many cases bipartisan rather than partisan because you needed as many Republican votes as you did Democratic. And you had to be sure you got them.

Increasingly we invited the party leadership to our issue briefings and involved them in our issues, particularly as we moved closer to the 1980 campaign. We didn't make a strong attempt to do it in the early days. This area was really a separate operation. The whole political liaison operation was run by Tim Kraft and later by Sarah Weddington, and it was differently structured. But as we got closer to the election and as delegates were being selected in the 1980 primaries, we would invite people who had been selected as delegates to some of the issues briefings in an effort to try and educate them about the President. We didn't invite Kennedy delegates you understand; these were Carter people. In a way the invitation was a reward, a little bit of the patronage you were talking about before. But it was also an effort to try and make them missionaries for the President's program.

The coordination with state and local leaders was not done in the early days as a political move in terms of partisan politics. If we felt that a national or state political leader could influence the Congressman or Senator or could help us in a public way on legislation, he or she would be included in the East Room briefings or smaller groups. Those people usually included community leaders, mayors, county officials, sometimes state chairmen, and the like. We included them when we thought they could help us. But if they didn't have any interest in the issue, they didn't get invited. What we were trying to do was build and create lobbyists outside of Washington who would help with particular legislative issues. If those political leaders were not doing that, then we did not use them. If they were, then we did.

Young: This is a fascinating thing. If you look back at how Presidents managed this function in the past, you begin to see that you were involved in the building of issue parties. And it's not really helpful.

Wexler: No, it isn't helpful. You have to start from scratch on every single issue. You have to start all over again and reinvent the wheel every single time.

Young: This becomes necessary as parties get weak and you try to revive that support structure. You build the capability to do it by going outside of the party. And in the long run, it doesn't help the party. Because the President can't afford to base his program on a partisan appeal. So it's a circular trend where the parties start weak and end up weaker.

Wexler: In addition, you are pandering to interest groups. It makes them stronger and encourages them to divorce themselves a little bit from their philosophical political party and say in effect, "My issue first; my party second."

Magleby: We have institutionalized it in fact.

Wexler: That's right. In a perfect world you would want them to say, "My party first, my issue second," and, "The national interest first, my interest after."

Young: You might not like the comparison, but this is precisely what Eisenhower started. He had a Democratic Congress and he had conflicting objectives to rebuild the Republican Party and to get certain things done that could not rely solely on the Republican Party. So he had to scotch the party appeals. He left office not a favorite of the party.

Wexler: Mike will no doubt express his frustrations on trying to involve the political people.

Young: Please do.

Chanin: On the record you want me to do this? This is a tape that is soon to be edited, I assure you! [*laughter*]

Young: Please do.

Chanin: Let me just put it in a more of an organizational format. There is, and I think it's true for every President, a very serious problem of coordination as a campaign structure develops. When you're trying to run a campaign you develop the equivalent of White House senior staff deputies at the top of the campaign. Overall policy can be well coordinated because the people who are setting it are generally one and the same. It's no secret, I think, that in the Carter campaign there was a group which met generally in the morning with Bob Strauss, Hamilton, Anne, and some others for overall campaign policies. Whether everybody agreed with what came out of there or not was a different issue. They did meet and everybody had a good working relationship. However, the rest of the operational part is the key to the ability to do things on issues at the White House. For example, returning to our discussion of collegiality, Frank Moore's coordination deputy was able to call up and say, "We have a problem, and maybe we better figure out an answer to it." We would

do it in the next twenty minutes, and maybe get something done for him on the Hill. This collegial relationship couldn't happen with the campaign because you didn't pass those people in the hall and you didn't have lunch with them. We came into the situation where we wanted to invite political people into issues meetings since it helped with the issue and helped with the campaign. People were getting more active locally in the campaign. They were then having more influence with Congressmen and more accessibility to the press. So, it worked that way, but it also worked the other way. The more we involved them, the better off we were in the campaign. We would ask the state for a list.

Young: You're talking about the state's party, wouldn't you say?

Chanin: No, we were asking the Carter-Mondale people, who would often go to the state party people or the Carter-Mondale people in the state. Sometimes those officials were one and the same, sometimes they weren't. Needless to say, for half the cases the list came in the day before the event. Everybody on the campaign staff had been informed about the rules governing White House invitations, and this is very important. One rule was that no one was to be told that they were going to be invited to the White House. If the campaign people want to take credit, we would let them know who had been invited and allow them to relay the message afterward. Once the invitations went out, they could call to ask the person if they had received it. In this way the campaign person could take the whole credit, which is very important to a state party chairman, to a local Carter-Mondale coordinator, or to a mayor. To be able to take credit can be very important politically if you want to get a person to help you on an issue. People know who to deal with, who got them the invitation. But these guests should not know ahead of time because you never know when the President's schedule might change, or what's going to happen. We might not be able to invite that group because of a sudden, a more important issue, or for the politics of the reelection. We might have to invite some people from another state or district instead. Unfortunately, we received the list the day before the event and everybody on the list was already calling and asking, "When am I going to get my invitation?" Invitation leaks was problem one. Problem two, whether it was the national headquarters for Carter-Mondale professionals in the field or local people, was that the meaning of the invitation was misunderstood. We would often get calls from campaign people with ten names of people who wanted to come to the White House. It was fascinating to study the lists when you went back and tried to figure out who it was they wanted you to invite before you invited them and why were they being invited. I'm talking about the sloppy running of a campaign, and I'll be very honest about it. We would ask the regional coordinator for the southeast, "Why this list for Alabama? Who are the people on these lists and why are they named?" As I said, you get a sense of the audience when you look at lists. You begin to sense something like a common address in Alabama. In some cases the businesses listed didn't really ring true in the sense that they would really be people the White House wanted for an issue. Their lists didn't quite make sense from our viewpoint. Religious people from Alabama that have been invited to hear why we must have a stronger defense policy would make sense. If they were from Massachusetts, it just wouldn't make sense.

Young: Well, the campaign people had a different agenda from yours.

Chanin: Yes, but we also found out that their end was being handled very sloppily. They would just give me ten names of whoever wanted the invitation. They never considered what the invitees

were going to at the White House, a brunch, a briefing, or maybe it's something else. But for them it passed the word. This is how the hooker was invited—the Carter-Mondale campaign in Indiana. [*laughter*]

Wexler: She did an interview with the local press, "Lady of the Evening Gets Invited to the White House."

Chanin: I don't remember the issues, but she said she was going to turn a few tricks to raise the money to come.

Ryor: [redacted]

Young: So, that's the fault of the party?

Chanin: I don't know whether it was the party or the Carter-Mondale campaign but I will say this, the Democratic Party suffers right now from a great deal of inattention that goes back a number of years. For more than 48 years the Democratic Party has been the one in power. It has become accustomed to thinking of itself as the majority party. I believe that it will stay that way for a long time at the state and local government levels around this country where the Republican Party, for the most part, does not really exist. It did not really exist at least until four years ago. Most state houses, country courthouses, parish courthouses are controlled by the Democrats. A Republican Governor, or Senator, or a President may be elected, but if you look at the local races, at the nuts and bolts of politics, in very few places do you see Republicans except in certain parts of the country. But the Republicans have sensed, and I think we saw this in the Vermont situation, the importance of the states' party leadership. We very rarely got Democratic Congressmen or Senators to invite their state party chairman.

Wexler: That's right, the Republicans were much better. During all those lean years they were far more conscious of their political leadership. In the early days when we were having East Room briefings the political operation in the White House would insist that we call the desk people at the Democratic National Committee to get some names from them. And we did that a few times. But that desk person would call up some local person and say exactly what Mike said they should not have said: "Who do you know that would like to come to the White House?" They had absolutely no relation to the issue involved and we were constantly getting all these yo-yos who wouldn't help us at all! So, we quit doing it.

The same thing happened with the White House social secretary, a kind of a side bar, when we were organizing a list for a state dinner. State dinners are very important occasions and it is a very big deal to be invited to a state dinner at the White House. Those invitation lists should be assembled very carefully. She was always given an assigned number that were in effect to be political names. But she soon found out that she was getting the same kinds of names that we were getting. Instead of some care going into the selection of people from the grassroots, the young kids who were manning those desks at the National Committee would call up and say to Joe Blow, his friend back in Des Moines, "Would you like to go to a state dinner?" His name would then get on the list. The lists would come in and the social secretary wouldn't know who they were, or where they were supposed to come from. And there was political harm in this as a lot of seats were wasted

in some of those state dinners. Finally, we got into that and stopped it, but it was a very sloppy kind of operation that did not help us.

Chanin: And that carries over into what we were saying earlier about issues. John White was a very competent person and was up on the issues. Where he could help us effectively by involving a state party leadership on a particular issue, he did so. But, we found that the state party leadership often disagreed on the issue, and where they did agree you could not rely on the local party leadership to be effective. This held true even if you educated them as to why they should be involved in a national issue and what it meant locally.

Abraham: How would you have determined whom to select for Virginia, from the Virginia Democratic Party, for example?

Chanin: Well, you would talk to the Lieutenant Governor first because he sees and understands national issues. You might then talk to people in the administration who were from Virginia. We would then try to find (and I don't remember if we found or didn't find people in Virginia) some party officials who were thought to be effective and might help. We tried though, and in a lot of places we had people in to see what would happen. But generally, because of the weakness of the Democratic Party nationally in terms of grassroots operations, this kind of thing was not too successful. Often you could not utilize the party structure, so you had to build your own operation. We would have to do this if we wanted an operation going in Alabama to help with an issue. New York had more party strength from our viewpoint, and there were several states where the party people were very important to our operation.

Wexler: And sometimes they didn't agree with us on the issue. So we were out of luck.

Young: But as recently as the Kennedy administration one person on his liaison staff, Vic Donahue, was to be designated liaison to the big city organizations. It was interesting that he was put on the Congressional Liaison staff, yet Kennedy would never let him go on the White House payroll. He kept him on the Democratic National Committee payroll to activate the local Democratic organizations.

Chanin: Before Abscam [FBI sting operation 1979-80] and some other things, there were votes you could get out of Philadelphia by just getting Mayor Rizzo. There were votes you could get out of Chicago by getting Mayor Daley. You can't get those votes from Philadelphia with Mayor Green. Koch can't do it in New York. House Speaker O'Neill might be able to help you in Boston and Massachusetts. But around this country the big-city machines are no longer there. Maybe Mayor Coleman Young can help with a couple of votes in Detroit, as can Mayor Bradley in Los Angeles.

Wexler: It's just not there anymore.

Magleby: I would like to follow-up on this. We have shifted from legislative politics to electoral politics and I can't hold back my curiosity about your involvement in the 1980 campaign. Specifically, were you involved in orchestrating the activities of the President that may have had a specific issue focus but might have also had a focus vis-à-vis specific primary elections? I suppose

that there are a couple of examples to keep in mind. There is the announcement just before the Wisconsin primary about the hostages. A different and more germane example would be the town meetings format that the President would frequently use to appeal on a set of issues at some specific jurisdiction. To what extent, if at all, did the Public Liaison office involve itself in helping to plan activities surrounding the elections?

Wexler: Very little. I participated in some campaign meetings in which I simply based my advice to the campaign committee on past experience in politics. But our office was not involved in an active way in the campaign. The town meetings, which all took place outside of Washington, were structured by the advance staff, the campaign staff, and the policy staff, but we had nothing to do with it.

Light: So the town meeting idea grew from some other part of the White House?

Wexler: Well, the whole town meeting format came out of the East Room briefing experience and we did town meetings because the President was doing so well in the East Room situations on issues. We structured and used the town meeting format for two years before the campaign started, and it was determined as a result of this experience that the format was best for him on the campaign trail. The real tragedy was that he didn't start the campaign town meetings early enough. He'd been out there for six months—

Chanin: There were a couple of things that we did with the campaign as far as coordination of the White House. During the campaign we did not get the kind of press nationally that we felt was important for constituency work of the campaign. The President has a series of meetings with consumers, elderly, Hispanics, and numbers of interest groups like them. The President met with some of these people regularly. These people who came and talked with the President then generally endorsed him. I think the one that received the most press attention was the environmental meeting because of Russell Peterson's endorsement. He was a Republican.

Wexler: That was late and I don't think it was a major part of what we did.

Magleby: But given your daily involvement with interest groups, as Carter was campaigning in New York or other states in the primary elections, was there ever a discussion through your office with those people about the possible endorsements and such things?

Wexler: Yes, we did. Since most of the groups in Washington are essentially nonprofit 501C3's with a lobbying arm and a nonlobbying arm, they are prohibited by law from endorsing candidates as a group. Therefore, we would bring in all the individuals to meet with the President. As individuals they could leave the meeting and endorse the President while essentially being identified with their national groups. This occurred in October, and we orchestrated the senior citizens, consumers, environmentalists, Blacks, Hispanics, mayors and Governors, et cetera. All those meetings and all those endorsements were public—

Chanin: There was a follow-up plan whereby those leaders worked with their counterparts in the various states where they were strong and where it made sense to have their support. In California, environmental leaders not only gave us an endorsement but when Reagan did his thing about air

pollution, they were all over the airways and out to the airport to greet him. So many of these groups made all the usual kinds of political claims that you would do normally to try to do yourself. And they would get votes in California over that issue.

Wexler: But this approach never really translated into people carrying the load at the grassroots level. And this is where the special interest arguments really fall down in a general election. People make their decisions on bases other than the environmental issues and consumer issues. Things that are their consuming passion for three years no longer remain their consuming passion when they finally have to make a decision in that voting booth. Other issues intrude and force decisions to be made on a different basis. It was a source of continuing frustration for us, as you can imagine, because we felt we had given them a fair shake for four years and they turned their backs on us. I can give you countless examples, not the least of which were the women's groups. I think they are going to pay a hell of a price for their purity over the next four years.

Magleby: This same pattern was true as the general election approached in terms of interaction with delegates. The media presented a picture that many Carter delegates who might be wavering or were unsure about what to do on the platform fight were invited to White House meetings in the East Room. Were you involved in those kinds of sessions?

Wexler: Well, there were four or five meetings in Washington of all the Carter delegates to the convention. The meetings were split between a hotel and the White House. All substantive meetings were held at the hotel and the delegates were invited to the White House for a reception, nonsubstantive, in terms of politics. The reception was paid for by the campaign. We were involved in those meetings and I was deeply involved, not on any kind of issues basis though.

In another incarnation I had a little experience with party rules and I was the one who briefed all the delegates on the upcoming rules fight at the convention over Rule FC3.

Young: There is another side to Mr. Magleby's question. We have been told by many people in the press that for the last two years, everything Carter did was motivated toward the next election. Was decision-making in the White House really dictated by electoral considerations? Or is that a myth?

Wexler: Boy, I'll say! Nothing in my judgment gives that an ounce of truth.

Young: It comes to the question of how your operation—

Wexler: Right. First, our operation wasn't tuned that way at all. We couldn't have functioned that way because half the time we were passing legislation we were passing them with Republican votes. We needed as many Republicans as we did Democrats. Secondly, if the President's decisions had all been made on a political basis, he wouldn't have done half the things that he did in the last year.

Young: We just wanted to hear you say it. [*laughter*]

Wexler: It was a matter of enormous frustration for some of us that the President didn't particularly like to hear in any circumstance that a decision was political. It was one of the first

lessons that I learned in the White House. I can recall one of the first meetings I attended with the President when I went to the White House in the Cabinet Room with other members of the senior staff about a particular issue. The President went around the room asking each staff member what they thought he should do on this particular issue. When he got to me I started by saying, "Mr. President, I think that politically—" I got about that far when he shut me up and said, "I don't want to hear what the political implications are of this issue. I want to do what's right, not what's political." He put me down in front of the whole staff. So I was very careful after that to make my arguments, but in a different way. [*laughter*]

Young: And I have found an example of exactly the same thing in every administration except Nixon's.

Wexler: It was as if there was something wrong with making a decision politically or at least factoring political considerations into a decision made in the White House. And this totally blew my mind! I could not believe that anybody who operated in an atmosphere where literally everything's political could take such a view.

Ryor: [redacted]

Young: People might believe him.

Ryor: [redacted]

Thompson: You're saying, though, that it's not hypocrisy. The phrase always used is that this kind of language is the tribute that vice pays to virtue, but you're saying it's more than this? This President really believed it.

Wexler: They all believe it. I think Ronald Reagan believes it too. He made a "Holier than Thou" speech in which he said, "I don't want anybody to make any decisions based on the fact that I'm going to run again the next election."

Young: Almost verbatim Richard Neustadt told me exactly the same story about Harry Truman. When he was offered a view of what he ought to do politically he said, "I don't want to hear that."

Chanin: I'll bet you Kennedy never said that.

Wexler: Probably not. But wasn't there a difference with the Truman story? A Truman anecdote I have heard involves Secretary [Dean] Acheson. He said, "Mr. President, this is the foreign policy we should pursue, but we can't sustain it politically." And Truman turned him down and said, "I'm the professional in this area, you tell me what the policy ought to be in terms of the national interest, and I'll tell you what is possible politically. Don't pretend you're a politician." It seems to me that Truman held a fundamentally different view, certainly not the degradation of politics.

Young: The case I'm thinking about was not that one.

Chanin: There is something about Carter himself, and this is related to the question of politics and the nature of the Carter Presidency; he did develop a very good understanding of what was politically possible and what wasn't over the last couple of years. The energy legislation and the Alaska lands bill would be good examples.

Wexler: But he always did that. He just didn't want to intellectually acknowledge that the decisions he was making or the actions he was taking were political. It's not that he didn't know, it was a matter of some frustration to all of us who tended to feel that politics is an honorable profession.

Thompson: How could he have cited as his mentor, then, people like Reinhold Niebuhr?

Wexler: Good question.

McCleskey: I had intended to follow-up on this matter—the concept of politics—but I'm not exactly sure what my concern is. I'm interested in the range of conceptions that you encountered in the White House and in the people that you dealt with generally. Your position, I think, is some distance apart from that of the President, but wouldn't you say that the staff as a whole tended to be rather more in your line of thinking? Or did you find a mix?

Wexler: It was mixed.

McCleskey: So, there were people who thought in the same terms as the President?

Wexler: Yes. In the White House when the President sets the tone, everybody marches according to that rhythm.

Ryor: [redacted]

Wexler: Generally, it was mixed in a lot of different areas; not only in their particular attention to issues as defined as political, but even in their perception of interest groups. If you were a policy person, you had a relationship with interest groups virtually every day in one way or another because you were always talking about issues. The Congressional Liaison staff, who relied on those groups to provide the muscle on an issue, thought that generally they were a real pain in the neck. I mean, they really suffered with them and often not very well. They really didn't like to work with them in almost any situation.

I would try whenever I could to mobilize the environmentalists, for instance, behind an issue and, well, they would work like hell. Sometimes they helped and sometimes they didn't. But they were always a visible presence and we could always count on them to stir up some interest at the grassroots level. The Congressional Liaison people generally considered them to be in their way. Their reaction was similar with virtually every other interest group you can identify. Mainly because it meant a lot of compromise on the President's position and a great deal of talking and negotiating. They didn't want to be bothered with this area at all.

Yet in the long run, the interest groups were the people who passed the Alaska lands bill. They were the people who helped pass the windfall profits tax, one of the few issues in which we organized a visible nation-wide citizens committee with outside financing and organization. But the Congressional Liaison office generally never thought that they were much help, even though they couldn't really get along without them. They suffered, but not well.

Neustadt: Did you also find that the National Security people tended to think that politics was beneath contempt?

Wexler: Yes, although [Zbigniew] Brzezinski learned a lot, I think, from those briefings. He became one of the most cooperative people in terms of working with our office, particularly whenever we needed him to talk to interest groups, both in large and small groups. He didn't start that way, but he soon liked it. Among other things, it became a kind of forum for him and he enjoyed it and he was very good at it.

He was spectacular with some groups. In 1979 we brought in college presidents and student body presidents from all over the United States for a day of meetings. This was held immediately after the invasion of Afghanistan during the draft registration debate, but it had been scheduled before the registration issue had grown to major proportions. One of Zbigniew's presentations was before kids who were, for the most part, philosophically opposed to the kinds of things that he stood for. Yet, they gave a standing ovation at the end! He did such a good job with them, and I think it was the highlight of the day. They were bored to death by Stu Eizenstat and complained afterward that he had gone on too long. But Stu was saying all the things that they really agreed with, while Zbigniew was not, and they just loved him. He was a real show for them.

Chanin: I think the degree of sensitivity among the National Security people to politics depended on the issue to some degree. The people who worked, for example, in foreign assistance were very politically oriented and sensitive to what needed to be done to get Congressional support for the level of foreign assistance. The people who were involved to some extent with SALT, both the Defense Department and the State Department, understood the educational and political needs.

Wexler: They didn't start that way, Mike!

Chanin: No, they didn't. I should say that the foreign assistance people really did understand because they were always pushing us. The State Department or the SALT people started without that understanding, but with some teaching at the East Room briefings and some reminders from us about what happened in the Panama Canal, a number of them became more politically interested. If

you want to take the issue of SALT as a political issue, then you'll have to accept the democratic process.

Light: I just wanted to pick up on something that was said this morning. You said that there was a learning curve within the White House. This brings up the notion that there are sometimes stable cycles that run through an administration (i.e. when you have a yearly programming cycle or a cycle of increased learning through a whole administration). Some people also believe that you have a cycle of declining public approval and party support that is difficult to break. And as I understood it, your office was designed to try and break that cycle, especially the downward curve in political support.

I wanted to get a sense as to whether or not you felt that there was that downward curve on two levels. My own judgment in looking back is that we got to the White House too late to change the basic impression of incompetence vis-à-vis legislation that had been set over the first year. My second observation is that because of the nature of our work, essentially starting all over again with each issue, we never translated the success of one to the essential success of the next. We never knit the whole thing together. We never had, in effect, an integrated whole that you could point to and say, "Here are the successes of the Carter administration." People have very hard times with linkages.

So we had a bunch of programs that we worked on and we were successful in about 80 percent of them, but nobody was ever able to see that whole, and we suffered accordingly. But again, I think our office suffered from the perception that had been established in the first year and I don't think we ever changed it.

Chanin: I think that's an organizational problem in the White House. Our plate was extremely full with what we were doing, given the number of issues involved. Jody Powell's responsibilities with the press kept him going late at night. Whenever anything broke, he had to deal with it then and immediately. He was limited in his ability to develop long-range planning in public relations for the President. To be successful he would have to put the package together, sell it to the public, and coordinate Public Liaison with Media Liaison and Congressional Liaison. He didn't have the time if he was going to also deal successfully, as I think he did, with the press. So, I think there was a gap there at the White House in the Carter administration.

We were talking earlier about the Nixon administration. After Kline left, there was really never anybody who had the job of advertising the President's accomplishments or whatever it was that he stood for. It would give him a national posture, which is also part of making him a more effective President. We talked about this a lot.

Ryor: [redacted]

Young: But it's much more than an organizational problem, I think. Mike, I remember something you said at lunch break. You were asked whether it was fun to work at the White House and you said yes. I wondered why, in God's name, it was! In a sense, you got the worst of both worlds, you come into an administration that is beleaguered with incompetence, doesn't know anything about Washington politics, and doesn't know how to work the machinery. You set up an operation that demonstrates the reverse. You changed things. Then, when your work comes to fruition, the President is thought to be politicking and not minding the store. He's thought to be concerned only by political considerations, whatever that means. So I'm surprised you didn't say, "We had a terribly frustrating time."

Ryor: [redacted]

Chanin: Reagan's going to find the same thing a year from now if he changes his economic assumptions. After they've been out for a week, or for however long, they will talk about his second set of economic assumptions. They will flip-flop [and] probably write the story that the chairman of the CEA [Council of Economic Advisers] is at odds with the head of OMB.

Wexler: I think that part of our problem with the press was of our own making. I don't believe we handled ourselves the way we should have in the early days. An example I like to use is the fifty dollar rebate. It is a perfect example of a responsible President changing his mind because he decided that economically he had done enough stimulating. Although the rebate seemed like a good idea at the time, it was clear that it was overstimulating the economy and was not necessary. And instead of saying to the country, "Look, I've gone too far and I don't need to do this now. I'm sorry I proposed this to the Congress and received help on it, but now I think that we had better retreat for the good of the country on this particular issue." He should have called the Congress too, rather than simply announcing that he was changing his mind. The preparatory work had not been done with the Congress, the interest groups, and the press. If he had done so, he would have been hailed as a statesman rather than condemned as an incompetent who had turned his back on his buddies and left them hanging out there by themselves. But there are numerous examples of that.

Rourke: In that particular kind of issue, would you expect them to consult with the Public Liaison office?

Wexler: Absolutely.

Light: You did well with the top six or seven issues that you identified as the President's. But as you went lower down on that agenda to the White House items and then to the agency items, was the success rate quite so high?

Wexler: I thought it was pretty good.

Light: Are you suggesting then that the President should try to do more, make his agenda much more visible, and just concentrate on those few select items?

Wexler: Well, the problem was that he concentrated on so many items that it became a jumble in the public's mind. As a result they didn't think he did anything. This impression was really the issue and it continued to be right through the campaign. If the President had started out by saying, "I'm going to focus on three things in my first term: peace security, economic security, and national security," he would have been better off. Everyone would have understood it. People would have been able to cope with whatever he was doing, and he would have had a tangible record to defend when he ran for reelection. But he didn't do it that way. He didn't define it that way and it became hard for people to see the results. His work on the deregulation issue received no visibility whatsoever, yet his work is going to change the face of the economy for the next ten years. Again, there are numerous examples.

Jones: Listening to the three of you describe this operation, it struck me that you were engaged in a tremendously ambitious project to simulate a legislature. Outreach would be calling knowing the territory for a Congressman or a Senator; task forces and sub-groups were called committees and subcommittees; East Room material produced would be called hearings; and producing the records and reports would be called casework. It would have been very interesting having to have handled the work that developed. Legislative policy result was a goal with credit-taking on both sides.

I wondered if you had this in mind! Did it develop that people, specifically the members, saw you as competitive with Congress? Was there the creation of a kind of small legislative system within the White House?

Wexler: From my own experience I never felt that members ever thought we were in any way competitive. They seemed grateful for what we could do to make their votes more comfortable for them, which is essentially what we were trying to do. Mike and John and even Rick can speak for themselves, but I never got the feeling that they felt this way. A couple of times the pressure got so hard that they would complain and say, "Why don't you turn her off or them off?" Once or twice they asked for help after it happened. [redacted] That was the only example I ever saw of hostility in a given situation. There were times, however, when we had so many people from the grassroots that we had organized to impact on Congressmen they finally just screamed, "Uncle," but they did it in kind of a friendly way.

Jones: Let me ask you a little differently. If I'm correct, then there is a Congress performing many of the functions that you performed. Why didn't the President rely on the Congress to perform these kinds of services with committees and subcommittees, which have traditionally performed the function of organizing these interests? Why wasn't the Congress thought of as performing those kinds of roles?

Wexler: Well, I don't believe they were strong enough to do that. I don't think they had any interest in doing it. The Congress was saying to the President, "Show me that you have got enough support out there to earn my vote for this issue." And they weren't saying, "I am going to get out there and show that there is enough support for you to earn my vote for this issue." They wanted it proven to them so that they could feel safe and secure in supporting him. That's what happens when you don't have any strong political system. Congress had no particular vested interest in doing that because it wasn't going to help them at home.

Chanin: In addition to that, there has been, particularly in the last eight years or so as more sympathy has been created, a relationship between interest groups and specific subcommittees. People move the triangle; in that agency to the subcommittee with the interest group and back and around in Washington. That is generally the limit of their ability in terms of those groups with which they work. We were trying to deal with groups much broader than that to get the business community involved with the Panama Canal, with possible cost containment since they paid the premiums on health insurance policies, or with synthetic fuels since they consume energy as well as produce it.

Wexler: And look at those issues. There are no easy issues. There never are. The stuff we worked on was all controversial. It turned off as many people as we turned on. So they were always in a dilemma, whether it was the Panama Canal, which was certainly no popular issue to those guys, the windfall profits tax, the Department of Education, the Department of Energy, this synthetic fuels legislation, or the classic, the Natural Gas Policy Act, which pitted the consuming states against the producing states. I mean it never was easy for any of them to vote affirmatively on anything. They always needed a little help and they weren't necessarily in the mood of going out and showing us. They wanted us to show them.

Ryor: [redacted]

Neustadt: Let me give you another example. On the trucking deregulation fight there was only one member of Congress who ever had any interest in constituency bills and that was [Edward] Kennedy. But he was on the wrong committee. The people who were on the relevant committees were much more comfortable being in the position of judges, standing back for a while and seeing where the political forces were playing out, even when privately they would tell us they were on our side. They were quite happy to have the folks downtown doing the constituency building.

Young: Chuck, when you raised your question I thought if this were a group of Congressional people, we might switch some things and say what you are describing is a simulation of the White House.

Wexler: Yes, that's right.

Jones: When you worked on these developing support core issues and programs, did you ever get involved in trying to thwart some particular policy that was developing, either in Congress or within particular groups? Did you work on the negative side?

Wexler: Officially or unofficially?

Jones: Both.

Wexler: In an official sense I would guess that the times we worked on issues in a negative way were with the vetoes or working with the public for acceptance. For instance, on the President's decision not to accept the first budget resolution this year, which took a lot of explaining, there were certainly negative decisions on which we worked. There were other budget and policy matters that were being developed during the time we were doing a lot of outreaching consultations. We would see something coming down the road that we knew was going to be a disaster for the President, and we would try very hard to stop it.

I can go back to the reorganization issues. I thought from the day we got in there that those were a political disaster and not accomplishable in any sense from start to finish. I always said so both before I got to the White House and after. I tried very hard to stop that process whenever I got the chance. Very often we would see budget issues coming down the pike that we knew were not going to fly. We would try to get the President to change his mind when he was beginning to move in the direction that I thought was wrong. Sometimes he did and sometimes he didn't. I think that is part of being a successful and effective staff person. Certainly conventional wisdom is that when you fight an issue, once the President does decide, you have to go along with it and publicly support it. But you owe it to yourself if you feel strongly about it to make your case as strong as you can before that decision is made.

Chanin: There were some issues that we officially fought and there were various tactics used; the same as far as interest groups went. We did the same kind of thing with it in balancing the budget amendment and with the legislative veto. It basically cost us the regulatory reform bill. There are the two clear cases where the administration took a negative position. It is, by the way, much easier to get them through Congress.

Young: I think that is an important point because usually we talk as if everything the President does is getting Congress to move. That's our rhetoric and our expectations. When you actually look at it, an awful lot of the work and an awful lot of history is stopping actions in Congress. I agree with you. It is much more effective for stopping.

Chanin: In the House, one problem was the phased deregulation of oil prices which were initiated. We had to try to derail this in Congressional committees.

Wexler: Every year we had to, in a sense, stop the Republicans from rolling us on the debt limit. It is an interesting switch to see President Reagan now.

Kettl: I would like to pick up the point on ad hoc groups and pursue that a bit. We have talked so far about the role of interest groups as basically proxies for parties, at least in terms of political

strength. There are a couple of points on that which individually may not point in any particular direction but which together I think have some important implications.

The first is that the interest group coalitions that make things work in the White House point of view seem to be much different from the more stable coalitions that administrators can count on once a piece of legislation is actually passed. The nature of coalitions seems to be a little bit more stable or at least certainly not the sort of shifting sands nature of things that you are describing. I also think they tend to rely more on Washington-based lobbies as opposed to reaching out across the country.

Again, I don't want to characterize that too harshly but I am wondering if the nature of the legislative agenda as compared with the administrative agenda makes first of all a tendency toward more ad hoc, unstable activity that means that half the Washington-based interest groups get into the field more, and whether or not your role is basically that of matchmaker. Did you have a situation where you never had trips to call back in the next round, making the whole legislative agenda from the President's point of view a continuing struggle that you have to begin again each time? Would you talk about your view of interest groups, particularly from the legislative side as it compared with the administrative agenda?

Wexler: Well, how you organized coalitions of interests in the context of Washington-based interest groups or beyond the Beltway, inside or outside the Beltway, really depended on what the issue was. We worked with issues like SALT II, the windfall profits tax, the Panama Canal Treaties, the Department of Education where virtually every state education association in the country was deeply involved, or other issues that are broadly based, with broad based grassroots coalitions behind them. We could easily reach out beyond the Beltway and organize, and it was very important to do so.

There were some issues on which you simply couldn't do that because there was no interest whatsoever. Hospital cost containment was an example of a failed issue where we tried to do that and it didn't make any difference either inside or outside; we lost. We tried as hard as we could twice to build a grassroots coalition on hospital cost containment and lost both times. There were two reasons: one, because we could never make people feel affected by the increase in hospital costs because there was always an intervener, the insurance company. Somebody else was paying the bills and they never felt the pain enough to get excited and exercised about it.

Secondly, because at the grassroots level the opposition was so well organized and so influential that we could never do anything to dent it, and that's because on every local hospital board was the president of the bank, the president of whatever local community organizations there were, the leading lights in all the religious organizations in town and so forth and so on. We were defeated outside the Beltway before we ever got going.

Some of the issues on which Rick worked, some of the deregulation issues had absolutely no interest. It was very hard to establish a grassroots lobby for some of the deregulation issues. On others it was possible but not very much so. So whether or not we could get away with it really depended pretty much on what the issue was, how we could organize, and how broad our coalition was.

It is not useful for political organizing and for building support around issues to have the ad hoc situation we had. In fact it is destructive, but I don't know how else you can do it. I don't believe that anybody who works in the White House really has any time to think about that. Now I like the luxury of thinking about the destruction I wrought on the political parties for the last three years in order to try to get a job done for my President, but I didn't have time to think about it when I was in the White House.

The major point that I would like to make in response to your question is that we were building our coalitions around a defined self-interest. That self-interest changes with every issue, so you are going to have to go back each time and start all over again. It does not in any sense create a political base, and it's an issue that all of us in our leisure now are going to have to address in terms of the future of the political system as we know it in this country. It is a serious and important issue, but it was, to conclude, an ad hoc operation. And as I said, when it is self-interest, you do have to start all over again. I don't know if that is responsive to your question.

Chanin: Basically I don't disagree with what Anne just said, but with the preface that building ad hoc coalitions is necessarily counterproductive to the development of political parties. As a matter of fact, it could well be beneficial, depending on how the people who operate the party want to make use of it. I don't think that the Democratic party for the last period of years did a damn thing toward trying to do any kind of grassroots organizing for the party. It had a virtually nonexistent mailing list, nonexistent fund-raising, no training seminars, nothing. Now, the Republican Party, on the other hand, had all of those activities. I would submit that it is irrelevant to what we were doing on issues, other than perhaps making the President successful. This helped the Democratic Party to the extent that the leader of the party's success has to be good for the party and thus help them in their local organizing. Otherwise it was irrelevant. If the Democratic Party had wanted to go along and become organized at the grassroots level, it should have had leadership training programs, developed mailing lists, and so on. I think that the issues based on the activities and the opportunities of patronage, which control of the White House provides, would be beneficial.

Wexler: But in order to do that you have to butt into the President's program. It may very well be in this time that the people who are at least activists or organized, and whole concerns that don't jive with his are not interested in buying in simply because they are Democrats. I think this is part of the problem.

Chanin: That's partly true but that just depends on how you organize the party, how specific the issues are, and how broad the directions around which you are organizing are.

Kettl: Let me suggest two possible dangers. I am not even sure whether they are true or not, and I certainly don't mean to imply that they are the only ones, but two possible dangers in proceeding on an ad hoc basis and building a coalition for each one. The first is that issues like Ms. Wexler described, which have no natural constituency, run into enormous problems because there are no chips to cash in from the past. So that on constituency-free programs or programs without a natural constituency, you run into enormous problems of getting anything done because the standard operating procedures don't work.

The second possibility is that since you have to begin from scratch on each program, it is an enormously costly process. You have to begin by putting a coalition together on each program. There are relatively few economies of scale except that you know how to do it and you have got a list of names that you can call from previous efforts. It is costly, and more costly than it might be otherwise. When you have got a busy agenda, it limits either the amount of time you can spend or the number of items on the agenda with which you can be successful.

Chanin: Yes, but the President should have a limited agenda. That gets back to how many issues we had to start with. In a limited process, we should have had less items on our agenda to start with.

Wexler: The other thing is if you follow our model, the coalition almost builds itself because you start advertising when you are putting the policy together, which means you don't have to reach out to the people. The people essentially are reaching in to you and saying: "I want in; I want my seat at the table." It gets bigger and bigger, and you don't have to work very hard at it because the word is out early on and everybody wants a piece of the action. Later on when it finally gets going, then you have to organize it, keep it going, structure it and target it. In the early days, during the policy development stage, it's fairly easy to get your players assembled.

Kettl: I guess what I am really suggesting is that playing the matchmaker role had certain clear and predictable impact on how policy proceeds. It tends to exclude some kinds of policies and makes other kinds of policies more costly, but in any case it is not neutral with respect to the outcome.

Wexler: That's correct.

Young: That's true, Don, but when I was a graduate student back in the 1950s first learning about how coalitions were built in an aggregation of interests, I was taught that this is the way we proceed, this is the way one has to proceed. You build a party. But it has become harder to do it. The locus of initiative for doing that has changed. The party is no longer as much help, but I don't see that there is a great change. I see it as being done in a different way. I think it is almost inherent in the nature of American politics, don't you?

Kettl: Well, I think so, but I think that the expanding number of interests and the nature of agendas that Presidents bring are both different. That kind of approach is at least not neutral with respect to outcomes.

Wexler: Well, you know it is interesting. I can't stress how strongly it becomes apparent when you start working on these issues how much the lack of partisanship exists. Take an issue like Synthetic Fuels Corporation. S932, which was the bill that finally came out, included alternative sources of energy as well as solar and energy conservation and lots of other things. There were many people in that coalition who essentially were anti-Carter. We had every earthmover, every associated general contractor, every coal company, all the people who were in the synthetic fuels industry as well as all the environmentalists who wanted the solar mechanism.

We had the most elective combination of people because there was so much in the bill. People weren't thinking about Democratic or Republican, they were thinking, *What's in there for me, how*

can I get it? And, *Now that this whole thing has been put together in a big mishmash I have to be for it.* So we have the Associated General Contractors who are going to build those synthetic fuels plants, all the coal companies who were going to electrify and gasify coal, the building trades and the solar lobby, every energy conservation group in the country, and a lot of other people as well. Sometimes you don't go out and look for it, but it will come to you.

Young: That makes certain things possible that might not be possible under a tight party system.

Kettl: At least a little bit different as well, I take it.

Chanin: Let me get back to the point about the party and the credit taking. The party could use something like that even if you (or every person that you are trying to recruit into the Democratic Party) don't buy a piece of it. You don't have to be a good Democrat or a good Republican. You don't have to support every single thing that's on the platform of Reagan or Carter or whoever. You can have the organization, you can have the structure, you can take S932, a significant accomplishment and the completion of an energy policy, and mark it as a Democratic accomplishment. The truth of the matter is, both structurally at the White House and in the Democratic Party, we really didn't have a mechanism for doing that after it was done. But it could have been used as a usual thing for party building if you had a structure in place which you could use.

Wayne: The issue I wanted to raise is close to the one that Don has been talking about. It doesn't directly concern parties though. You talked very persuasively about your outreach program. I am really concerned with what you have just mentioned, the energy program, and the extent to which now, almost every single unit in the Executive Office of the President is susceptible to interest group contact, communication, and influence. I was just amazed in talking not only with DPS [Domestic Policy Staff] people but the people in OMB. They consult on a regular basis with members of interest groups on some policy formulation types of questions. This office has encouraged that consultation by getting them involved in the policymaking stages.

Yet, I recall President Carter saying not too long ago how difficult it was to govern because of all these single issue groups in Washington, and because everybody is self-interested. Then Reagan goes on television and says we have got to go for the whole and not individual self-interest. Lloyd Cutler writes an article for *Foreign Affairs* where he talks about the difficulty of governing in part because of all these self-interests. You didn't open Pandora's box, but you certainly kept it open.

Chanin: I think we want Ed to go for the whole, which is what we were in a sense doing. You cannot go for the whole by saying you can't be involved. The only way you are going to convince the National Association of Widget Makers that they don't need protection against Japanese widget makers but instead should have full trade is by stressing that it helps the total economy to have open trade. Bring them in and have them help you design your foreign trade program or your tariff program and get them into a piece of it so that they understand it and you broaden their horizons.

Wayne: But then you can't bitch about the perniciousness of single issues—

Chanin: You can only give this opportunity, at least, to broaden your horizons, and to do something in the national interest. Yet they stand back and say: "It's all or nothing. Give us protection or to hell with it all." Then, you can say that you are being irresponsible and that's where the difficulty is. That's true with women's groups, for example. Look at the way they behaved in the last election and the last year or two. It is true of a whole number of groups. It has made it very difficult to govern because of the fact that they are unwilling to participate in what is the whole.

Wexler: I really wish President Reagan luck in trying to keep the whole and to function in the national interest, and I hope he succeeds. I don't say that sarcastically, I mean it sincerely, but Mike is right. What every President has complained about, and what our President certainly was complaining about, was the fact that he reached out, probably more than any other President in history, had the most open White House and gave people the broadest opportunity to participate in issues and to have their say. Most of the time they were saying, "I want it all. I am not going to take part if you don't give me everything, I won't play."

Where we were successful was where we were able to overcome those emotions and get these groups to act in the national interest, which was in almost every case a compromise with what their stated goals were to begin with. It was that way in the Department of Education, God knows. That certainly isn't what the NEA [National Education Association] campaigned about in 1976, but that's a perfectly legitimate gripe in my judgment. Some of the most blatant abusers of what I consider to be an extraordinary behavior on the part of the President of the United States were the women's groups. Now they are paying a terrible price, not only in terms of policy but also in terms of representation in the federal government.

Wayne: My point is that when you create communication, it is going to concern not only what you are not interested in but what you are opposed to. In a sense you are fueling the fire even by trying to control that fire.

Chanin: Look at the options.

Ryor: [redacted]

Neustadt: If you want to dampen the single interest groups, it seems to me the only ways to do it are a) to have a really effective means of communicating with the country as a whole, and b) to change the campaign finance laws. Talking to these people didn't strengthen their hand. They are there anyway and if you ignore them you really get screwed.

Young: Can't run a closed shop.

McCleskey: My question is a follow-up; it's not my turn but it would be appropriate to ask it at this time. Clearly there was a price that the groups would attempt to extract for their cooperation. How did you go about determining whether the price was right?

Wexler: Well, we determined whether the price was right based on what we wanted policy-wise. In the early stages we had a pretty fair idea of the kind of thing we wanted to send up to the Hill. They would come in, we would talk it through and negotiate it, and try to structure a policy based on what we thought we could buy based on a very clear understanding of what the President wanted. There were some times when we would end up with or articulate something with which some of the major groups did not agree. That didn't mean we didn't go ahead and do it, but we tried to be as accommodating as we could within the perimeters the President set out for us.

Then we moved to the next stage, which was subcommittee markups on the floor. Any changes were made in the dynamic legislative process where Senators and Congressmen got involved. The negotiating was virtually out of our hands and in the hands then of the President and the Congressional Liaison staff, sometimes influenced by the interest groups that didn't get what they wanted downtown and simply went up to the Hill to try to do it all over again. Sometimes they succeeded and sometimes they didn't, but our tradeoffs were limited to the boundaries that we were given by the President. We never went beyond them.

McCleskey: All of you, in effect, were involved, not just somebody from Eizenstat's office.

Wexler: No, when you got to that point it was Stuart or the deputies. The end result always came back to Stuart, to me, and to whoever else happened to be involved. But one of the reasons that my operation was successful was because I had the wholehearted participation of the domestic policy staff. I could not have done my job without them, ever.

Chanin: An example is urban policy, where we had certain dollar limits. The issue was pockets of poverty. We were designing the legislation—The poverty issue is whether or not, for cities that don't qualify for UDAG [Urban Development Action Grant] because of the level of distress, you can take a part of the city which is a pocket of poverty, and create a qualifying area. That costs extra money and the pot is going to be smaller for the rest of the cities. Mayor's organizations and so on of course did not want to get in the middle of a fight between their more northern cities which all would qualify and the pocket of poverty areas. So they said make the pot bigger. Well, we had certain dollar limits. We went through a series of negotiations on designing that limit by having someone from the Treasury or from HUD [Department of Housing and Urban Development] make a computer run on what different combinations might cost. We went to the Hill with an agreement on UDAG and a disagreement on the pockets of poverty because we could not go beyond certain things the President had set out. UDAG passed and resolved the issues as it moved through the Congress.

Rourke: In this office, essentially you were localizing constituencies. This is the sort of thing that agencies have been doing for scores of years. Were there ever occasions in which you found yourself locking horns with agencies that were mobilizing constituencies in directions different from where you were going? I was thinking for example on the Department of Education, would HEW [Health, Education and Welfare] be mobilizing groups somewhat different to the direction you were mobilizing them? Or, in connection with SALT, would the Department of Defense ever be involved in them?

Chanin: SALT was a problem.

Ryor: [redacted]

Rourke: Was this education case unique or did departments mobilize different kinds of groups fairly frequently?

Wexler: I would say it didn't happen very often. Where it happened with greatest regularity and with total predictability was the Department of Defense. I think it happens with every President although I can't be sure. There were just dozens of documented cases with the President taking a stand on an issue and the general, the admirals, the colonels, and the lobbyists going up there and taking the total opposite position and lobbying against the President. We caught them at it all the time.

In the defense authorization veto, the big issue was the nuclear carrier. While our people were up there working like hell to try to get the Congress to sustain the President veto, they were in a room in the Capitol showing movies on why this nuclear carrier was the greatest thing since sliced bread. At that point in time Hamilton had a little institution, which kind of petered out after a while, which was a weekly meeting with designated representatives of the Cabinet. In most cases the representatives were the executive assistants who were pretty powerful people up there, sitting usually in the office right next to the Cabinet member. There was one very hairy meeting where the representatives of the Department of Defense were literally working in the open against the President's interest. They sort of sat there, listening to the whole thing, went back and continued to do the very same thing, item for item. I am sure that they will continue to do so no matter who is President.

Rourke: Yours wasn't the only game in town as far as interest groups.

Wexler: Not in the Defense Department it wasn't, I'll tell you that right now, nor do I think that it has ever been. I am sure there were as many advocates on the SALT issue in Defense as there were opponents, although I believe that they also, at least in the Defense Department, worked against the treaty wherever they got the chance. Although that was not the case at the State Department at all, I'm sure that there were other examples of this. There was one other case in the Department of Agriculture where a highly placed official in the Department of Agriculture was requested by the Agriculture committee and the Senate to write a piece of legislation that had to do with sugar

prices. This was directly in contradiction with the President, and that was a big hullabaloo. But there are other similar cases, no question about it.

Chanin: On the other hand, I don't think we were Who's Who in the Cabinet game. For the most part we're holding aside the Defense Department. The Cabinet Secretaries were very cooperative in that kind of thing. We built off their coalitions mechanically. They had contacts at the bureaucratic level with the interest groups and we literally built upon them. That was the starting point.

Wexler: That's where it began. There might have been an issue on which an agency had been working for six months before we got into it. They'd done all the hard work and we just picked up their group and brought them over to the White House. You must remember we didn't get into very many of them, just the ones that were very important.

Ryor: [redacted]

Thompson: Maybe this question is more social talk, but since I won't have that opportunity, I'd like to ask it now and I think it is related to Mr. Wayne's question in a certain sense. I wondered if there was ever any talk among you about this constituency that is almost impossible to define because essentially it is the constituency of utterly sovereign individuals who have their own peculiar problems. The intellectual, educational, academic community will always remain a mystery to me, as I thought the other day when we had a speaker who talked about how difficult the new administration was finding it to place people, particularly in the foreign policy spots. There weren't that many people who met the particular loyalty tests that the new administration has set up.

Let me try to recapitulate some of the conversations I've heard late at night in meetings of political scientists. In a sense you had in the foreign policy field the worst of both worlds, the worst of two establishments. Anne said you had picked the most establishmentarian representatives of the establishment in New York when you picked [Cyrus] Vance and [W. Michael] Blumenthal and people of that kind who, when [John Jay] McCloy passed from the scene, became the establishment. Then you went and got the *Foreign Policy* magazine people, and they were the new establishment who had overthrown the old establishment in certain areas and who had become as always happens just as exclusive as the old establishment had, and therefore had their own enemies.

You know Kraft was against you from the beginning. I thought of it when I read Stanley Hoffman's piece defending the Carter human rights policy. You had people throughout the administration who were on your side and now are rediscovering the good that you did, although sometimes they were

against you. To some extent these were social reform groups or the social agitator groups (and that was your word, not mine). But you had a number of people who just inevitably turned some of those people against you because of their very strong populist, or whatever you call it, view.

You had the whole problem with the people who from the very beginning were with you on SALT whom Mr. Cutler refused even to bring in to see the President. He said after the [Paul] Nitze interview, "If you did that, that would simply be the converted speaking to the converted." So they got mad, and there must be dozens of other examples of this kind.

Maybe all these examples are wrong, but Kennedy said it was worth $25,000 to bring Schlesinger into the White House just to keep him from shooting at the administration from the St. Charles River. [Henry] Kissinger hired three people I know of without pay as his unofficial advisors on foreign policy. They practically never met. He didn't pay them a cent, but they withheld their fire through much of the Kissinger business. And that must have happened in past administrations with all kinds of examples.

Had you ever thought about how you were going to deal with this broader constituency who were supposedly rational, objective, unemotional, detached but enormously conscious of their egos, and with their broader views when you began talking about constituencies?

Wexler: Well, I think we dealt with them quite a bit. Certainly on issues where we thought there were some interests and some concern both on the foreign policy side and on the domestic side. I can remember numerous meetings in the Roosevelt Room with university presidents from major universities from across the country and on noneducationally related issues. In some cases they were friendly and in some cases extremely hostile. After the invasion of Afghanistan and the taking of the hostages in Iran we went through a series of meetings large and small, breakfasts and lunches in the residence with virtually the entire foreign policy establishment.

We went all the way back, as far back as we could in terms of age. We covered the waterfront; we really did have virtually everybody in. It was my judgment from what I saw of the lists that I put together for the SALT briefings that we did cover almost everybody. Maybe not in small meetings with the President, but certainly in the largest front affairs. I think we did reach out to them and a lot of those folks were the President's friends from the Trilateral Commission. (I can say that without fear of being shot in this room. There's certain places where if you whisper "trilateral," people get up and say bad things. I was in South Carolina last week and we got into the airport and I turned to my husband and said, "Trilateral Commission" in the airport to see what kind of a response I could get.)

He did spend a good deal of time with those folks on the telecom in the early days. I think that he did less of that as we moved into the second half of the first four years. There was an uncommon amount of dissatisfaction because people felt that whatever it was, it wasn't enough. But I think there was more there than people were willing to admit. We did the same thing that Kissinger did with a lot of unofficial advisors and to my knowledge that keeps some people quiet for a while. I don't think the problem was as much between the foreign policy people and the foreign affairs people as there were between the Vance people and the Brzezinski people. Vance brought in a lot of the *Foreign Policy* types—Bill Maynes and Dick Holbrooke and a number of the younger types.

Young: But they all came from one group?

Wexler: That's right. But Cy picked them! They did not come because the White House was insisting that they come. I mean that Vance had virtually carte blanche to pick whoever he wanted. It got hairy later on and there got to be a real war between the State Department and the National Security Council, and one cannot minimize the bitterness and anger that was connected with that. I think people began to choose up sides and to really criticize the President when they felt that their sector of the establishment represented by Vance was being undercut. That's when it really got rough in terms of people criticizing Carter. But I don't think it was as much from the outreach as it was from the fact that they thought that Brzezinski was getting the upper hand in the foreign policy and they didn't like it. That's about as frank and candid an answer as I can give you.

Chanin: We did try to get the whole SALT group together. It included those who thought that SALT clearly didn't go far enough to those who felt we were selling out to the military establishment in our efforts to get SALT.

Thompson: A number of people were told informally that there was no need for any conversations or any advice on SALT. That in fact the administration had its own strategy. It was like a track meet. You wore your sweat suit and warmed up with the Panama Canal and then you took the sweat suit off as you got down the road and tackled SALT. And that kind of reasoning, I think, alienated a great many people who actually were very much in favor—I won't mention names—of what you were doing but resented being lectured to by a person who had never conducted a negotiation with the Soviet Union in his life!

Rourke: The neo-conservative faction of the Democratic Party and the people who associated with American Enterprise Institute also felt that way about the Carter administration. Now I don't quite know how such an outreach to them could have been handled, but—

Wexler: He didn't feel as though whatever he was telling me got through to the President. We did try to keep our lines open to the AEI [American Enterprise Institute] whenever we could, and in however many ways. One of the other people who worked in the White House, Landon Butler's deputy Bernie Aaronson, worked very hard to try to keep those doors open most of the time. And it did give us a different perspective on a lot of issues.

Sabato: I had a couple of specific points that I wanted to ask you about. The first was on the PACs [political action committees]. To what extent did you find yourself dealing with, communicating with, or negotiating with the actual political action committees rather than the special interest organizations on a whole?

Wexler: Not at all, never.

Sabato: Never? All right, that was easy.

Wexler: They never show their faces in the White House. They were up on the Hill all the time, but they were never downtown. Not with us anyway.

Sabato: Secondly, did you not undertake any other sorts of merchandising activities? For example, you mentioned you had a 93,000 name computer tape—

Chanin: 39,000, but there were others who had a few more! [*laughter*]

Wexler: That was just our "A" list.

Jones: The "S" list was a longer one?

Wexler: We didn't keep one of those. [*laughter*]

Sabato: Well, the other side, particularly the right wing political action committees and the mainstream of the Republican Party, were conducting massive direct mail campaigns against you on the very issues that you were trying to organize, particularly SALT and the Panama Canal Treaty. Did you ever undertake through the White House any major persuasive direct mail program or did you utilize the talents of Pat Caddell to develop strategies through a poll? Did you ever commission Gerald Rafshoon to do media work, since the other side again was using a lot of television media against you on those issues?

Wexler: Well, no. We couldn't afford to do that and I'm not so sure it was legal to do that kind of thing. Anyway I think once or twice we had an outside citizen's committee operation in effect, independent of the White House except that we talked occasionally. There was some targeted mailing for the windfall profits tax; mailings that were organized and paid for by this large citizens' group, and I suspect that on windfall profits tax it was the unions who paid for the mailings. They were targeted to the unions themselves. I'm sure the NEA did many targeted mailings with the Department of Education issue. We were aware of them but we did not orchestrate them.

We did a good deal of marketing through speakers' bureaus on various issues where we would organize a speaking program that was very grassroots-oriented and worked very hard at getting people at the local level into Kiwanis clubs, Chambers of Congress, and local platforms to talk about particular issues and do a lot of local media. To that degree we were trying to merchandise locally on a retail basis, but we could never duplicate in any way what was being done by the [Richard] Vigueries of this world. At the end of an issue, though, the Viguerie campaigns didn't have much impact on the Congressmen.

I mean, we saw the stuff that was done especially at the House on the implementing legislation for the Panama Canal. This was one of the biggest operations that Dick Viguerie made out, but it was after the fact. It was after the treaty had been ratified that he tried to reopen the entire issue and tell

people in effect that they could get the Panama Canal back. This was a total distortion of the fact, which by the way never bothered him. That campaign resulted in tons and tons of postcards. Viguerie would send out a letter that had a perforated coupon on it and people would just tear off the coupon, sign it and throw it in the mail and it would go to Congressman X or Y. There were only two or three Congressmen who weighed their mail and weighed the Viguerie postcards. After a while it had no impact at all. And they would tell you that.

Chanin: There is an issue that is relevant to your own considerations about the Presidency. There's a law of questionable constitutionality which makes it illegal for us to use federal funds to get the public to urge Congressmen to vote a particular way. Now, what that means in some interpretations is that if you hear a federal official who is on a trip say in his speech, "By the way, go write your Congressman," that is a first amendment question. Should particular Presidential appointees get involved as to whether or not that's constitutional? People said to the White House staff, "Why don't you do certain kinds of things? Why don't you send letters out to the President to do all kinds of things?" Well, you have to be very careful in what you do. We were careful in all cases. We made sure that what we were doing was in a sense public education. We did educate, however, where we thought it would have a good result.

Wexler: Very often that education consists of a target list.

Chanin: People would ask us who is interested and how would they vote. The President who is excepted in the law, and the Vice President, can literally go out and fight your Congressmen, call your Congressmen, and do whatever you want to do. But that depended on the law and also on the way the President would allow his signature to be used. There were very severe limits on our mass mailings from him or mass mailings of any sort except in response to a request for information or legitimate public education situations.

Ryor: [redacted]

Magleby: And they were used?

Wexler: Oh yes, by the interest groups. We couldn't pay for it. And that's why we organized these citizens' committees, which worked. We didn't do it very often. When we had a big important issue we did it. We were often criticized by people who were not familiar with this 1922 law that said that you can't use appropriated funds to influence the vote in the Congress. So we would have a group of 250 people in the East Room of the White House. The President got to make this big pitch about how you had to vote or how you had to get in touch with your Congressman about hospital costs containment. They didn't realize that every person in the room had been invited because they were from a particular Congressional district whose Congressman we really wanted to influence.

After the President was finished, they would come running over to a White House staffer and say, "Well, give me the list. Who am I supposed to call?" The staffer would hem and haw and not tell him because it was in effect against the law, and you never knew from what slant that person could

be. You had to be pretty careful, and we were always pretty careful. We would try to interpret the law as loosely as we could and we certainly encouraged people to call the next day and ask, which then became public education, of course. But we tried very hard within the law to do what we could without blatantly violating it. People used to say that we were just stupid because we didn't take full advantage of the situation, but we did as much as we could.

Chanin: As a former, famous public person said, "You could do it otherwise, but it would be wrong!" [*laughter*]

Magleby: I'd like to pick up on a theme that we had before the afternoon break. Anne was talking about the fact that the Carter administration would have gotten off to a better start if the President had established his priorities and perhaps made a speech listing the three most important ones. This triggered a hypothesis in my mind that Presidential popularity, at least, reflects how the President is perceived by the mass public. You spoke earlier about the problems with the mass media. I'd like to hear your general reactions to what you perceive the situation to have been in terms of the Carter administration's relationship with the mass media and thereby the mass public. Was the President pictured inaccurately or accurately? Did you try to change that? And were you successful, in your own opinion?

Wexler: Well, I think that the President did very well with the media, considering the fact that expectations were abnormally high when he took office. He did well until the [T. Bertram] Lance situation came to a head. He got into trouble by coming strongly to Bert Lance's defense. It was clear to him within a 48-hour period that Lance was in bigger trouble than the President thought he was. That was more of a problem of what was perceived as being sloppiness on the part of the staff than it was the President's defense of Bert. Then it turned out that there were enough grounds, rightly or wrongly as it turned out, to indict Bert.

The public perception of his defense of Lance hurt him very badly. That began to turn the press. It also began to turn the public, who cynically determined that this President was just like every other President. His cronies were his cronies, and there were rules for some people and there were different rules for other people. That was unfortunate because it vastly increased the cynicism of the press about Jimmy Carter. It probably colored most everything that happened after that. That's my own personal opinion, I don't know if anyone else agrees with it.

Thompson: That's confirmed by what we've been through in this exercise before. We have talked to about 40 or 50 reporters and they have said exactly the same thing. Some of them have a theory that there's a turning point in every administration where relations sour and for them the Lance thing was the turning point.

Wexler: That's interesting because I hadn't heard that from them, but at that point I was on the outside watching it and that's the way it looked to me.

Magleby: What about the incompetence issue?

Wexler: Well, it was all part of that. I think the Lance problem was the beginning of that as well. I think that there were several other things that also hurt us on the competence issue. One was the

Department of Energy and the way the first energy package was conceived and presented. The second was the way the $50 rebate was presented. As I said to you before, I think it was the right decision, but it was badly handled. As Mike says, it was a very long running curve. I think between eighteen months or two years into the administration we learned how to handle issues, how to handle ourselves, how to handle the Congress and, to a certain degree, how to handle the press. In many cases it was too late and we were never able to go back and repair the damage that had been done earlier.

A lot of those damages kept getting created because of bad relations on the Hill, because of the misadventures of the White House staff, and because of other things that were not necessarily substantive but created a style or a perception of a style that hurt Jimmy Carter. People have certain expectations about the Presidency that were not fulfilled by the way the President did business. It resulted in four years of misinterpretation, best represented in that column that was done by Hugh Sidey after the election in which he said, "Now maybe we'll have a little class." That probably got everybody in the Carter administration about as angry as anything that any of us have ever seen in the press. I have never seen a more unfair and vicious piece in my life. That's a very short answer to a very complex question. I never felt any kind of real hostility toward the press. Most of them were my friends before I got there and will continue to be my friends after I leave, but there was a great deal of hostility between the White House and the press.

Magleby: You helped organize the problem when you said, "We learned how to handle the press about eighteen months into the administration." If you were advising the new President about how to handle the press, what would you say are some of the secrets?

Wexler: I don't know that there are any secrets. I think a lot of it is obvious. It's mostly ego-massaging, care and feeding problems. Again, we tried and we were pretty open with them. They had about as much access as any press corps has had in any administration. But they not only wanted to be respected and fed, they really wanted to be loved as well. And if there is a secret, it's in a way having a relationship where they feel as though they're buddies, even though they have a professional relationship, and that's hard for a President to do. I think Jack Kennedy did it. I think Lyndon Johnson started to do it, but when he finally got into the problems with the war he got paranoid and that was the end of his relationship with the press. [Richard] Nixon always hated the press. I think Jerry Ford had a pretty good relationship with the press based on 25 years of experience on the Hill. He pretty well knew how to handle them.

Magleby: This morning you intimated that defining and framing an issue was an important part of dealing with the press. Anticipating how issues would be packaged locally in the case of the Texas newspaper was important—

Wexler: Well, yes. I think that's very important, but as I said, after a while we did that very well and extremely professionally. Framing issues is very important, but I must say, I think we learned it far too late. We really didn't do it until late. Mike alluded to it earlier—he said when we had a really strong issue that we had to have interpreted properly, we would invite the Hill press down to the White House and take them through the issue. They were the people who were essentially writing about it on the Hill rather than the White House press corps, who could have cared less

about the substance of any issue. Unfortunately, I think we didn't really catch on to that until far too late, but when we did we were extremely successful.

Chanin: Can I add something to what Anne said about the press thing? I agree on the Bert Lance thing and how we compounded it later perhaps with the White House staff activities. The UN vote change on Jerusalem is another mix-up that came right at a time when we were about to turn some things around with the press on energy and some other important things. But there were some other things that were partly our style and partly the President's style. We mentioned the issues thing, what we stood for, and what were two or three things that Jimmy Carter really stood for. Even after Burt Lance we might have been able to communicate, but I don't think we really had any mechanism whatever to be able to do that. We never had the strategy in the campaign either.

The second thing was that we tended to get caught up in details, with all due respect to the Domestic Policy staff. Look at Ronald Reagan's Executive order on the regulatory freeze and the fact sheet that goes with it, two pages of each. It says we'll make exceptions for emergencies and many reductions in regulations to actually make things more efficient. Imagine! Now go back and look at the Carter materials that we gave to the press. Maybe two weeks later we came out with some simple, media background piece that we gave to the press on regulatory reform. Sam Donaldson would not even be able to get past the first page before he got lost. The Executive order that went with our activities covered it all. People from the Justice Department told me after they read the Reagan thing that they were shocked over the details and who had to pick out all the details. Of course, he didn't give them the details, he had a simple message, "I'm freezing regulations and except for emergencies, folks, don't worry about them. Anything that's good I won't freeze." And that's the message he got across effectively. We just never got beyond the threshold, whether it was the President's style, our own internal style, or for whatever reason; we didn't perfect the thing. In the document we never got beyond it.

1 guess the third thing has to do with the President's speech style. At press conferences and in his own speeches, while we know he had a pretty good self-deprecating sense of humor, he did not have that sense of humor where he was able to take a tough question at a press conference and turn it into laughter and put everybody at ease. There were many occasions when he might have been able to do that, and could have changed things after Bert Lance or even after the Iran thing. We just weren't able to bring that humor into our relations with the press, for whatever reasons. That, in the end, might be one of the things that made Reagan very successful in the campaign. Not quite Kennedy humor, but he could give a relaxing answer.

Wexler: He was able to do it in the town meetings.

Magleby: Carter was?

Wexler: Yes, but in small groups. He did it in the East Room extraordinarily.

Chanin: He didn't do it in front of the White House press corps.

Wexler: If you put a television camera in front of him and turned that light on, the whole world changed.

Wayne: I have the perception that he seemed more at ease with less politically sophisticated people, but that when he got in with politicians who have their own constituency, he didn't fare nearly as well as he did in the town meeting-like situations. Is that correct?

Ryor: [redacted]

Thompson: The press told us that the thing they would never understand was why he gave press conferences so infrequently. They thought that it was the best mode of communication. I wondered whether that had been discussed?

Wexler: He did every two weeks until July of 1979 and he handled himself very well. At that point I think Jody decided that he had done it too much.

Young: Jody said that?

Wexler: Yes. It made the President too available, and therefore he had begun to lose some creditability with them. Jody felt that they would communicate better if he didn't hold conferences as often as he had in the past. So they stopped doing the press conferences as often. It's just one of those situations where you can't satisfy them. If you do it a lot then they don't like it, or if you do it too little, they don't like it. So, it's just one of those unfortunate situations where it's impossible to really please them.

Young: Jody said that the President would have liked to continue it and that he was the restraining influence because he felt that there was too much exposure. Jody said he really shouldn't have a major press conference unless there was something quite important to say. So he was against the idea of regular conferences. But the press did ask the question because they felt he was so effective at the handling of a press conference.

Chanin: Let me go back to your question about strong political people with constituencies. Anne and I both sat in on a number of those meetings in the Cabinet Room. Anne sat in on a number of meetings with the Democratic leadership. The participants in the meetings in the Cabinet Room were Black national leaders and others who had very strong constituencies and were strong personalities in their own right. He was very much at ease in a room like this. He was very much at ease. I don't know how he was in leadership meetings. Anne's point about that little white light is the key.

Light: Well, we've been talking a lot about coalition building today; coalition building from the White House outwards. How much coalition building was there within the staff? Whom did you think of as your closest allies and was there a lot of coalition building? Did you feel like you had to team up with other offices in order to win battles within the staff? You know, the notion that no White House office is an island and you have to team up at some point.

Wexler: We couldn't have functioned without total teamwork. The whole basis on which our task force worked and the basis on which we were able to do our job was a good strong working relationship with all the other support staffs in the White House. There was never any problem about this in the White House. It's probably the least turf-conscious place I have ever worked. There were occasional problems in this White House, but they were very occasional. It had to do with a number of things, not the least of which was that the inner circle of senior Carter staff people were so sure of themselves and their relationships with the President that they were not threatened by anybody. Those were the folks who had worked with him when he was Governor and in some cases before he was Governor. They might have laughed at Al McDonald and said that some of his management techniques were crazy or that he used a lingo that they didn't like, but they were never threatened by him. Therefore, there were no turf wars of major consequence.

Light: What about the mid-summer crisis?

Wexler: That was not a White House staff issue. The President at that point was being urged by the staff to get rid of some of the Cabinet, but there was never a time when I think anybody on staff felt threatened. I mean, there were some lower level people who were incompetent and should have been fired. In my opinion, not enough of them were fired, but it did not affect in any way the working relationship of the senior staff people who really never felt that their jobs were threatened in any sense of the word.

Rourke: How about that early dispute between Jordan and Watson?

Wexler: That was settled before they ever moved inside the White House and Jack moved upstairs to do the Cabinet Secretary and intergovernmental relations. Hamilton moved into Bob Haldeman's office. Jack intelligently and quietly did a superb job without ever threatening anybody. He just built up the President's confidence in him until the point when Hamilton moved over the campaign and it was time to name a new Chief of Staff. It was certain that Hamilton went along without any rancor whatsoever with the suggestion that Jack take the job.

I say this to you in all honesty; I have never worked in a place where there were fewer turf fights than in this White House. I could not have done my job without a strong working relationship with all of the other staffs. Frank could not have done his either without a strong working relationship with us. The press people felt that way, and I know Stuart and Jack did too. It was harder for us because we got there late and we had to inch our way into the system, but we did get in there. There were minor problems because the structure was there right from the beginning. We learned to work together, but there were never any real problems about that.

Young: Except for OMB?

Neustadt: A lot of it was institutional. There's an inevitable turf conflict between the totally political personal staff and the President and the career bureaucracy at OMB. I think it was compounded by the fact that there was a large Domestic Policy staff that duplicated a lot of functions that OMB thought were naturally their own, and by the tension between the OMB budget cutters and people who wanted to spend in their own shop. There was a lot of struggling at all levels.

Wexler: There was also a deep philosophical difference between Stu Eizenstat and Jim McIntyre, which was acknowledged openly by both of them. In every debate before the President, it was given that on budget and policy issues Jim would take one side and Stu would take the other. Stu went into those sessions like the good litigator that he was without ever having any personal feeling about it, just fighting as hard as he could. He was just an absolute sight to watch at those meetings. He was just superb. It was a wonderful show to see Stu get up there and make his case because he's such a good litigator to begin with. I would say he won more than he lost because he was so good at it. But again I never detected a hell of a lot of personal rancor, and there were a couple of times when they really went at each other. I was usually on Stu's side I've got to add, with some serious personnel problems, but they were very rare. It was done very professionally. We had a different relationship with OMB because we did so much of the budget outreach. We got to know those people very well.

Chanin: Two things. One is that while the director of OMB is in a sense part of the White House staff you really can't look at OMB as a logistically operating part of the White House staff. There's a difference in the way you operate, which shows that the organizational difference does make some sense. The second thing is what Anne said earlier about the open White House. The informal structures, the informal process of people just going to see each other and making decisions and getting things done, were as important for the decision-making process as the formal structure was, at least in shaping White House staff recommendations to the President.

Light: I'm not looking for evidence of rank or conflict but for different ideas. McIntyre has one idea and he goes out and tries to recruit others within the White House to support his argument. It's the same with Eizenstat—

Ryor: [redacted]

Wexler: There were always major, varied, and far reaching discussions on issues before they ever got to the President, long before the options papers were ever written. Very often Stu and Jim could hammer out their differences at that stage. It was done at that point without anybody going around anybody else. The President would not allow, in most cases, end runs. It happened occasionally, but very occasionally.

Young: What Paul is really asking you about is in-fighting on the staff.

Chanin: All through these sessions you would have Jim, Stu, and maybe Anne at Stu's office at five o'clock in the afternoon with some deputies or whoever, dealing with the issue. Often they came to resolutions or if they didn't they would say that here are our differences and I guess we've got to get the President to decide. Jim would say this is what I feel and Stu would say what he felt and some others said, "Well, wait a minute, we ought to be doing it a little bit different than both of you want to do it." A lot of stuff just happened that way.

Ryor: [redacted]

Wexler: There was some in-fighting, but it was pretty open in-fighting. Everybody knew how everybody else stood. The thing that characterized it as much as anything was the lack of rancor.

Young: I noticed that you said a moment ago that things worked well In a sense because of those certain people from Georgia who had such access to Presidential trust that they weren't threatened by anything. One hears as much about the Georgia mafia as one hears about the Irish mafia or the California mafia. Does that mean that others on the staff had to earn the trust of the President?

Wexler: Unquestionably. No question about it. He never felt as comfortable with the rest of us as he felt with them. There was never any question in my mind about it.

Jones: My question was what happened to your operations and the priorities you were working on in the face of a crisis, such as the hostage and the economic problems in the earlier part of last year. Were you able to develop the programs you were working on continually, or—?

Wexler: No, we continued with the programs we were working on, but we had to shift gears. We went through extensive budget outreaches every year, first between October and January of 1979 and then all over again when the President decided to change the assumptions and redo the budget. We had to spend a lot of time shifting our gears. John was very involved in that. We did the same thing over the summer as we developed the economic program. We were bringing an extensive outreach along while working things to fruition after two years of hard work at the end of the second session of the Congress.

So you go with the flow. As new things come up and there's suddenly an issue that you didn't know you were going to be working on, you just jump into it. You mobilize your folks and go to work. We were deeply involved in the Olympic boycott, which we didn't know about until moments before. When we finally got the U.S. Olympic Committee to agree to the boycott, which was a long campaign, we were already mortgaged to the Olympic Committee in terms of promising to help them raise money. The President had gone out on a limb and said to the Olympic Committee, "I will help you raise millions of dollars to keep the committee alive, since the fund raising that would have normally occurred had we gone to the summer Olympics will not happen." Then of course, he turned to me and said, "Anne, help raise the money," and he forgot all about it. Suddenly, there I was traveling around the country helping to raise money for the Olympics. So

there are lots of things that you end up doing that you didn't plan on doing when you started the year.

Ryor: [redacted]

Jones: Didn't the hostage crisis and Kennedy's entry give you more of the President than you might have had otherwise? [*laughter*]

Ryor: [redacted]

Wexler: It did. You know we had him all the time. He was there constantly, and we had not expected it. It was good, in a way, because we were able to do much more in the White House than we could have done otherwise. But in my judgment, it was bad for him and I said so at every meeting that I attended with him. "Get out, get out, get out! You shouldn't stay here. It's wrong. It's a bad decision." Well, you can see the impact I had.

Jones: It was hard to say that without saying the word "political"! [*laughter*]

Wayne: I'm interested in the White House as a unique organizational entity and I'm wondering what effect working there has on interpersonal relationships. In other words, what effect does the White House have on people getting together one way or another? Are you always conscious of the fact that you're in the White House? Does that mean anything? Did the long work hours to which you referred mean that in the end, it's going to be more burdensome to touch all the bases? Do people get a high on this, do they fight over perks? Does that narrow in the normal course of decision-making?

Ryor: [redacted]

Wexler: I think the White House has its perks, and it is a very special place. There are very few people who work there, and that goes all the way from the people who do the security work to the secretaries to the senior staff. There's a certain cachet about it. People feel very proud about it and want to be as professional as they can be because there is a very tiny, tiny segment of the population who ever get into the place. I don't think that there's any question about the fact that it is a very special feeling. It certainly was for me, and I'm sure it was for Rick, Mike, and John as well.

I think that if you're lucky, and I think we were, you do develop special relationships that you have for the rest of your life because you're working in such close conditions. Our office was probably

worse than most. We were in the West Wing, but I had a very nice, spacious office. Mike and the two other people who worked right outside my office were in very cramped quarters. I think when you work in the West Wing, which is a very small place, you have to make personal adjustments; either you get together and love each other, or you kill each other. We were fortunate in that we had pretty good working relationships with everybody else. And, because it's such a special privilege, I think people feel close to each other and special about it. I think most people look at it that way.

Rourke: One of the things that has been said, at least about earlier White House staffs, is that staff members were reluctant to say anything to the President that they thought might irritate or offend him. Hence, they sometimes tend to screen information from him. Was this ever a problem in the Carter White House?

Wexler: Oh yes. I don't think that anybody says all the things that they think they're going to say when they go into that Oval Office. The Oval Office is a very inhibiting kind of place. If you must say things that you think the President might not like or might disagree with, you find extraordinarily tactful ways to say them. I think that would be true of every President and his staff. Dick Cheney tells a story about how people used to come to the White House to see President Ford. They'd go in to tell the President how he was doing something wrong, or how he must do something he was very reluctant to do. They'd walk into the Oval Office, sit down, and talk about the weather and all sorts of innocuous things. When they walked out Dick would say, "Well, did you tell him?" And they'd say, "No, Dick. *You* can tell him." Isolation is probably the biggest problem a President has to fight and I'm afraid that Jimmy Carter fell into that trap very early.

February 13, 1981

Young: I think what we would like to do this morning is to move from the subject of your work, your organization, and your White House operations in relations to other staffs, to some larger questions. They are perhaps of more widespread concern to you, to the country, to scholars, as well as to people who are going to be serving the Presidential staffs of the future. One of those questions has to do with the Presidential staff system and the Executive Office as a whole. You've seen the thing grow over a time, so that it's now very large. John Ryor said yesterday that since the tasks grow, you can't cut back the office. Others say the problem is an oversized staff with too much White House bureaucracy. You might want to say a little more about this subject.

Secondly, staffs used to be prohibited from making any public statements at all. Jim Rowe tells the story of when he came to work for FDR [Franklin Delano Roosevelt] as a young man of 28, he went into the President's office one morning, and FDR said to him, "Jim, did I read your name in the paper yesterday? Were you at a cocktail party?" Rowe said, "Yes sir, I was." Roosevelt then said, "I thought I'd read about this party in the *Star*. Now, Jim, you've been here six months and this is the second time I've seen your name in the paper. It first appeared when you were appointed and now this. I can tell you that if I see it in the paper many more times, you're going to be looking for another job." I suppose the change of time has had some impact.

A third area you might want to address is the problem of isolation, which you said is the problem. If you had to advise the President on how to design a staff and set up a staff operation to cope with that problem, what advice would you give? Such a question has some ethical utility and strikes a larger audience as well.

Fourth, I think all of us would like to hear what you think about those four years of this Presidency. What were its major accomplishments, its major frustrations, and why? What are the things that you want to teach people and what should they be thinking about when they look back and try to evaluate the Carter Presidency? What were the myths, and what were the unknowns that ought to be known, ought to be studied, ought to be looked at?

Along this line too, you all know what the Carter administration has been faulted for and I've been very struck, in listening to you yesterday, that one of the problems for outsiders looking at that Presidency is deciphering internal change. What you have given us really is a description of two Presidencies—before and after Wexler. Not that you were the whole part of the change, but we do get a sense that there was a very distinct change in operating style at some point in the administration. Maybe that is part of the problem. Would you consider both before and after the first fifteen months as well as the last few months?

Finally, how do you deal with Washington? This is one of the areas is which the Carter administration is faulted and various explanations have already been given. It is a major problem for any elected President nowadays, particularly one who may be only four years in the office and who, as John Ryor said, may be programmed to be anti-management and then finds himself at the head of the government. I've been struck, in my talks with professionals and Washington bureaucrats who come to the Miller Center, at the intense antagonistic-adversary atmosphere that seeped out when they talked about politics in Washington and what the White House was doing. Certainly it is a symptom of a problem. How does the President cope with it?

These are the kinds of questions that I think that we'd like to focus on today because I'm sure you have some thoughts about them just as we all do. We might begin with Chuck Jones, who wanted to start you on this course, unless you want to volunteer some things first. Do you want to comment?

Wexler: I think the best way to proceed is probably to respond to your questions. But let me just say that I believe, in terms of structure, there were not two Presidencies, there were really four in the four years of the Carter White House. The first change in structure occurred when I came to the White House, but you must remember that I did not come alone. At that point Tim Kraft was shifted to a role that included political coordination, a job that had not been previously done. In addition, Jerry Rafshoon came in when I came in. This change had profound impact for about a year on the White House because of the whole fascination of the press with Jerry Rafshoon. You know, we had a series of new adjectives, new verbs and new nouns: "Rafshooning," "Rafshoonery." Remember?

Young: "Rafshoon-ize."

Wexler: That's right. I think this first change has to be looked at when you're looking at the history of the Carter White House. There was another change in July of 1979 when the President returned from Japan and the Summit. He canceled his speech to the nation, went on to Camp David, and went through that process which resulted in some major Cabinet changes and a lot of disruption. It also brought a few weeks later (after a number of unfortunate experiences) Al McDonald into a major management role in the White House. The last change occurred when Hamilton Jordan, in effect, left the White House in order to campaign, and Jack Watson became the Chief of Staff. Now, I list those four because they were four distinct periods on the White House when the management and structures were affected. We can go back and talk about them all in detail if you would like, but there were really more than two. There were really four.

Jones: Anne, did your perception of the President as a center of or principal person in decision-making change much from the time when you were in the Commerce Department to the time you went into the White House? Was there also a change in your picture of the man himself and his relationships within the White House and in decision-making?

Wexler: No, they really didn't because I was very close to the Cabinet member for whom I worked, and she was very involved with decision-making as it affected the Commerce Department. And I was pretty familiar with the processes that went on in the White House by the time I went there. There were no surprises for me in terms of the decision-making process. When I spoke with the President before I took my job in the White House I said to him, "How would you like me to communicate with you on a daily basis?" He replied, "Well, aside from the meetings I would like you to start with paper. The best way I like to communicate is by receiving a memo and then, after the memo, to have a meeting if I feel it's necessary." It didn't surprise me because it was pretty much the way he'd operated right from the beginning and continued to operate right through the very end.

Jones: Did your evaluation of his performance change?

Wexler: Well, that's a hard question to answer. I'd have to give you almost a yes or no answer. My evaluation of his performance in terms of what I deem to be his own self-confidence changed. He came into the office, I think, the most confident person I had ever know in my life, and it was the one thing that struck me about the President from the day I first met him in 1974. I had never known anybody who had the confidence as a person that he did. But it was clear by the end of 1980 that he wasn't the same person along those lines. He was far less confident, in my judgment, of his own decisions or in his own capacity to make the right decisions. I think that was the most striking difference.

Young: How do you account for this?

Wexler: It's endemic to the job. You can't know what the job is until you get there. And once you do, you can't always be sure that everything you're doing is right, even though you think so, and he thought before he became President that he knew exactly how to do the job. Over the four years he came, as I think all intelligent people do, to the point where he was beginning to question maybe his instincts and sometimes his judgment.

Young: Do you think the fundamental reason behind these four Presidencies or these changes was that he lost that naïve self-confidence?

Wexler: I think that was part of it, but I think he was also struggling to make things work within the White House and tried to make the kinds of adjustments that he was comfortable with. Don't forget there was a lot of pressure on him, a lot of people were saying, "You ought to do this," or "You ought to do that."

Rourke: As you went through those four stages, did you feel that by the end of this progression that he got it right, so to speak? Was the system that worked the final system?

Wexler: Yes, it was working and it would have worked well, I think, in the next four years with some adjustments. But we would have made some changes in the White House structure in the second term.

Young: Could you talk about those differences? It's a very interesting point.

Wexler: There would have been a strong Chief of Staff and a stronger hierarchical structure in the second term. Jack had worked out a pretty good working operation as the Chief of Staff. In effect, he acted as a full-time Chief of Staff and had a full-time deputy in Al McDonald, who was very management oriented. I think that's very important.

There would also have been a substantial expansion of the role of Public Liaison to go in an area that I know something about. We talked about this to some degree and agreed that it needed to be expanded. I think we would have fooled around with a different structure for working with all the special constituencies—ethnics, Blacks, women, et cetera—until we found what we felt was a comfortable relationship. I don't know if there would have been many changes in the Domestic Policy staff.

I think we would have again had very in-depth conversations about how to structure the political relationships in the White House. I strongly recommended several profound changes in the way the White House personnel office operated because I don't think that was one of our strong suits. Among a number of other things, it would have strengthened what we had already begun to build. Finally, I think there would have been some major staff changes as well, but I believe we were on the right track by the end.

Young: Would the Congressional Liaison staff change? I'm not talking about specific names; I'm just talking about its work and its relation to Public Liaison. Is that what you were referring to?

Wexler: At the end of the administration there was a pretty solid routine setup for the Congressional Liaison people. I don't know for certain whether the personalities would have changed, but I suspect some of them would have. However, one of the things that we would have tried was to start from scratch, or at least to start over, with a new Congress and a new relationship on the Congressional Liaison side. Probably, we would have been able to do that.

Thompson: Would foreign policy have changed the structure?

Wexler: That's a good question. I think there would have been. There were a number of us who were prepared to insist that it change, and I don't know who would have won and who would have lost. That's about as honest an answer as I can give you. It was a very open question.

Young: What was the direction of change you would have recommended in foreign policy?

Wexler: I would have wanted to proceed somewhat along the lines that Secretary of State [Edmund] Muskie talked about before the election and that Haig has implemented. It was time to lower the profile of the National Security Council in a way that would have made it possible, at least for the press, not to focus on those issues. You know, once the press does it, the embassies follow, and then foreign governments do it. The press report becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy even though it may not necessarily be the truth. But it doesn't make any difference.

Thompson: Did the President know how much this was hurting him?

Wexler: Yes.

Thompson: Personal loyalty?

Wexler: Uh huh.

Young: What about OMB?

Wexler: I think OMB would have been OMB and will be OMB forever! [*laughter*]

Young: Do you think these changes are good general advice? Are they changes that would be responsive to this President alone because of the way he worked and thought, or would you want these changes you've mentioned to be considered good general advice for any President coming in? Does it depend on the kind of man?

Wexler: I think it's a kind of combination of the two. You always have to structure and build a staff that is responsive to the particular personality and needs of the person who is in charge. But having said that and having had the experience with three White Houses rather than four (I wasn't there the first fifteen months), my own judgment is that you can't run a White House without a strong person who is running things at the top. You must have, it seems to me, a Chief of Staff. You must have a coordinating structure. And you must have a system of accountability where people have a sense that they are responsible for their actions. It's got to be more tightly organized.

Chanin: Let me say one thing about this subject because it's something that's been in the paper recently with the Reagan administration. At the same time you also have to be careful that you don't allow one or two people to become the funnel or bottleneck for everything. One of the advantages of the spokes-of-the-wheel system is the fact that outside people felt, *Here's somebody who has direct access to the President and who doesn't just speak to another person who then deals with the President.* There were several clearly defined (and they should be kept clearly defined) access points for decision making, particularly policy decisions, and communicating with

the President. Therefore, you didn't have a system where everything got hung up, but it could lead to disjointedness if you weren't careful. This is why you have to have a coordinating mechanism. I believe you've also got to keep several roads of access though.

Wexler: I really don't. Let me make just one comment about it because there is an interesting psychological question here that I can't answer. I don't know whether we would have had the comfortable relationships that we had with Chief of Staff Jack Watson, where we were able to do the things that I've just talked about, had we not had the kind of loose arrangement that we had initially. I really can't answer the question outside of my own experience. All of us really ran individual fiefdoms, if you will. And we all kept very good collegial relationships, even though we had a Chief of Staff who clearly was in charge. We all met with the President every morning at ten o'clock, and everyone continued to do what they had always done in terms of expressing their own opinions and raising the issues that were important to them in the course at any given day. Jack never interfered with that in any way. So I don't know whether we would have felt as comfortable later when we became more structured, if we had not felt the experience of loose organization in the beginning.

Young: This is an important point to register because as you look at the Reagan administration you see strong central management in the large sense. There is a contrary view among people who trust Presidents that such a system is bad, and the model they take is Roosevelt. What they tend to forget, though, is that during the war when the office became very complex and overloaded, Roosevelt moved czars into certain areas to sort of run them. But the first postwar President, Eisenhower, was strongly criticized by many people for this practice. I take it this is not the system you're advocating, unless it goes along with a strong collegial relationship.

Wexler: Yes, that's right.

Ryor: [redacted]

Chanin: I'm not sure we ever really got beyond that notion even after we came to the White House. There were coordinating efforts all the time of the work you did in any area. But what has to be—It's important for people who want to look at the future White House staffs is that you can't experience it until you get there. Whatever system you set up for the management and coordination of longer-term things will be overrun. Things moved so very fast during the course of the day in the White House. Decisions have to be made so quickly that the system has to be able and people have to be able to work with each other collegially almost without regard to what is the formal structure.

Young: It's surprising to hear you say things moved so quickly because I heard Ms. Wexler yesterday say that the Civil Service task force met every day for two years.

Chanin: But inside as they were meeting there were decisions made as to positions we would take on civil service reform.

Young: I understand. The action-forcing, daily staff things move quickly, but the policy process gets more complicated and drawn out in the meanwhile.

Wexler: The legislative process does too. It's not uncommon to take two years to pass a bill.

Neustadt: I think the fundamental difference between managing the modern White House and the Roosevelt situation is that there are many more layers of machinery to manage. Mike Chanin is right in that the firefighting decisions were made quickly and often relatively smoothly because of the mutual trust. But the system exacted a terrible price when you wanted to do something that didn't have a deadline attached to it. There was an incredible amount of time wasted as people would sit around in meetings and logroll because there was no clearly established authority for making decisions.

Young: One of the perennials from inside or outside people who design Presidential staffs is that the action-forcing, fire-fighting, day-to-day things cannot be avoided so we ought to have something in the White House decision process to look at the longer run. I think Stu Eizenstat tried to do this, didn't he? Anyway, do you think it advisable?

Neustadt: There was a scheduling effort that was run out of the Vice President's office.

Wexler: That was the priority setting process. The other long range planning mechanism that was established, but again got bogged down in very much in the day to day problems, was the economic policy group.

Chanin: Al McDonald also brought in, and I don't know if this is publicly known, a management tool which was essentially an internal calendar. The calendar listed all the known items of the agenda and a real search through the intergovernmental staff of agency decision dates. We had never done before at the White House. For instance, the calendar would show when the air bag rule was supposed to come out; that it was a political hot potato; that we'd better have a date; and that we should see how it fits into everything. It would give the date that we were anticipating and allow us to foresee an economic address that might not be scheduled at the best time. It was a regular calendar that gave us two weeks lead time.

Wexler: I don't think that was what pertained to policy development though.

Chanin: Yes, but I'm just trying to mention there was another mechanism that took a longer-term focus.

Wexler: Jim was talking long-term policy considerations though. The Economic Policy Group [EPG] at least tried, when they weren't totally buried in major decisions that had to be dealt with immediately, to do the kind of long term planning you are talking about. The management tool that Mike Chanin described was certainly an innovation and became very useful because you could look at the calendar and say, "Well, the President doesn't want to come out and make a statement

on the economy the day that the consumer price index is coming out." Earlier nobody would have thought about that because they weren't aware of when the consumer price index was coming out. It made our planning process a lot neater and better.

Young: Just two more questions. I noticed that when you were talking about ways you would like to see things change, changes that may have been possible now or planned during the second Carter administration if there had been one, you didn't mention anything about economic policy changes. Would you have seen any major changes in an advisory system in this area?

Wexler: No, I don't think there would have been dramatic changes; however, Al McDonald proposed the creation of a permanent EPG staff director in the White House. This was being seriously considered by the EPG, Stu Eizenstat, and the President. The post's major responsibility in the White House would have been the coordination of all the economic policy tasks and decisions as well as outreach and everything else. The absence of such a post was a great lack for us.

A bunch of people would go over to meet in the Secretaries' dining room in the Treasury Department every day or every week for six months. The pattern was that they would get more and more secretive all the time. They did not want to share what they were doing with anybody. They thought that they were about to change the world, and they were going to do it all by themselves. That's very dangerous, extraordinarily dangerous. You cannot make public policy in secret and expect to be successful with it, but it's a natural tendency that people have. Trying to draw them out, expand the public dialogue, and get input to them in such a situation is critical. You must find ways to be sure you've always got the outlets open.

Chanin: Let me say something about the EPG. I was not a member; I never went to an EPG meeting or even an EPG deputy meeting. We were constantly dealing with labor leaders, business leaders, and others who were concerned about the economy, and we tried to watch where the President was going. We found that, more and more, the EPG missed the deadlines. They would say, "We'll make a decision on this by this date," but it didn't happen. They would get bogged down in issue details and trivial items and nothing came back from them. As a result, our economic decision process dragged on for months. It was a very poor system for whatever issue was at hand and however it was staffed. Maybe you can explore the economic decision process with the President, but, from an outsider's point of view all you could see was delay. "We're going to decide this next week—no, we didn't get to it—we'll need two more weeks because something happened."

Young: So, you had a good deal of distance from that process?

Chanin: Anne was probably closer to it than I was. I'm just saying from my point of view there were problems.

Wexler: I chaired a task force that dealt with all the implementing processes and the public relations processes of the President's fight against inflation. We made a decision that we would maintain a permanent White House task force on inflation. The task force met once or sometimes twice a week to try to do what we could to keep the public aware of the fact that the government

was taking a number of steps to deal with inflation. Many of these steps would have been left unrecognized by the public without our efforts. The executive assistant of the Secretary of the Treasury participated on the Task Force. He was sort of the staff person for the EPG at Treasury. The first item on the agenda every week was a report from the Economic Policy Group, and week after week after week we would say, "Okay, Randy [Howe], what's going on?" And he'd say, "No decisions were made." Then he would proceed to tell us what the debates were, but, you know that merely slowed things down.

Ryor: [redacted]

Young: It's a burying ground.

Wexler: However, when you finally got to the point where you had to get a decision, you really had to go to the EPG in the end. I mean, you couldn't force it through any other way.

Neustadt: I always found the game was to get the President to sign off on a deadline, and then, a week before the deadline, take the option paper to the EPG.

Wexler: That's right.

Young: Is there anything in the Executive Office that you think ought to be taken out? Frank Rourke has done some studies of Office of Telecommunications policy, which has been shifted out to Commerce to some extent.

Rourke: Dick Neustadt was the one who did it!

Young: We have the operators and the students here! But are there other things? Is it good advice for a President nowadays, rather than to think of pulling things all together in the White House, to take on some things that might be lower in priority for him?

Neustadt: The Council on Environmental Quality does not belong in the White House. It's an advocacy unit. The policy work ought to be done either under the domestic policy staff if it's Presidential advice, or to the extent it's regulation (and they do have some legal authority) it should be done by the EPA. The Office of Drug Abuse policy was folded into our staff and that doesn't belong in the White House. It belongs at Health and Human Services.

Chanin: I think the same thing goes for the Council on the Elderly and whether that should have been folded into our staff. If you want to have a Special Assistant at the White House to deal with aging problems, fine, but to have a separate counselor sitting there on your staff or on the senior staff is the same thing.

Wexler: But that was a political decision.

Chanin: I understand that. But if you want to talk pure structure and organization, it should not have been there.

Neustadt: Well, there's certainly something politically useful about having a visible advisor to the President for each powerful constituency.

Chanin: Yes, but that's different than having an entire office labeled for one constituency.

Neustadt: Right, it's all the staff that gets attached to it. For instance, CEQ had several dozen people.

Wexler: I would agree with you about the drug abuse policy office, but I would like to think about CEQ a long time before I took them out of the White House. They service a very powerful constituency, and the CEQ was extremely useful to me individually simply because it served as a buffer. Even though we were organizing people around specific issues, we were also trying to keep them from blowing up and attacking us, especially in the case of environmentalists. I must add before we leave today that part of our job in working with constituencies was keeping them quiet or keeping them neutral. This was as important as making them advocates, and sometimes that was even more important. We did it very successfully in case after case. But having CEQ as an outlet for the environmentalists, a place for them to go and really discuss in great depth some of their problems, was very useful to the White House. It was useful to Stuart Eizenstat and it was extremely useful to me because it kept that very vocal and hard working constituency away from us when we needed to have them away from us. This was very important.

Young: That's interesting. You bring them in in order to keep them out.

McCleskey: Why did you have to have them in the White House?

Wexler: They had an office across the street on Jackson Place near Lafayette Park. Gus [James Gustave] Speth, the chairman of CEQ, had the same standing as a Special Assistant to the President which was great because he was perceived as having access to the President. In fact, he did. He used to meet with him once a month, and he came to the senior staff meetings. But he was not housed physically in the White House. Yet he was perceived to be enough a part of the White House staff to make him useful to me anyway. Other people might not feel that way. But I would think very carefully before I unhitched CEQ.

Neustadt: Is this a useful strand to continue?

Young: It's interesting.

Neustadt: I would just say two things. One is that the same set of pros and cons applies to the Consumer Affairs Office. Secondly, there was a price for having the CEQ in the Executive Office. Discussion at any level except the top of CEQ was a guaranteed leak to the environmental constituency. Therefore, when you were doing policy planning, at least in the regulatory area, you always had the choice between inviting them to the meeting and knowing that whatever was said

would be leaked within 24 hours, or not inviting them to the meeting and knowing that you would get Hell from them for doing it without them.

Wexler: He's right in every word that he says; that's absolutely true.

Young: But for you the risk was worth it?

Wexler: Well, sometimes we didn't invite them to the meetings.

Chanin: The real question is how do you want to structure the operational unit? Consumer Affairs, the elderly, the CEQ do not need to be and are really not in the White House staff per se. They are a part of the Executive Office of the President. But you need them somewhere. If you didn't have a CEQ, then there would be a Special Assistant to the President for environmental matters or similarly a Special Assistant to the President for the elderly with one or two staff people. Of course, such an arrangement would still result in the leaking problem, but you could cut down the number of people and put their regulatory functions and other functions somewhere else. You must have the buffer somewhere though, a person who can deal with those very large constituencies, like the elderly, the women, the environmentalists. And this person must be in the White House so that the constituency has the perception that there's permanent and quick access to the President.

Jones: It just so happens that buffers leak.

Wexler: Well, sometimes they do. In a very practical sense, and you know I can't attest to either its neatness or its legitimacy as a political science concept, there has to be a way to relieve the Martin Andersons, the Stuart Eizenstats, the Anne Wexlers, or the Frank Moores from the pressures of all the constituencies. Having a buffer, as messy as it sometimes is, does that. Sometimes they become more advocative than they should, but nevertheless, it really is important in terms of allowing you to do your day-to-day work. Otherwise you would spend the whole day on the telephone dealing with these people or trying to decide who you're going to send to a meeting with them. I believe that this is not necessarily limited to the function of my office, but it could be just as much applicable to a policy office, the Congressional Liaison office, or some other office. It's just the truth.

Young: This is not a dialogue between political scientists and practitioners; it's a dialogue between practitioners.

Wexler: Yes, that's right.

Ryor: [redacted]

Jones: That's my point in criticizing buffers. You can't have it both ways. They've got to protect themselves too. They are on a different point perhaps, but they're there.

Wexler: Look at the Mark Siegel case. It is a perfectly good example of a guy sucked totally into the whirlpool of advocacy to the point where he was so unhappy he had to quit.

Thompson: Is the reason you had no similar representation with the intellectual community that you thought you all were intellectuals? [*laughter*]

Wexler: Well, no, I don't think we thought we were all intellectuals. I think that we—

Jones: You had a higher opinion of yourself than they did! [*laughter*]

Wexler: It's nice to be that kind of intellectual when you were trying to deal on a day-to-day basis with as many problems as we were. I've always thought of myself as too much of an activist, although I have often aspired to spend more time in intellectual pursuits than I have ever been allowed to. But I was married to one, so that was a kind of substitute. The other half of the family took care of the intellectual representation.

McCleskey: White House staff people always complain about people who go to the agencies as "marrying the natives," becoming tied to a constituency. But you make it sound like the White House staff people themselves married the natives, at least the various liaison offices.

Chanin: Not at all. You have professionals like Louie Martin, who is very respected by Black leaders, but a very experienced professional politician. He was secure enough in himself that he did not have to take politician positions with Black leaders. At the same time he did a very good job of being their advocate when necessary and being honest.

Wexler: The same was true with both Ed Sanders and Al Moses, who handled Jewish affairs in the White House. They also did a very good job.

Wayne: I wanted to ask two questions both relating to the way we began. You spoke about the need for a hierarchy in the White House perhaps as the way you ended up rather than the way you began. Political scientists often seem to be obsessed with the question of White House staff size. Were there enough people working in the White House at the bottom? Did you need more? Could and should the staffs have expanded somewhat? That would be my first question and then I want to follow up.

Wexler: Well, some should and some shouldn't. I think the Domestic Policy staff was large enough. I don't think Stu ever suffered from a lack of staff. I think the Congressional Liaison staff was probably large enough. But I think our staff was not large enough and there was a good reason. We got in late with a ceiling of 351 people and we had to be squeezed under that ceiling. I think that we would have been given more in the second term because we needed more. I can't speak for the National Security Council because I just don't know. I'm not familiar enough with their functions, although I can tell you that the National Security Advisor does not need a press secretary. Generally, I think that within the boundaries looked at by us and the Reagan people a

reasonable number is somewhere between 350 and 500. I would prefer lower rather than higher when possible, but still that's a big range. But if it ever got over 500 it would be too big.

Young: That was the size of the Marine Corps when [Thomas] Jefferson was President.

Wexler: I don't think you do yourself a hell of a lot of good by cheating yourself on staff in the White House. It may very well be possible to do what we did in some cases, which was to detail people over for six months if we needed them because we had a big blitz on something. At the end of that period they were sent back. But it's, in my judgment, a very false economy to try to reduce your own staff needs.

Neustadt: A couple of other offices, I think, were terribly understaffed in the Carter White House. I have no idea how their staffing has been determined in the Reagan administration. One's the media liaison office, which has to do most of the work with the press around the country. Given the growth of telecommunications technology and the influx of the press from around the country into Washington (or at least indirectly accessible to Washington), it has become essential to always know what you're doing. The office of the Chief of Staff or staff director probably was a little understaffed in our administration to really do the job of coordination that they needed to be able to do. He had one deputy and one other person who helped out, but that was all that he had and he should have used more people.

Let me say something about details, because it's a phenomenon that we would experience in our office. It's nice to say that you need somebody detailed for a special project, but generally that person ends up there for four years. No one wants to go back to the agency, because if you go back, you're suspect. This is particularly true if you're a career person. So the tendency is that the White House staff ends up very large; not the official staff, but the detail people who came two and a half years ago for a two-week stay and are still there finagling.

This is not Potomac fever. I don't know what you'd call it, maybe White House Gate fever. You don't want to leave and so you finagle some way to stay. We've seen that in our office and about every other office in the White House.

Wayne: I'd like to follow that up with a point that you raised at the end of our meetings yesterday afternoon. You spoke of the problem with the President over time becoming isolated. Do you think that is a structural problem as it relates to the organization of the White House staff? Is it a problem as it relates to the size of the White House staff? Is it a problem that relates to personality of the President? Would a more hierarchical staff structure create more of an isolation problem for the President? Could you talk a little bit about that?

Wexler: I don't think so. But a good deal of it has to do with the personality of the person in the office. I think you have to want to fight isolation if you're aware of that threat. I don't like to speak of isolation so much in the context of the staff. The President gets to see the staff plenty in the course of any given day, but the longer you're in the place, the more fatigued you become, and the more every meeting and every additional event become onerous. The thing that you need to do the most is to spend some time with your feet up with a drink in your hand or a cup of tea or whatever,

just shooting the breeze with people whose opinion you respect. This becomes harder and harder to do.

I think that it is important for Presidents not so much to be more accessible to their staffs as it is to be more accessible to the outside world. And I'm talking about the whole outside world, not the Congress only. They should see people from business, academia, labor. They should also see their friends or just ordinary people whom Presidents respect or who want to talk to him. Jimmy Carter didn't do very much of that at all.

I think that one of the things he liked to do in the evening was watch movies. He was too tired and it was a way for him to relax. Often friends from the outside were invited to watch movies with him. We often went to the family theater, as did many other people who were not necessarily connected to the White House, to watch films. But after the movie was over and you would have a short conversation, then everybody would go home. And the President, I think, missed that kind of intimate one-on-one or a three-on-one give and take. He could have gotten some of the outside feedback that he never really got.

Wayne: You were saying that the longer you were in the White House the more fatigued you became. I personally witnessed a time when it seemed like you were in meetings all day. You had come in at 7:15 in the morning for a deputies' meeting, and probably had to leave your home before seven. You had that meeting, other staff meetings, the task force meetings, and then your own work. And you leave at eight o'clock at night. What does that do to a person over time? Are you less tolerant? Did you have that perception over time? How does that affect your own mentality?

Ryor: [redacted]

Jones: Let me just add this question first. Do you, in fact, become isolated?

Ryor: [redacted]

Chanin: Let me add two things. First of all, there's no doubt about the isolation; but it's an isolation not just in terms of the family but also in terms of Washington itself. And, just to back up, Washington is a very isolated city. You can talk about the President's isolation, but you have to understand that Washington, with the special interests and the Congressman and the life they lead, is not representative of what other people think. For example, the environmental constituency was in tension with environmental advocates in Washington many times. Anne and I were talking about phone calls this morning. You may get a hundred phone calls in a day when you're running the schedule that we were trying to run. You can and do want to return phone calls, but you can't

return more than fifteen or twenty phone calls in a day, and sometimes that's at 6:30 or 7:00 o'clock at night, so, you're not going to reach many people because they aren't there waiting for you to call them. Isolation develops and unless you're involved with what's not right then, you probably won't receive a return call. You just don't have time to call a very good friend who happens to be in town, who would be wonderful to talk to. You can't see a good, savvy politician from Iowa who could tell you what's really going on out there. It would be nice to do that, but it is probably much more helpful to talk to a person at the American Legion about how we're going to handle this latest flare that's going to come up on the Hill about the draft registration issue. And that's what's hot, so that's what you're going to deal with.

Young: But that's really quite extraordinary! I should think of all the operations on the White House staff, you should not be saying this because you were most closely in touch and most frequently in touch with outside people.

Chanin: There was just so much time in a day. We had so many things going on and unless something was really right on the thing that you were working on, then it was very difficult to break up what you were doing and take that phone call. Now, after November 4 it was very different. We tried to return a lot of phone calls. [*laughter*]

Thompson: Is there any chance at all that part of the problem is that one might take him or herself too seriously? I get at least fifty phone calls many times during the day here, and yet I know it isn't going to remake the world if I get to everyone. I know that most of the things that come up, like funding, and inquiries, I can't do anything about. So, granted there is the tension, but I have heard many old hands say that the one lesson that they learned in Washington was after a period of time they stopped taking themselves quite as seriously as they did at the beginning. Is that true?

Wexler: Yes, I think to a certain degree that there were people in the White House who took themselves too seriously. I would not count anybody in this room who served in the White House among those, however. I don't think we ever did. I think our particular function in the White House was really to serve the public in a very real and intimate way, if you will. I think we did take our responsibilities seriously, but I don't think we took ourselves that seriously. At least we tried very hard not to. I don't think we had that opportunity because we were always being responsive or initiating some things that we thought that we needed to do.

I'd just like to make a couple of other observations about isolation. First of all, I think you accept that fact when you work in the White House doing the kinds of the intensity that we all worked. Every White House staffer learns that you give some things up. It's probably hard in the beginning to do that, but you eventually come to that conclusion and you do it. You don't see your old friends a great deal. You don't have social engagements on Saturday night. You try very hard to keep Sunday as a day when you can totally relax, if you don't have to go to the office. You give up a social life in a sense if your children are grown and away from home because you want to save whatever time you do have for the things that really help you restoke the fires. And that becomes a fact of life. I don't think people resent it very much, they just do it. Then, you pick up your life when you leave. And I think that's part of the cost of working there. One of the things we haven't talked about in this session, either yesterday or today, is a Wednesday group. I suppose we ought to get it on the record.

Young: Yes, I'm glad you brought that up.

Wexler: That was something that I instituted the week that I got to the White House. It was a group that met weekly from the time we got there until the Wednesday before January 20. The group was composed of old Washington hands, people who had formerly worked in the White House in the Johnson administration or who were from Congressional staff people. I think there were a couple who were neither, but I can't remember now who they were.

Young: People not currently in official positions?

Wexler: No one was currently in government except the people on the staff who came to the meetings. The meetings lasted an hour or an hour and a half every Wednesday for two and a half years; just good conversation about things that were happening, of both immediate and long-term interest. It gave us an opportunity to get the perspective of the people who were not intimately involved in the everyday things that were going on, and it was for many of us, I think, the best part of our week.

Sometimes it was highly contentious. They came in and just yelled and screamed for an hour about things that they thought we were doing wrong. Sometimes they were extraordinarily helpful in both advice and activity in getting legislation passed. One of the people who was in the Wednesday group had worked for Senator [Robert] Byrd and whenever we wanted to send a particular special message to Senator Byrd he was often the messenger. That's just one example and there were many like that. But they were just extremely, extremely helpful. They were the ones who suggested the format and eventually a lot of the language in the Kennedy Library speech, which I thought was one of the best speeches that Jimmy Carter ever gave.

McCleskey: Who from the staff was at these meetings? Was this just your operation or were other senior staff there?

Wexler: They would wander in and out. I mean in the early days Frank Moore used to spend a lot of time in some of those meetings. He would come in and talk about legislation currently on the Hill and where it needed help and how some of these folks could help him. After a while Frank stopped coming but his staff members continued to come when they needed help. Bill Cable often came. Bob Thomson came a lot, as did other Frank Moore staffers. David Rubenstein, Stu's deputy, came almost all the time.

Ryor: [redacted]

Wexler: All the speechwriters came to every one and they have proudly talked about the fact, since the advent of the Reagan administration, that they were part of that group. They got a lot out of it and a lot of ideas for speeches. My staff, of course, attended the meetings. Dick Moe, the Vice President's Chief of Staff, came every week.

Chanin: His Congressional Affairs [person] always came.

Wexler: No, No, the Vice President's press person came to every one.

Chanin: And one of his speechwriters.

Wexler: Right. Al Isley and one of his speechwriters. They were great sessions.

Chanin: We might talk about what we did with the memos afterward.

Wexler: There was never a Wednesday group that didn't have at least one good idea. We would do a memo to the President after each meeting and say, "Mr. President, today the Wednesday group said so-and-so," and very often he acted on it.

Thompson: Did you ever get off the reservation entirely? In other words, instead of bringing people to you, did you do what we used to do in the Rockefeller Foundation? We joined clubs or other places because we said if we kept eating lunch with one another we would begin to believe our own lies. [*laughter*]

Wexler: Well, we all got out because we traveled, and we all got out for lunch once in a while, but not often.

Young: Is it a misperception to believe what many of us have read in the press about the bad relations between the White House and the rest of Washington? I think this Wednesday meeting group is a very interesting thing to look at in that light. Is this just a misperception, a myth about the Carter Presidency? Did you feel that? The Washington establishment and you.

Wexler: I think that the Washington establishment felt left out of the Carter administration, I really do. I don't think that there was much of an effort to reach out to people who would define themselves as the Washington establishment. But then, I don't know who the Washington establishment is, I guess. Mrs. [Katherine] Graham used to be a regular visitor in and out of the White House and certainly entertained lavishly many members of the White House staff all the time. I mean, we certainly went to those kinds of social events.

Chanin: The Governor of Maryland was always in and out.

Young: I didn't mean socially, I meant in a political sense. Either the myth or reality goes as follows: here is a guy who came in by running against us and proceeded to do us in. I've heard that so often, and you've read it in the press. This is identified as a major problem with that administration.

Wexler: The Kraft syndrome, you know. He is the best story I can think of because he's so much a part of the Washington establishment, I guess. He was one of the people who perpetuated that myth.

Young: So it is a myth?

Wexler: I suppose so, I mean Tim Kraft—

Ryor: [redacted]

Wexler: All the time.

Ryor: [redacted]

Wexler: Averell Harriman and Clark Clifford were in and out of the White House all the time. I don't know who you identify as members of the Washington establishment as opposed to those who are not. There was no social intercourse of any kind, which I think annoyed people. They never felt as though they were welcome. The example of Reagan's invitation to the recognized leadership of Washington to the F Street Club burst that balloon for him immediately. And whether he ever has any relationship with them ever again won't make any difference.

Magleby: It seems, though, that this may relate to something you said yesterday about the relationship of the press corps on Capitol Hill to the press corps that covers the White House. I think a lot of the perception of the Carter White House being out of touch may have come from the Capitol Hill press corps who reported an estrangement between Speaker [Thomas P.] O'Neill and the President in terms of the coordination, logistics, and timing of the vote on the treaty. So to what extent could this idea of the Washington establishment not being part of the White House be a result of the Congressional interpretation or the perspective from the Hill?

Wexler: Oh, I think that's part of it and that's a perfectly legitimate point to make. I think too that the Georgians were generally perceived by the Washington establishment, the social writers, and so forth, as being clods! I mean they were not, but that's what they thought they were.

Thompson: Even Jody Powell?

Wexler: Well, less so Jody. Jody Powell and Joe Alsop were very good friends. Joe Alsop saved Jody's reputation in Washington because we used to talk about him all the time. But Jody was probably the only exception, and the rest didn't care. Jack Watson cared too; he was also an exception.

Chanin: Jimmy Carter had some friends on the Hill, like the Georgia delegation. And some other Congressmen and Senators were personal friends of his. But he never really developed these relationships the way Lyndon Johnson or Jack Kennedy or even Dick Nixon did within his party. Even though they were in the minority, this group of Congressmen and Senators became Nixon's champions on the Hill. They became power brokers, in a sense, because of their relationship with the President. They were known to be the President's confidants. When he spoke or if you spoke to

them you were almost speaking to the President. President Carter never had that, and in a sense, that led to the problem of perceptions at the other end of the avenue.

Young: Capitol Hill was the briar patch.

Wexler: I read Bob Donovan's book on Harry Truman the summer before the election, thinking to myself, *Well, it will be good to read this book in the context of what seems to be happening to Jimmy Carter*. And I was struck by the fact that Truman affirmatively tried to bring people into his Cabinet and others from the Congress in order to smooth his own relationships with them. But it really didn't in the end help him at all. So I think a lot of it depends on the individual as well. I mean, Harry used to play poker with those guys all the time, but it didn't really make any difference. They certainly gave him a hard time when they felt they should.

Young: When the Congress was in session early in the New Deal, Roosevelt spent about 30 hours a week alone with various people on the Hill. He didn't have a Congressional Liaison; that's one thing he wouldn't staff out. He had a few people to help, but for the most part he took it on himself.

McCleskey: This is a bit of a digression back to yesterday, but we've touched on this today in several ways. Could you comment on the role of people such as Pat Caddell, Jerry Rafshoon, and Jody Powell? How did they function and how was their work related?

Wexler: Well, I think both of them had an extraordinary personal relationship with the President as well as a professional one, and I think he felt comfortable with both of them. Although they didn't always agree with each other, they did most of the time, and they had, I think, a very disproportionate influence on the decisions that the President made on many issues, especially toward the end. Some of those decisions I agreed with, but many I did not.

I think that there were three major events in the Carter Presidency over which Pat Caddell had an enormous influence. The first was the Malaise speech, which was all Caddell's idea. The second was the Democratic Convention acceptance speech, which again was mostly Pat's idea. Pat was very instrumental in the drafting of that speech. The third was the debate strategy which was also straight out of Caddell's head. In all of those events Pat dominated the discussion of the strategy and left some other people, whose opinions should have been taken more seriously on the side lines. The most important of those sideline people were Stuart and the Vice President.

Young: Hamilton Jordan?

Wexler: Well, Hamilton was in there, but Hamilton deferred to Pat on many issues. I think Jerry Rafshoon, despite the best of intentions, had too high a public profile, which harmed the President far more than he helped him. I don't think he helped him very much at all, although it wasn't his fault. I think he instituted a lot of changes that were very good in the White House in terms of better coordinated and far better organized public relations function.

I think he also helped organize the speechwriting process, something that badly needed to be done. But somehow or other, as I said earlier, the whole Rafshoon mystique got caught up by the press and then ended up creating more cynicism and harm without any intention on their part of ever

doing more than needed to be. A second result of Jerry's and Pat's disproportionate influence (as I said, this stemmed in part from the President's comfort in talking with both of them) was the fact that other people's advice on issues that had to do with public perceptions, PR [public relations], and the image-making of the President was pushed aside as Rafshoon pushed his own ideas forward. I think if there had been a little more balance in the decision-making process, it probably would have been better for the President.

McCleskey: Could I follow that up? We talked yesterday about people's conception of politics and you were saying that the President lost confidence as he went along. Was that perhaps in part because he realized that he didn't really understand the political process? I'm not talking about the legislative process, but what happens out there in the body politique. And was that related to the role of such people as Caddell and Rafshoon?

Wexler: No, I don't think so. The President superbly understood that it was part of the problem; perhaps he understood it too well.

I think he was overcome by the weight of issues more than anything else. It wasn't so much the process as it was the increase in inflation, the problems with the economy, Iran, and Afghanistan. It was just the weight of all this stuff that was pressing him down and his own feelings about himself. And I'm saying this without him ever having said it to me, so it's just from observing. And with the decisions he was making, how can you be sure?

Ryor: [redacted]

Wexler: It could kill him!

Thompson: Was there any wait-a-minute man to counter Caddell and the others? One thing that we've heard continuously is that when Lance left there was nobody close enough to him who could say as [Dean] Rusk did to Kennedy, "Wait a minute, let's think a little more about this."

Wexler: The only wait-a-minute person who was available after Lance left was Rosalynn [Carter]. Sometimes she played that role and sometimes she didn't. In the sense that we're talking about, there were plenty of people who would say, "Mr. President, I think that maybe you ought to look at options one, two three, four, five again before deciding." Certainly, Stuart played that role a good deal, but it wasn't the same relationship as you are talking about.

Kettl: I'd like to ask Ms. Wexler a broader question about the Carter Presidency. It seems that a judgment has begun to set in, arguing on the one hand that the President was mired in an enormous number of details. On the other hand and at the same time, there was an inability on the part of the President to articulate a vision as to what he was about. From your point of view, to what degree is the President truly a captive of the agenda that he faces? Possibly Carter may have taken on an agenda that strategically was too large. What can the President do to improve a sense of strategic as opposed to tactical planning?

Wexler: I think in the early days we took on an agenda that was too large, and again, much of that set the tone for the Carter Presidency. I mean, we came in with this enormous list of things that we were going to fix and improve in the first four years, and I think that everybody learned the limitations of the job fairly quickly. At the end the President had begun to have a sense about this. He began to articulate a sense of very clear priorities, to lay out the problems, and to begin again without too much confusion as to what the solutions ought to be.

But I think in a way it was too late to do anything about winning the election. There was a long learning curve, and I don't know how else to respond to your question. Perhaps President Reagan has learned the lesson rather well, and we'll see if he can stick to his own game plan. If they deal with the economy, with energy, and perhaps national security issues and very little else, I think they'll be quite successful. But I think the trick is defining your priorities, making it very clear to the country very early what it is that you're going to do on a priority basis, and then try to do it without complicating it all the time. Enough comes up every day that you have to add to your plate without starting out with a big plate.

Neustadt: As long as the economy is not growing, it seems to me that the President inevitably is the captive of agendas forced on him. But the kind of self-inflicted wound that the very visible reorganization commitment represented can be avoided.

Kettl: There's a related question, which is that the same sorts of questions face you as individual staff members. How does one try to get a sense of broader strategy apart from individual day-to-day tactics, which again is connected to the isolation that we talked about earlier? How can individual staff people get a broader sense of long-range strategic questions apart from the tactful questions of how to support individual items?

Young: And there's another part to that problem as you hear many people talk about the possibility of a four-year Presidency and the one-term President who looks at the lengthening learning curve as everything gets more complicated. They say it makes sense after looking at things to get people to look ahead, but there's no institutional memory built into the Executive Office either except perhaps in OMB. And there are some problems with using it there. Did you feel that there was a void in terms of old hands or an institutional memory or something like that on the staff?

Wexler: Well, that's what I used the Wednesday group for.

Young: I know.

Wexler: There was no way in that White House, or I suspect in any White House, to learn except by doing. The only thing you have to rely on other than learning is the transition books that are provided for you by the last group, and of course, we weren't there at that time. When you come into a job in the White House you receive a blank slate on which you propose to write, depending on what your own ideas are, how you should do your job or how it should have been formulated. If you're smart, you reach out to people who have done it before and talk to them at great length. That's how you get the institutional memory. Some people did that and some people didn't. I've always been struck by the fact that once you get in there, and I think it's true of the Reagan people,

you forget because you are so busy that you just don't think about going back and asking advice from the last crowd. So it just starts all over again.

Young: But my point is that it isn't altogether a blank slate. And then when you discover it, it's traumatic.

Wexler: Maybe you're right. That's a good point.

Chanin: I want to back up to an earlier point. I don't believe that Jimmy Carter was so bogged down in details that he couldn't function or that he'd lost the vision. He was a master of details with a very long memory for details, that's true. But he still was very effective at making decisions, quick decisions, once he got the issue put to him. I think he had the vision of where all this was going together. The problem was the plateful and communications.

I'd like to make a second point about long-term strategy. I talked a lot about the firefighting yesterday. Please don't get the impression, and this is something that Anne and I both spent a lot of time on, that we didn't spend time on long-term strategy. One of our jobs, particularly because we had a very good staff that handled tough decisions on a day-to-day basis, was to take an issue and look at it over the long term and see where we thought it was going to go. We tried to do it, at least from our perspectives, in terms of outside groups and the politics of the issue. We got down with the Congressional people, with Stu, and the political people. When Al McDonald came he was a driving force behind this, and these were not two-week looks, these were longer looks! We had some gaps in carrying out what we wanted to do partly because of public relations inabilities and Iran and other things that occurred. But there was a very conscious effort in the beginning of almost every issue to develop a strategy; and we constantly were looking at that strategy.

Wexler: We would program our issues for a year.

Ryor: [redacted]

Wexler: One other thing I'd like to say about this detail issue, because I think it's important, is that the President spent in the beginning a good deal of his time learning and studying everything. In my judgment he was right to do it, and I think he always thought so and continued to do so because it helped him to learn his job. After the first year the only thing he attached in that kind of exquisite detail was the federal budget on which he spent a tremendous amount of time. However, because of that, he had a better grasp of what the government was all about, what was important and what wasn't, how the priorities worked, and what he perceived as the needs of his Presidency. He had a better grasp than probably any other President for a long, long time. And, in my own judgment, that's the way to do it. If you understand the budget and you can control the budget, you really understand the government and your Presidency. But you've got to be familiar and comfortable with the budget in order to do that. I think that was his perception and it was certainly mine. He had mastered it, I think, very well by the end of the last year.

Young: Interesting, Nixon had precisely the opposite view. He couldn't stand dealing with the budget.

Wexler: Boy, I'll tell you, if you really want to know the government, you have to know the budget.

Jones: But do you need some guides there too?

Wexler: Well, he had them.

Jones: You can lose whole divisions of people in the budget!

O'Brien: We have concentrated so far on the obstacles and constraints placed upon the President and on the broad perspective of Presidential evaluation. Could you isolate two or three of the major contributions of the Carter Presidency? What do you think are the major contributions or accomplishments of the Carter Presidency?

Wexler: Many of them were on the legislative side. Without any particular order of importance, a list of domestic accomplishments might begin with the whole deregulation question, which Jimmy Carter initiated and successfully brought to conclusions in a lot of fields. Deregulation is going to have a long-term impact on the economy, and I think that was a substantial accomplishment. Jimmy Carter began to turn the country around with great difficulty, but did it nevertheless and did it well on energy. That's a very long and complex issue, but his leadership and his stubbornness brought producing and consuming states together for the first time in a forty-year debate. The subsequent things that he was able to do in the field of energy began to bring the country to a posture where it could look toward energy independence within a ten to fifteen year period. This is an extraordinary accomplishment.

The beginnings of what he was able to do in government reform, civil service reform, and subsequent things will have an impact over time. On the domestic side, the establishment of the Department of Education was an important accomplishment. I certainly strongly disagree with the Republicans on this issue.

On the foreign side, the President's own particular character, again his attention to detail and his stubbornness, for lack of a better word, made it possible for us to have the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty; again an extraordinary accomplishment in my judgment. Of course the Panama Canal Treaty was something he didn't have to do, but did in order to inaugurate a new era in our relations with Latin America. The normalization of relations with China, and a total reversal in the relationship between the United States and the third world principally because of Jimmy Carter's leadership and the work of Andy Young and Donald McHenry were both accomplishments. Historians will know better the very important role that the United States played in the final and successful conclusion in Rhodesia or Zimbabwe.

The multilateral trade agreement was done with such skill that nobody thought of it as an accomplishment, but will have long term impacts on the economy. In the second term, the President would have begun to make and push through Congress the kinds of decisions that would have made it possible for us to begin to develop the same kind of incremental building toward the

security in economics that we had begun to achieve in the energy field. I'm sorry we didn't have the chance, because I don't believe that the Republican program is going to work, but we will see.

Chanin: Let me add a couple of broader things. Number one, I think Jimmy Carter restored a concept of integrity and honesty to the Presidency that was destroyed by Dick Nixon and Jerry Ford of the Republican party. I think Jerry Ford is just as guilty as Dick Nixon in some of that destruction. We shall see what happens with the Republicans and the kinds of people they have put in this government today, but they are the very same people who had no respect for our institutions, our government, and our process. That's number one.

Jones: That contribution is before or after the Burt Lance affair?

Chanin: I think all the way through. Lance is a blemish, but I don't think Lance really destroyed the belief that people had in Jimmy Carter. This belief continued right up to the end of the election campaign, according to our polls. The people believed Jimmy Carter was an honest man and that the Presidency was again speaking the truth. They may not think he was a competent or they may not think other things about him, but they did think he was speaking the truth. There are a number of us who feel strongly about that.

Wexler: There was never a major scandal of any kind in the Carter administration.

Chanin: We messed up on the UN vote; we messed up on some things.

Wexler: Mike is right about that. Honesty and integrity were restored. Let me just add one more thing. One long-term impact was the President's sensitivity to minorities and women, which was reflected in the appointments process and certainly in the judgeships.

O'Brien: I was going to ask you what you think of the federal judiciary.

Wexler: Over time the appointments to the federal judiciary are going to have profound impact on this country. Certainly Jimmy Carter destroyed the myth forever and ever that you could not find qualified Blacks, women, and members of other minorities to serve in high positions in the government.

Chanin: You might say that this is a true story. One of the last people from the Carter staff who is still in the government as a general counsel is a woman general counsel for a federal agency. She went to a meeting of the general counsels of the federal agencies to discuss regulatory reform, regulatory relief, or whatever they call it under Vice President Bush. She was the only woman in the room. It's the first time she can remember in four years in government that she went with her general counsel–level people, where she was the only woman with white males in the room.

Wexler: Yes, look at this table, folks.

Ryor: [redacted]

Jones: That's right. The perception of integrity was restored to the White House and yet the Lance affair, rightly or wrongly, vindicated or not, may have been the problem.

Chanin: That was suggested yesterday. It was a problem, but in the end, if you look at the polls and you look at what people said about Jimmy Carter, you see Lance did not cause a problem.

Jones: But that's different from the Presidency.

Wexler: The point that we were trying to make yesterday was that the cynicism of the press was reignited by the Lance incident. We were never able to restore the image of Jimmy Carter walking down Pennsylvania Avenue after that. It just became harder.

Chanin: The second general thing that Jimmy Carter did was to at least begin the process of understanding the limits of American strength, the limits of our resources, and perhaps even the limits of world strengths and resources. That's in the environmental area; that involves energy supplies; that involves how and what we can do with international situations, recognizing what true strength is, for example, in Afghanistan and how you use that strength.

Rourke: Do you think you tried to do this?

Chanin: I think he tried to do it because it's part of his ethic. This is a man who, perhaps partly because of his southern background, believes in concepts of conservation of resources, and believes that you don't waste. Waste not, want not, in one sense. He believed that we had lived in this country through a period for a long time of misapprehension about our abundance. He began to change but not the way Jerry Brown might talk about the age of limits. I was trying to keep away from the word "limits" because it gets confused with Jerry Brown's thinking, but "limits" is the only word I can think of. Look at that and you can see what he has done in the environmental area.

Jones: It's hard to know for sure whether he changed it. At the same time there was less gas available.

Chanin: Right.

Ryor: [redacted]

Wexler: Having said that, the point that ought to be made is that Jimmy Carter was really the bridge President from an age of abundance, in many cases, to an age of limits. He faced those issues as affirmatively and as strongly as he could. We tried to bring the country to a realization of the fact that we were going to have scarcities, and that we were going to have to deal with them.

He was only partially successful. Part of it was because he was dragging along a constituency with him who didn't want to hear the bad news, but he made it easier for the next one and the next one

and the next one because he was the transition person. We'll be seeing that the further we get away from this administration. There's no question about the fact that one of the things that this President did was see the future very clearly in terms of those issues, and he tried very hard to make the country understand those issues.

Young: So in a sense this is the irony of a one-term President, a bridge President. He is a bringer of bad news.

Wexler: To a certain degree that's true.

Chanin: Let me just mention a couple of specific things. One cannot overlook the importance of civil service reform. The top-level management, career management, and government management will be able to be rewarded, be given incentives, and be allowed to apply their talents. There are some very talented people. There are some problem areas that might need some further work when you reform civil service laws that extensively for the first time. In a hundred years or whatever, you expect some cleaning up having to be done as you get more experienced with it. The other thing was that I think that he really improved our relations with NATO and with our European allies. The NATO decisions, the joint decisions on levels of funding, and the advanced placement of missiles were decisions that the U.S. had been after for a long time. We forget very quickly our allies' impatience with Henry Kissinger, whom they felt was jumping over them and was ignoring them in his style of international performance. Jimmy Carter, in spite of the fact that he might have had some individual personality problems, did not jump over or ignore them. We had a neutron bomb problem with Germany earlier on which he did change for the better. He strengthened the NATO alliance, which has proved very useful in broadening the situation with the Soviet Union in terms of Poland and Afghanistan. Those are two specific things. The vital specific thing is that during his administration, partly due to the Congress and partly because of Jimmy Carter's attention to the budgets, the Congressional budget process really did get strengthened. Whether or not they can keep that process of doing an overall budget resolution, setting their numbers, then going back and letting committees come through with their appropriations within certain numbers, is unclear. Our participation in readjusting the overall numbers, even though we opposed the budget resolution, might have to some extent interrupted the process a little bit. Nevertheless, that whole process became real partly because of the President's involvement in the budget, and because of his feelings about the importance of the budgeting process. That's part of the way you got control of it. He did another thing that Reagan is now having to deal with, which was bringing to public attention the whole problem of fixed expenditures, uncontrollable expenses, off-budget items, and loan guarantees. That was all part of the public works vetoing part. It wasn't just water projects that were environmentally bad. The whole budgeting process was involved in showing that we've got to start dealing realistically with what we're spending, putting it into the federal budget, and dealing with it in that process.

Thompson: Apparently it was not successfully communicated with the American people. Compare this list with Roosevelt's for instance: winning the war and staving off the worst aspects of the depression. Is the priority problem with accomplishments the same problem that it was with a legislative program?

Young: It's not Roosevelt that I'm looking at, though that might be fruitful. I'm looking at the program that he brought in and the campaign promises, from tax reform on through. Then I'm remembering the farewell speech about nuclear threats, the environment, resources, and human rights. When he looks back over the things, is that the way that he wants to be remembered? How does he come out on his own evaluation?

Wexler: By the way, let me add to that list one other thing, the Alaska Lands legislation which is the biggest area set aside for conservation since the days of Theodore Roosevelt. This will be perceived as an important accomplishment of Jimmy Carter's. You look at that list and it really knocks you out.

Ryor: [redacted]

Wexler: We dealt with each issue as it came up, and in many cases, brought it to a good resolution. Then we went on to the next one, without ever articulating that kind of overall philosophy that made people feel good about their President. In the course of the campaign, people were saying, "Jimmy Carter hasn't done anything for four years, why should I vote for him?" I used to hear that all the time. Just take the list that we've just run off. Each of those items is significant. If you go back to the Kennedy administration, there were maybe two or three positive things that you can think of, and one of the most important was the GATT [General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade] Agreements. We handled the second round of the GATT Agreements with such dispatch that nobody gives us any credit for it. Beforehand, everybody thought it was impossible. The same thing with Johnson, Nixon, and Ford.

And when you go back and look at this list you have got to be impressed. But the problem was that we never were able to say in a way that brought it all together that we were moving the country forward in a way that made people feel good about their President. During the campaign, I was talking to a group of women and they were complaining about this and that and the other thing as far as the Carter Presidency was concerned. One woman got up and said, "Can't you make me feel good about him?" which of course, was typical of California. This could happen only in California. It's a uniquely California response. But that was at the point where we had a problem. I never forgot that. It was a plea to "make me feel good about my President." That's what they wanted.

Young: One can perceive the failure to convince people of what you're really doing, but one is struck by your phrase, the "bridge President." If one thinks in historical terms, I think that's pretty close where the first revisionism will come out. People will begin to look back and they'll see this Presidency as a move from something to something, if we keep our fingers crossed. But isn't it inherent in the very idea of this President bridging two eras that you're going to have a mishmash of success on your box scores and that nobody will be able to sort out the significance of what you

did until they have the distance of time and really look at your weaknesses and your fears. If you try to put yourself in the position of somebody looking back in years, ten years out, fifteen years out, what would you think would emerge as the major weaknesses of this administration? Because all of them have some.

Ryor: [redacted]

Young: What you're saying is the real trouble with this administration was its failure given the new technology for communicating. It wasn't a bully pulpit.

Ryor: [redacted]

Wexler: The person to really go through the entire Iranian situation decision-making process, in terms of staying in or getting out, is Jody Powell. The President was reluctant to discuss that with anybody else. He and the President spent hours together trying to figure out what to do on this issue. The rest of us never really knew what was going through the President's mind on those issues except he always said no when we asked him to tell us.

Jones: John, I'm not sure that the record was so salable. Not that it's not impressive, but as I go down these items just on the domestic side, I wouldn't like to be in charge of having to sell these items. I think they're unsexy: deregulation, energy turn around, civil service reform, the Department of Education, Congressional budget process strengthened, bringing attention to how we were spending tax expenditure items, and so forth. There's a broader problem for this President that does support the notion of bridge Presidents. Following the Johnson innovative programs, there was a tremendous domestic breakthrough, greater even than during the depression years. This is a period of consolidation and now we seem to be in a period of trying to cut back on a number of programs. Consolidation is not a very sexy operation. Reorganization, restructuring, and that sort of thing do well at consolidation, but they're not sexy.

Wexler: How does a bridge President present himself to the country during a transition? What do you do to say, "Listen, folks, that was the genesis of the new foundation"? That was a very honest phrase, because that's what we were doing. We were fooling around with the foundation. The

structure was going to come maybe over a ten-year period. It was very hard to communicate that idea.

Ryor: [redacted]

Wexler: Another thing is that this President was a person who dealt with problems. It was his personality and it was his intent as an engineer to identify the problem and then to solve it in a very specific, activist fashion to the degree that he could. The things that you've just read, and the list that you just read, were pretty good descriptions of what he found when he came to the White House, and he dealt with them as best he could.

Rourke: But there were certain things that he should have dealt with that were really more important. The common complaint is that the economy management was not a stellar undertaking as far as the Carter administration was concerned. Were there things that you might have done that you neglected to pay enough attention to?

Chanin: That's the real point. Look at the list. One thing that we didn't say is that he dealt with our problems of economic inflation, other than the energy part of it. I wasn't at the White House at the time so maybe I can say what has to do in some degree with the philosophy about the government and the role of government. The President came into office and put in a stimulus program. When he came into office he could get in that Democratic Congress about anything we wanted. They made a very bad strategic mistake when they failed to ask for standby wage and price controls, because they would have gotten them at the time. The economy could have afforded it if there was a spurt in prices in anticipation of his using controls. He would then have had a weapon which probably would have taken Kennedy out of the race, or could have kept him out, and a weapon to hold things still for a period while other economic programs, the budget cuts, the credit and controls, the other things, were given a chance to work. He didn't have that weapon because they decided early on to accept the philosophical opposition to wage controls, or for whatever other reason. The President must have decided it. Not to get that standby authority when they could have gotten it from the Congress was a mistake. If you trace back the politics, particularly of Kennedy with his talking for nine months about how Jimmy Carter was incompetent, and that we ought to do these other things, they are due to this mistake. The UN and a few other things that we had done earlier became issues for people like Ronald Reagan. That's what the issue was. Ronnie had made that the issue in the election very successfully, and I think that was the issue in the end, plus Iran.

Wexler: Mike is right, but the way that the early days of the Carter administration were structured, it was hard to do that. I mean you had the Secretary of the Treasury having one philosophy, and Stu Eizenstat, the Domestic Policy advisor, having a totally different one. And Charlie Schultze another one and so forth. The one thing that Reagan has done intelligently is to develop a team that agrees with each other. We do not agree with what they're doing, but nevertheless they all agree. Whether or not it's going to work, they are going to try it. And they are going to try it at the time that they

need to try it, which is in the very beginning. If they succeed there will be substantial and profound changes, and if they fail we'll have more chaos and we'll be back in in four years.

Thompson: Was there a political reason why he didn't do that? He said during the campaign that he had differing foreign policy advisors so that he could bracket Brzezinski and Vance and hear their differences?

Wexler: I don't know. Maybe so, but it was not good theory. It wasn't good practice.

Magleby: This question falls directly on the issue that we've been skirting around since we began this discussion. Since your office was so keenly involved in communication with the special public and to some extent the mass public, I'd be interested in your reaction to the campaign strategy. We've talked about it indirectly. It seems to me there are three sorts of issues that arose. One of these was who were within the circle of advisors that advised the President on three issues. One, what to do about the hostage situation; two, when to leave the White House; three, when to focus on other issues, if at all?

Secondly, the decision about using a primarily negative campaign visa via Reagan rather than the kind of speech that he gave at the very end before he left office where he said here are the three big accomplishments of my administration. Why didn't you put those on the agenda for the campaign and campaign on those specifically? Instead we got a substantially negative campaign against Reagan.

And the third campaign decision that was based upon the negative campaign premise was, why then did Carter debate Reagan in the end? Was it that he felt that he had to because the commitment had been made earlier? Had he set himself up to be quickly knocked down if Reagan deflated the negative premises that the campaign had used?

Wexler: Let me preface my response by saying I was not deeply involved in the strategy for the campaign, so I can speculate on some of this without giving you definitive answers. On the question of the hostage situation, he was advised to either stay or go by a very close knit group that included Jody, Hamilton, and the First Lady for the most part, with the Vice President moving in and out because he was out of town a lot. Mrs. Carter would come back every weekend from having spent three days on the road and say to the President, "I think you ought to get out." I don't know very much more about that than what I've already said. My own personal feeling from listening to some of those conversations is that he pretty much decided himself what he wanted to do. I don't know what his reasons were.

The negative Reagan campaign was a response to Caddell's polls and whatever judgments Hamilton and the other group made. At the end of the campaign, from about the first of October through November 4, there was an eight o'clock meeting over at the campaign headquarters which I attended that really dealt with day-to-day problems and issues; what we're going to do here and what we're going to do there. My judgment is again that it was a kind of a responsive thing, which wasn't very carefully thought out. There was a lot of pressure to do it otherwise, and a lot of conversation about it, but it never got implemented. I cannot tell you why.

The reason the President debated was because he felt he had to. There was a large body of opinion inside the White House and in the campaign staff about its being a very bad idea. There had been the long press attention when he had refused to debate Kennedy after having accepted to debate. There was about a six-month period when the debate was an issue over and over and over again endlessly because it kept being raised by Kennedy. The President felt that because of the pressure of the press and the possible negative response, when people would say everywhere, "Why doesn't the President debate?" He had no choice.

Young: There was some backfire in his own party at the same time, which has something to do with it.

Chanin: I'd add one misperception from the campaign. I can't add why it originated, but I can tell you what it was, and why I think it's important. I spent the last three weeks of the campaign helping Ron Staten. We learned from the local politicians, the people who had to campaign for mayors, Congressional candidates, Senators and so on, that they could not use any of the material produced by the Carter-Mondale national campaign.

Jones: Why?

Chanin: Too negative.

Magleby: Was that feedback being transmitted back to the party members?

Chanin: Oh yes, it was transmitted when they wanted to print their own campaign material, cut their own radio tapes, and when they didn't use the national stuff. They were asked to cut it out.

Magleby: Maybe Caddell doesn't agree with me.

Wexler: I don't know. But I'm just telling you that that's what we found. There was a Caddell/Rafshoon operation. I don't know very much more about it than that.

Chanin: The people who analyze national campaigns sometimes don't get into this level of campaign, but if you're going to run an effective campaign nationally you have to work together with local candidates. If you're doing a literature, you work it out where you're going to cover half of a state senatorial district and they'll cover the other half. You'd better have the materials that they're willing to put out with their materials. And they'd better have materials you're willing to put out with yours. They weren't willing to take our materials with theirs. Not the national materials. I don't know exactly what motivated people to operate the way they did.

Ceaser: Partisans always seem to see things in their own perspective, and see things as good and bad as they begin with their own viewpoints. Anyone maybe looking from the outside was probably surprised, but then not surprised, at your lists of strengths and weaknesses. You have a whole number of contributions and accomplishments. Very few weaknesses except an inability to communicate. Now the question I have stems from this. If you look at what people see in the country at large about the Carter Presidency, they might have said, "Well, he made a mistake on the economy, he didn't come out very good and he made mistakes in foreign policy. He began with a

view of favorable relations to the Soviet Union, and ended up calling for more defense spending and sounding very much like Reagan."

Now the question I have is this. Was it felt by Carter and the staff that they had actually made critical mistakes at the beginning, both in their perceptions of the Soviet Union and in the perception of what makes the economy run? Or did they think that there were no mistakes, that there were just some things beyond their control? The second part of my question is what did the people on the staff feel about how the President felt about these things? You mention that he began as a confident man and he ended up rather unsure of himself. Was the perception of this because maybe he was wrong about some very critical things, and then his own doubt became part of his governing style?

Wexler: It's impossible to be President without being wrong about some things and making mistakes. Things never turn out to be quite what you think they're going to be before you get there, that's true. That's the first thing, that's the beginning of wisdom in the White House. There was an acknowledgment early on about the first overzealous efforts to further reduce arms. In the first six months of the Carter administration, when we first went to the Soviet Union to talk about reopening the SALT talks, this was probably acknowledged later on as a mistake by both the President and others on the White House staff. Had we taken the SALT agreement that had been negotiated by the Ford people, we could have had it signed and ratified within the first two years of the Carter administration. We probably should have done that. We were too ambitious and too anxious to move the disarmament talks to further deep cuts quickly, and it was a mistake.

The difference between what President Carter wanted and what Ronald Reagan is talking about is that Carter was really talking about a cut. Reagan is talking about a kind of mutual negotiation that takes ten years. He talks about real cuts, but that's rhetoric and doesn't have anything to do with what Carter was talking about. I think that as we began to recoup our efforts to negotiate a treaty with the Soviets on SALT, it took too long and it was too hard to sell when we finally were able to sign it because we were moving into an election period when people were nervous about the Soviets. It was further compounded by a couple of mistakes, not the least of which was the way that Cuban issue was handled in August of 1979. That was the end as far as our efforts on SALT. Without that we would have ratified the treaty, although I would have preferred that we had ratified it earlier, and I think we could have.

There are two issues here. One, the entire Carter administration was deeply committed to the principle of controlled nuclear weapons all across the board. The other thing is that there was debate and acknowledgment within the administration that many of those issues were not handled as well as they could have been, that the timing was not what it could have been.

On the economy, we were elected in 1976 with a promise to stimulate the economy and with a group of constituencies who literally demanded and expected it. We probably overstimulated it. There was some recognition of that as we moved along the road. The thing that tends to be ignored and is hard to defend in an election context, not necessarily in an historical context, is the fact that the major problems connected with inflation in the last two years of the Carter administration came from the great price increase in energy prices. There was not very much we could do to cushion that, even had we had the authority for wage and price controls. That's not in the way of an excuse;

it's simply a fact. There was very little that we could do anything about cushioning those shocks or in fact of dealing with the rather massive increases in the inflationary cycle.

We did more as a Democratic administration than most Democratic administrations have ever done. That's part again of being the bridge Presidency and understanding what the future will look like for any party and any Presidency. In addition to having made some decisions that probably could have been made better, we also had some bad luck.

Ryor: [redacted]

Wexler: The expectations are very high. In an election atmosphere, people are not interested in excuses. If inflation was very high or has gone from 5 percent to 12 percent, very few people care whether or not it's because OPEC [Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries] raises its prices. The fact is that they're having to pay eighteen or 22 percent on their mortgage if they want to buy a house and they could care less the reason for it.

Neustadt: The other thing is that economic policy will be viewed as part of a very long bridge. That is, the next four years will also be viewed part of the bridge. People will say that we dealt with part of the long-term problem of resources, but that the economics profession failed to come up with any good ideas for dealing with productivity. In the next four years, there will be an effort to deal with productivity by cutting government. That will prove irrelevant. At some later time people will come up with some programs that begin to respond to the problem.

Young: I'm glad the economists also have their failings. You hear so much about political scientists.

Wexler: If we're smart the party will take advantage of those new ideas and begin to work in them as we go.

Abraham: I think the economists deserve infinitely more blame than they're getting. It's incredible. I have an egghead question. About fifteen years ago I was among those who worked with Rex [Rexford] Tugwell on one of his myriad of constitutional drafts. At the time he was obsessed by the notion of a one-term Presidency, and what he came up with in his thirty-third draft was a nine-year term of office, plus a recall after three years. Forgetting about the latter, what is your judgment of a one-term Presidency based on your own observation and your experience?

Wexler: I think it's impractical in our political system. I think it's a very bad idea. One of the things that keeps a President on his toes and keeps a country of its toes is the thought of having an accountability principle. The rhythm of the first term and the changes in the second term are derived from the way it's organized now, which is rather good. You've got to have a situation where a President is accountable to the people in the sense that he has to go back and get reelected. I think a six-year Presidency in one term is a very bad idea.

A subject for another three days' discussion is that the Congress would just go crazy. If you ever had a one-term Presidency, you'd have the President downtown trying to set policy and move the country, and the Congress saying we don't give a damn what you do because you're only there for one term and we're going to do exactly what we want. It would just destroy whatever communication and opportunity there are for working together. That's my own opinion. I don't think it would work.

Jones: Lame duck as soon as he arrives.

Ryor: [redacted]

Wexler: And if you think you now have problems with special interest groups, if you had a one-term Presidency, all the efforts would be up there and the flow would be going up to the Hill. The man sitting in the Oval Office would be irrelevant.

O'Brien: Wouldn't you repeal the amendment limiting the President to two terms?

Ryor: [redacted]

Wexler: I would like to think about it. I don't see why not.

Jones: You've got the same problem with your second term. You were beginning to describe and reflect on what to do with the second term.

McCleskey: This is a question about personnel. There is a kind of spreading popular wisdom that one of the problems with the Presidency is that under contemporary nominating procedures there is a strong tendency for candidates to recruit relatively young and inexperienced people for campaign purposes. These people start early and work months and years. If he wins, then these people have to be paid off with appointments. So you've got a heavy infusion of people into the White House and into the agencies who may be expert campaigners but who really don't know much about the politics of governing. Do you think that is so?

Second, what in your own experiences do you think best prepared you for the job you were doing? And third, if you were in a position to set up a grooming and preparatory program for a White House staff, what would you put them through?

Wexler: First, the campaign staffs differ. If you look at the Reagan White House, it's considerably older than the Carter White House. Nevertheless, many of the people who are in the Reagan White House have been involved with Ronald Reagan in campaigns. They're all older, maybe because he's been running for so long. You have to have a mixture in the White House. You ought to be able to blend experience and maturity with youth. For the most part, working in the White House has got to be a young person's game because when you get as old as I am, it's very hard to work over a sustained period because you get so tired. That's really true, and it's important to have younger people working in the White House, at least at the lower levels, as has always been the case. So I think you can mix and it's proper to do that.

Everybody's campaign experience, young people's particularly, does not always translate to jobs in the government. You have to pick and choose, trying to explain to people that long and active participation in the campaign does not always result in a White House job. There are places in the White House where you can put people who worked in the campaign, and have them function extremely well and learn a lot. We had a number of young people on our staff. One woman who came to us as an intern from the University of Virginia when she was a student and worked with us through the Department of Commerce, the White House and is going to the University of Michigan to start law school next year. She is an extraordinary person and obtained a tremendous amount of experience in the White House. Whoever gets her when she gets out of law school is going to get somebody who has benefited tremendously from that experience.

There is a real need for taking smart young people and grooming them. It will affect them for the rest of their lives. So there's a role for those kids. I don't know what the proper preparation for working in the White House would be. You asked what prepared me the best. I think 20 years of what I had done before. I mean almost everything I had done in my life really prepared me for the job that I finally ended up in; the right job for the right person in my case. That isn't always the case in the White House, I might add.

McCleskey: That suggests that the style of politics in Connecticut was not all that different from Washington. What you learned in Connecticut was pretty easily transferred.

Wexler: I had 20 years of understanding the role of grassroots organizing, managing, and administering. Connecticut did not have very much to do with it. It was just what I did, how I did it, and what I learned. All of it finally came together for me in what I was asked to define and build in the White House. Grooming people to serve in the White House was the most important thing, but there are two parts to that. One is the diversity of training. It's hard to specify. Imagine that you're doing an interview with a student in political science who says that his ultimate goal in life is to work in the White House and asks, "How do I get there?" The question would be very hard for me to answer because so much of it is the luck of being in the right place at the right time.

I think previous experience in government helps. One of the things that I felt was an advantage for my working in the White House that was not an advantage for others was that I had worked in an agency before I came to the White House. Political experience is important and taking advantage of the experience of others who have worked there in the past. Being able to have access to the kind of discussion that we're having at the moment is going to be very important to the people who want to work there in the future. What is most important is a general sensitivity to politics and the priority issues that affect the country. The experience of working elsewhere in the government is very important for working in the White House. It reduces the isolation substantially.

Chanin: Anne is too modest. Why she was successful in the White House did go back to a grassroots experience. She had run a campaign in Connecticut. She had participated in a number of national conventions involved with rules. She had not the knowledge of the rules, but the knowledge of the process and things that had worked and hadn't worked. These were key factors in her ability. There are a lot of lawyers in the White House who are in the kinds of jobs that we were in, the general jobs. Of course there's a difference. If you're going to be in the White House as a

specialist on health, then there's a whole different way of getting there. It's a whole different person that you're looking for with a whole different set of characteristics. But the general jobs and staff jobs [work] for a lot of lawyers. They have been trained to think logically from A to B to C, and they're good for the White House if in addition to thinking logically they have had political experience in situations where they have to worry about and master logistical problems without letting those problems swallow them up. Even at the very senior staff level at the White House, you have to worry about the details. We had lots of details where we had our problems. When a Governor got held up at the gates, when he got run into, that's a problem that shouldn't have happened. That's a detail that eventually ends up on the President's desk. But training or involvement in local campaigns, whether in Connecticut, Georgia, or Virginia grants the experience that we looked for in our staff members. They had a lot of experience having been involved in running a campaign. They could see the overall perspective of what was involved in running a major organization. These are two key factors. And then the third factor is just pure personality.

Wexler: Chemistry.

Chanin: You can train a person for a part, you can give them the job, but how they relate to the people around them and how they react to unique staffing situations or to unique positions cannot be trained. We can't look at the people who worked out for us and those who didn't work out for us and see any difference in the training of the person.

Wexler: Getting back to patronage, you can't expect people to give two years of their life to an undertaking like running for the Presidency and not expect them to expect some reward for it. And you should never go into a situation like that with the unrealistic expectation that you can just kiss them goodbye after they put you in the White House, because you can't and you shouldn't try to do that.

Ryor: [redacted]

Wayne: The last question may be not as significant as the others but it relates to the significance. We were told by Woodrow Wilson in 1885 that the most significant thing about the Vice Presidency was its insignificance. Much has been made of the fact that Jimmy Carter gave a different kind of role to Walter Mondale. I was interested in the extent to which there was a wait-a-minute person, and your response that it was Rosalynn after Burt Lance left. What kind of relationship did Walter Mondale have with Jimmy Carter? Why didn't he function at all as a wait-a-minute person, and was that relationship at all institutionalized?

Wexler: They had a close relationship. Walter Mondale husbanded his wait-a-minutes very carefully, and used them when he felt he really needed to do so. He viewed his relationship with the

President as being supportive, advisory, and helpful in carrying out essentially what it was that the President wanted him to carry out. He did not, except when he felt it was very, very important, stand up and say, "Mr. President, I think you're going down the wrong road." He did it, but he didn't do it often.

His Vice Presidency was entirely unique as compared to past Vice Presidencies in his access to information and his access to the major decision-making processes of the White House. Everything that the President knew, he knew. If he chose to, he could attend every significant meeting that the President had. He was as conversant with the problems and the issues of foreign policy, no matter how sensitive or how secret, as the President was. And he played a major role in the whole priority setting of public policy making. He developed policy process as much as anybody in the government. He significantly advised the President on how that should be handled. He moved into the West Wing, which was very important. For these reasons, the institutionalization in a lot of those things will continue.

I think to a large degree Vice Presidents will demand it. George [H. W.] Bush will have a lot of that, as he should. After Mondale and Bush, most guys who get offered the job are going to negotiate for the same kind of participation. Because of Mondale's character and because of Carter's character, a genuine affection was in their relationship, which changed the whole Vice Presidential institution.

Neustadt: I have a note about staff. Historically the Vice President's staff has had a very tense relationship with the rest of the White House staff. That was not the case at all in this administration. I think the main reason was the one that Anne's talking about: the relationship between the Vice President and the President and the people who were around them. But it was important that some of the key White House staff people such as Brzezinski's deputy, and Eizenstat's deputy, had come from the Mondale staff. That is a valuable precedent that any future President should try to follow.