$4.5 million in fiscal 1978 and a professional staff of 42, is no bureaucratic heavyweight—will probably turn out to be not much more than the administering agency for federally supported conservation programs and for emergency fuel allocations.

Commissioner Larocca has going for him the fact that he is close to Governor Carey and that both Carey and the chairmen of the Senate and the Assembly corporation committees, Senator James T. McFarland (R-Buffalo) and Assemblyman Irwin J. Landes (D-Long Island), are committed to the idea that there must be a comprehensive state energy plan, just as there are such plans for health services and higher education. Nevertheless, Larocca and the governor could have trouble convincing the Legislature that any one agency should have the authority to make plans binding on all agencies with respect both to the question of how much electric power will be needed 10 or 15 years hence and how it shall be generated. The PSC and its acting chairman, Charles A. Zielinski, do not want the energy plan to be this far-reaching.

But Larocca has doggedly insisted, contrary to everything Zielinski and the PSC staff have been saying, that adversary proceedings of the kind conducted by the PSC and the Siting Board do not offer the best way of deciding policy issues such as how much New York should rely on electricity in comparison to other forms of energy or whether more nuclear power plants should be built until the problem of radioactive waste management is resolved. He points out that the latter question was a central issue in the Siting Board's recent 3-to-2 decision to approve construction of a nuclear plant on Lake Ontario.

In an effort to have the forthcoming energy plan carry more legal and political weight, Larocca is now proposing that its formal adoption as a state-approved plan be by the SEO advisory council, which includes members of the cabinet, among them Zielinski. But inasmuch as Larocca is himself the council's chairman, the question arises whether the council could review the plan objectively.

Even if Larocca prevails and produces a plan that represents official state policy that no agency can ignore, it is not clear how much will come of it. The high cost of energy is a matter of such concern in New York that the public might not put up with an increase in utility bills occasioned by new policies such as marginal cost pricing or innovative projects such as district heating. If so, Larocca and his associates could find themselves in the paradoxical predicament of being severely constrained by the very problem—sharply rising energy costs—they are trying to help overcome.

Federal Constraints

Also, there is a question of how well the SEO will be able to cope with the constraints or inhibitions imposed by the federal government. Already SEO staffers complain that none of the federal money received for conservation programs can be spent for energy "conversion"—for instance, for a project to convert an oil-burning industrial or utility boiler to wood chips, a fuel abundant in the forested regions upstate. An inhibition of this kind can be overcome if the state is willing to appropriate money of its own for such endeavors.

But there could be other federal constraints which, whether justified or not, could not be circumvented. If the SEO, NYSERDA, and some of the downstate utilities such as Consolidated Edison or Long Island Lighting Company should undertake to use municipal refuse as a boiler fuel, would this prove feasible in light of the federal Clean Air Act? Perhaps so, but at this point one simply cannot know for sure.

Yet, despite all such uncertainties, the effort here to proceed ambitiously in the development of a comprehensive energy policy for New York could renourish some of the hopes disappointed by the lack of such a policy nationally. It is a hopeful sign that the federal system—which, in theory at least, makes for 50 potential centers of governmental initiative and innovation—will serve the nation well in its efforts to come effectively to grips with the reality that the old era of energy abundance has come to a close.

—LUTHER J. CARTER

Many Gave at the Office in 1976

A recently released study of donations to candidates in the 1976 federal elections illustrated some well-known facts about corporate largesse: Republicans had only a slight edge in receipts, with most corporations giving to members of both parties; incumbents found it vastly more easy to attract funds than challengers, by a ratio of 4 to 1; and much of a corporation's total spending was spread among members of the committees that write legislation affecting the giver.

The most important news in the study, which was done by the staff at Common Cause, the public interest lobby, was that 1976 marked the first time corporations really took advantage of the 7-year-old law that permits them to set up campaign committees for employee donations. "Some 400 corporations established political committees for the first time during 1975 and 1976," and the overall contributions by the committees rose almost 300 percent in 1976 to $7.1 million, the study said.

In terms of the broad range of issues expected to be taken up by Congress this year, the most important numbers in the study are those that reflect 1976 industry investments in current members of the House and Senate. Among industries involving high technology, trade associations in the health area (such as the American Medical Association and the American Dental Association) were far and away the most beneficent ($1.7 million). Thirty current members of the Senate received an average of $8071 each from health associations, for example, and 387 members of the House received an average of $3804 each. Other corporate investments in current congressional members are reflected in the chart below.

—R. JEFFREY SMITH

Industry	House		Senate		Total ($)
	Members (No.)	Average ($)	Members (No.)	Average ($)	
Coal, oil, and natural gas	285	1145	33	3396	438,611
Chemicals and metals	236	693	24	2527	224,439
Aerospace	198	693	21	1857	176,332
Communications	211	495	21	1025	126,152
Electronics	218	365	23	1667	116,260
Pharmaceuticals	118	284	19	995	52,500

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