

Carter Transition Scramble: See-Saw for Energy Policy Specialists

S. David Freeman, who directed the controversial Ford Foundation energy study that called for slower growth and maybe zero growth in energy consumption, is strategically placed in Jimmy Carter's "transition" staff. And, while Freeman is by no means assured of a high place in the Administration, the mere fact that he is now in a position to have a direct influence on the President-elect is highly ironic given the odd chain of events that has brought him to his present role.

In particular, there is much irony in the fact that, only last August, Freeman's name was struck off a list of experts who were to be invited to Plains to give Carter an energy briefing. This was done at the insistence of an important Carter associate, Frank Moore, who was Carter's executive secretary while he was governor and was the Carter-Mondale campaign's southern states coordinator and its finance director and director of congressional liaison.

Moore has said that Freeman, whom he regards as a controversial figure, was excluded simply in the interest of having a "more balanced" group of briefers. But others attribute the exclusion to promises allegedly made by Moore or his associates to Texas oil people who contributed campaign money—promises that Freeman would not be admitted to Carter's circle of policy advisers.

A Post-election Loser

Still more irony can be seen in the fact that Freeman was first brought into the Carter organization by Joe Browder, an environmental activist who has turned out to be one of the big losers in the post-election scramble for positions on Carter's transition staff. After his appointment last summer as policy coordinator for energy and natural resources in the transition office that was set up in Atlanta after Carter's nomination, Browder recruited Freeman and two other energy and environmental specialists to help him. He says that he threatened to resign over Freeman's exclusion from the energy briefing, and that he later spent a good bit of his time reassuring industry people who came by his office that Freeman was a sound, reasonable fellow.

But it was Browder himself who lost his leadership role in transition operations after the election, and he quit rather than accept what he described as the vague "peace-keeping, face-saving" consulting job that was offered him. He attributes his loss of position to policy conflicts between him and Carter's campaign issues staff.

Stuart Eizenstat, who was campaign issues coordinator, disputes this and says that the consulting job would have allowed Browder to do what he is best at—the free-swinging generation and advocacy of ideas. According to Eizenstat, the decision to offer him this job rather than some other was reached jointly by him, by Barbara Blum (director of transition operations), and by Jack Watson, the 38-year-old attorney and trusted Carter associate who, as head of the transition office in Atlanta, had been Browder's boss.

Browder suggests that the environmentalist point of view may no longer be effectively represented in the Carter organization. But this, too, is denied, and by the volunteers whom he recruited for the transition staff as well as by Eizenstat and others. Browder is described by one of his former associates as a "beautiful but very difficult person." Those involved with him in Atlanta all seem to believe that, as a dedicated advocate, he was miscast in his assigned job of policy options analyst—a job he got only through the personal intervention of Carter, whom he had been advising and trying to help since early 1974.

Before reviewing how all this came about, consider for a moment the post-election transition staff that has been assembled in Washington under Jack Watson and others. This transition group of 140 professionals is the successor to the one set up last summer in Atlanta in anticipation of a November victory. The staff is young (average age about 34) and has substantial numbers of women and blacks (about 35 percent of the staff professionals are women and 12 to 14 percent are black). Also, its members appear decidedly liberal and activist, and a number of them have been drawn from the "public interest" movement.

Some were previously with Watson's

transition or policy planning staff in Atlanta, while others have come from the campaign issues staff that operated under Eizenstat. Teams or "clusters" have been designated for particular policy areas, such as energy and environment, national security affairs, justice and equal employment opportunities, housing and transportation, and so on. The clusters include people who have been assigned to serve as liaison between Carter and the transition staff on the one hand and specific agencies and departments on the other. Freeman is the staff liaison man with the Energy Research and Development Administration; he also is a major contributor to an energy policy options paper, on which Carter's comments are expected shortly.

The fact that a transition staffer has been made a liaison agent and has had the duty of preparing option papers does not in itself signify greater responsibilities to come once the new Administration gets under way. Typically, the agency liaison people are still in their 20's or early 30's, and, while they may have had some experience as public interest advocates or held legislative or executive staff jobs, their experience of politics and government has been limited. Indeed, Katherine Schirmer, leader of the energy and environment cluster and former staff aide to Senator Philip Hart (D-Mich.) and to an Environmental Protection Agency official, is herself only 27. But Freeman is a more plausible candidate for a high position than most.

"A Time to Choose"

Now 50 years old, Freeman has been a prominent member of the energy community for the past six or seven years, and, most recently, served as a full-time consultant to the Senate Commerce Committee. In the early years of the Nixon Administration he was an energy specialist in the Office of Science and Technology. Then, in 1972, Freeman was made director of the \$4-million Ford Foundation energy policy project. Furthermore, the recommendations set forth in the project report, *A Time to Choose*, appear compatible with opinions Carter has expressed about energy policy.

The report was especially notable for its emphasis on reducing the rate of growth in energy consumption through conservation measures; it even suggested that, for the period beyond 1985, zero energy growth would be a feasible, and possibly desirable, goal. In discussing environmental problems, it stressed the advantages that would flow from avoiding "massive new commitments" to increasing energy supplies

through early development of nuclear power, western coal and oil shale (at least in areas where land reclamation is difficult), and offshore oil from the frontier areas of the Atlantic and Pacific outer continental shelf.

The "Freeman Report," as this project document quickly became known, was hotly criticized by many people in industry and also by some academics. Some ten scholars, mostly economists, contributed to an elaborate critique, published under the title *No Time to Confuse* by the conservatively oriented Institute for Contemporary Studies in San Francisco. But, even if the analysis that went into the report was as superficial as its critics allege, its insistent theme that conservation must be given a central place in national energy policy can, by today's lights, be taken by many as common-sense, middle-of-the-road doctrine. "I think history has dealt kindly with the report," observes Hans Landsberg, head of the energy program at Resources for the Future, a Washington-based research organization.

It seems that few people in the Carter campaign organization knew much about Freeman before Browder brought him to Atlanta last summer. And the very fact that he arrived under Browder's auspices may have put him in a questionable light in the eyes of some leaders in the campaign.

According to Browder, he had first gotten at cross purposes with Eizenstat as far back as 1974 when Governor Carter, who already had his eye on the Presidency, was chairing the Democratic National Committee (DNC) campaign effort on behalf of the party's congressional candidates.

As director of the Environmental Policy Center, a small organization located just off Capitol Hill which has led the environmental lobbying for such major bills as those related to strip mining and land use controls, Browder has been prominent in national environmental circles for several years now. He represents a rare combination of idealist and manipulator, and, although no blind ideologue in pursuing his legislative goals, he can be severe and unsparingly candid in his characterization of others and their motives. Some of Washington's more proper and cautious environmental leaders have always been more than a little uneasy about Browder, and have been known to screen him out of meetings where a careful sense of decorum was supposedly in order—he was, for instance, excluded when, a year or so ago, a group of environmentalists met with President Ford in Cincinnati.

In early 1974, Browder was asked by a

Georgia environmentalist who had ties to Carter to contribute some information on energy policy for possible use by the Democratic campaign committee. The material he submitted on nuclear power could have come straight from the pen of Ralph Nader, and Eizenstat, who was taking time away from his Atlanta law practice to edit material submitted to the committee, apparently found much of it unacceptable. Browder was upset about the finished product that was circulated to candidates, and he called Carter to complain, saying, among other things, that it was absurd to be saying things such as "it is generally agreed that the current generation of nuclear power plants can be operated safely." (Eizenstat says that he has no recollection of any of this and that, therefore, it could not have influenced his present attitude about Browder.)

While never an intimate of Carter's, Browder developed more than a passing acquaintance with him. On one occasion in 1975, he spent 2 days with him in Miami (where Browder once worked for the National Audubon Society), taking him around and introducing him to "good government" people.

A "Flip-flop" Averted

Browder had been submitting issues material to Carter on a volunteer basis during this year's primaries, but, when a flip-flop by the candidate on strip mining legislation was only narrowly averted, he became convinced that he would have to join the candidate's staff if he was really to have an influence. Upon discovering that Eizenstat did not want him, Browder again called Carter directly and, as a result, was hired to be a part of Jack Watson's policy-planning or transition group.

When Browder showed up in Atlanta, Watson learned to his surprise that Browder, without consulting him, had recruited three full-time volunteers to work under him as energy and natural resources coordinator—David Freeman, Katherine Fletcher (a staff scientist with the Environmental Defense Fund in Denver), and James Rathlesberger (who had earlier been staff director for the House Environmental Study Conference). Shortly thereafter, Browder included Freeman's name, along with the names of several others, on the list of persons to be invited to the August energy briefing for Carter.

Frank Moore subsequently voiced his objections about Freeman, and, from what can be pieced together from several people inside the Carter campaign, there seems no doubt but that some kind of commitment was in fact made to Texas

oil contributors not to use either Freeman or Lee White (formerly a consumer-oriented member of the Federal Power Commission) as advisers. Browder says that he would have resigned if Watson—who has not responded to *Science's* inquiries about the matter—had not promised that Freeman's exclusion from the briefing would satisfy any commitment that had been made and that, henceforth, there would be no question whatever about his good standing as a part of the team.

In truth, it was Browder's own standing on the team that was soon to come into question. There were sharp disagreements between him and Watson over what he was supposed to be doing, and also between him and his three volunteers. Understandably, the latter were afraid that if Browder were fired, they, as his own handpicked recruits, would "go down the tube with him." Once, when Browder was challenging Watson's judgment in no uncertain terms in an open staff meeting, Freeman and his other associates are said to have been fairly cringing with embarrassment.

Browder also was quick to challenge the judgment of people on Eizenstat's campaign staff whenever he thought things were going awry. For instance, he was appalled upon learning that a letter had gone out under Carter's signature which plainly suggested that the synthetic fuels subsidy bill pending in the House was not in conflict with his announced opposition to subsidizing synfuels development. This letter, sent to Representative Olin Teague (D-Tex.), chairman of the Science and Technology Committee, was employed by Teague and other sponsors of the bill in an unsuccessful effort to undercut the opposition to it. The issues staff, which prepared the letter, eventually called Teague's office to say that it should not be used to promote the synfuels legislation.

Browder says that he served Jimmy Carter well by intervening forcefully in the synfuels matter and in several other situations where potentially embarrassing mistakes were about to be made. Although hurt and dispirited by his treatment at the hands of the transition leaders, he still professes faith in Carter and in his willingness to accept good advice from whomever it may come.

But, even though Browder has been successful in the past in arranging to talk directly with Carter, this time he has not been able to get through. So Browder is now out, while Freeman, the "controversial" energy expert whom he brought to Atlanta and had to defend, is now in, and possibly in a big way.

—LUTHER J. CARTER