



## JIMMY CARTER'S THEORY OF GOVERNING

*by Jack Knott and Aaron Wildavsky*

*"Seek simplicity and distrust it."*

ALFRED NORTH WHITEHEAD

If President Carter didn't believe what he says or act on his beliefs, there would be little reason to study his words as predictors of his deeds. Yet, as we shall show, he does care about his beliefs and he does act on them. Why, then, if Carter is a believer, has it been so difficult for observers to determine what he believes or what he will try to do in office? Because we have all been looking in the wrong place. President Carter does change his views on substantive policies, such as tax reform, medical care, and busing. He is not an ideologue of policy, but changes his mind, like most of us, as the times and conditions change.

Our hypothesis is that Carter's basic beliefs are about procedures for making policy—procedures about which he speaks with passion, determination, and consistency. His concern is less with particular goals than with the need for goals, less with the content of policies than with their ideal form—simplicity, uniformity, predictability, hierarchy, and comprehensiveness.

Therefore, if there is a danger for President Carter, it is not that he will support unpopular *policies*, but that he will persevere with inappropriate *procedures*. The question is whether he views his procedural criteria merely as rough guidelines for formulating public policy or as immutable principles of good government. If they are hypotheses about governing—subject to refinement or abandonment in the face of contrary evidence—there is no reason for alarm; but if he does not allow his theories of governing to be refuted by experience, we are all in for hard times.

Of all the Democratic presidential candidates in the primaries, Jimmy Carter was criticized most for his alleged vagueness on

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policy. Some people saw him as a fiscal conservative who would cut government spending; others wondered about his plans for costly social programs. Actually, his campaign staff put out numerous papers outlining his proposals on issues ranging from busing to abortion to welfare.<sup>1</sup> The problem was not so much that he did not say specific things about issues but that he placed greater emphasis on methods, procedures and instruments for making policy than on the content of policy itself.

The response of Stuart Eizenstat, Carter's chief "issues" advisor, to a question last summer about what issues would dominate the campaign will serve as an illustration. Eizenstat grouped the issues into three types: one centered on the present lack of long-range federal planning; a second emphasized openness; a third dealt with government reorganization.<sup>2</sup> With all three, the emphasis was not on policy outcomes but on administrative instruments. (Long-range planning, like openness and reorganization, is not a policy but an instrument used to produce policies.)

### Carter on Procedures

In contrast to the other candidates, Jimmy Carter made numerous statements during the campaign and during his term as Governor of Georgia (1971-75) in which he explicitly emphasized principles of procedure for making public policy. Although we are aware of the possibility that these statements are in part rhetoric, his ideas do comprise a coherent philosophy, with recurrent and

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identifiable themes about how government ought to work; and we shall show that he put them into practice as Governor of Georgia.

In his own words, a major purpose of reorganizing the federal government is to "make it simple." He favors "drastic simplification of the tax structure";<sup>3</sup> "simple, workable, housing policies";<sup>4</sup> "simplification of the laws and regulations to substitute education for paper shuffling grantsmanship";<sup>5</sup> "simplification of the purposes of the military" and a "fighting force that is simply organized."<sup>6</sup> Rather than the "bewildering complexity" we now have, he intends to create a "simplified system of welfare."<sup>7</sup> His praise goes out to the state and local governments that have devised "simple organizational structures."<sup>8</sup>

How does he intend to simplify? When Carter became Governor of Georgia, he reduced the number of agencies from 300 down to 22. He has proposed a similar nine-tenths reduction in the number of units at the federal level—from the present 1,900 down to around 200.<sup>9</sup> His rationale seems to be a general one: the fewer the agencies, the better.

Another way to simplify administrative structure, according to Eizenstat, is "to make sure that duplicating functions are not performed by one agency and that, in fact, we don't have a situation whereby duplicating programs are being administered by more than one agency."<sup>10</sup> Carter has repeatedly stated that one of the purposes of his proposal to introduce "zero-base budgeting" (as he did in Georgia) is "eliminating duplication and overlapping of functions."<sup>11</sup> In restructuring the defense establishment, Carter would like to "remove the overlapping functions and singly address the Defense Department toward the capability to fight."<sup>12</sup>

### **The Uniform Approach to Policy**

A third way President Carter intends to simplify policy is through uniformity. He plans to reform the welfare system by providing a uniform national cash payment varying only according to cost of living.<sup>13</sup> He intends to standardize the tax structure by eliminating loopholes, thus treating all income the same.<sup>14</sup> To create uniformity, Carter would grant a direct subsidy for new housing.<sup>15</sup> He would also standardize medical treatment—"We now have a wide disparity of length of stay in hospitals, a wide disparity of charges for the same services, a wide difference in the chances of one undergoing an operation"—and make criminal justice uniform by "eliminat[ing] much of the discretion that is

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now exercised by judges and probation officers in determining the length of sentences."<sup>16</sup>

"There's just no predictability now about government policy," Carter has complained, "no way to tell what we're going to do next in the area of housing, transportation, environmental quality, or energy."<sup>17</sup> He believes in "long-range planning so that government, business, labor, and other entities in our society can work together if they agree with the goals established. But at least it would be predictable."<sup>18</sup> And: "The major hamstring of housing development is the unpredictability of the Federal policies. . . ."<sup>19</sup> In agriculture, the greatest need is a "coherent, predictable and stable government policy relating to farming and the production of food and fiber."<sup>20</sup> In foreign affairs, other nations are "hungry for a more predictable and mutually advantageous relationship with our country."<sup>21</sup> Unpredictability led Carter to condemn Henry Kissinger's policy of no permanent friends and no permanent enemies with these words: "I would . . . let our own positions be predictable."<sup>22</sup>

### Shared Goals Make Predictable Policies

If only we agree on long-range goals, according to Carter, then we can work together and make our policies predictable. The format of his thinking follows: long-range planning entails the explicit delineation of goals; once goals are known (and agreed upon), policies become predictable. This predictability reduces conflict and increases cooperation.

His theory of conflict explains how Carter would expect to deal with a recalcitrant Cabinet: "The best mechanism to minimize this problem is the establishment of long-range goals or purposes of the government and a mutual commitment to these goals by different Cabinet members. . . ." By getting early agreement, "I can't imagine a basic strategic difference developing between myself and one of my Cabinet members if the understanding were that we worked toward the long-range goals."<sup>23</sup> When asked how he would resolve differences with the Congress on foreign policy, his response was: "I hope that my normal, careful, methodical, scientific or planning approach to longer-range policies . . . would serve to remove those disharmonies long before they reach the stage of actual implementation."<sup>24</sup>

A major Carter campaign criticism of President Ford was that he "allowed the nation to drift without a goal or purpose."<sup>25</sup> By contrast, when Carter became Governor of Georgia, his administration attempted to identify long-range goals: ". . . during

the first months of my term, we had 51 public meetings around the state, attended by thousands of Georgians, to formulate specific long-range goals in every realm of public life. We spelled out in writing what we hoped to accomplish at the end of two, five, or even 20 years. . . ."<sup>26</sup> Only if government has clearly defined goals, Carter believes, will people be prepared to "make personal sacrifices." One of his favorite quotes from the New Testament is: "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for the battle?"<sup>27</sup> But suppose others prefer to march to their own music? How would Carter contend with conflict?

If openness is not a form of godliness for President Carter, it must come close. He has proposed an "all-inclusive 'sunshine law' . . . [whereby] meetings of federal boards, commissions, and regulatory agencies must be opened to the public, along with those of congressional committees."<sup>28</sup>

Carter's espousal of openness is connected in his own mind with direct access to the people. Just as he favors giving the people open access to governmental decision-making, he plans, as President, to speak directly to them. He values openness "to let the public know what we are doing and to restore the concept in the Congress that their constituents are also my constituents. I have just as much right and responsibility to reach the people for support as a member of Congress does." He has also said that he plans to restore Franklin D. Roosevelt's "fireside chat,"<sup>29</sup> accept "special responsibility to by-pass the big shots," and to act, as it were, as the people's lobbyist.<sup>30</sup> Should his policies be thwarted by special interests, Carter says he will go to the people. At times, Carter identifies himself *as* the people. In reviewing his experience with consumer legislation in Georgia, he said: "The special interest groups prevailed on about half of it. I prevailed—rather the Georgia people prevailed—on the other half."<sup>31</sup>

What is consistent in these proposals is Carter's opposition to the intermediate groups—lobbyists who stand between government and citizen or a palace guard that stands between a President and Cabinet. They fracture his conception of comprehensive policy-making.

President Carter prefers to make changes comprehensively rather than "timidly or incrementally." As he has put it:

Most of the controversial issues that are not routinely well-addressed can only respond to a comprehensive approach. Incremental efforts to make basic changes are often foredoomed to failure because the special interest groups can benefit from the status quo, can focus their

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attention on the increments that most affect themselves, and the general public can't be made either interested or aware.<sup>32</sup>

The same theory guides his efforts on government reorganization:

The most difficult thing is to reorganize incrementally. If you do it one tiny little phase at a time, then all those who see their influence threatened will combine their efforts in a sort of secretive way. They come out of the rat holes and they'll concentrate on undoing what you're trying to do. But if you can have a bold enough, comprehensive enough proposal to rally the interest and support of the general electorate, then you can overcome that special interest type lobbying pressure.<sup>33</sup>

In a word, "the comprehensive approach is inherently necessary to make controversial decisions."<sup>34</sup>

Changing everything at once, then, is part of Carter's political theory: comprehensive change enables one both to identify the public interest by considering the merits of opposing claims and to serve that interest by requiring opponents to fight on every front simultaneously, thus diluting their forces while concentrating one's own. The bigger the change, the greater the public attention—and the more likely it becomes that the public interest will prevail over private interests.

A central ingredient in Carter's comprehensive reforms is their inclusiveness. A characteristic Carter phrase is "a complete assessment of tax reform in a comprehensive way." He wants to "establish comprehensive proposals on transportation and energy and agriculture."<sup>35</sup> He favors a "comprehensive nation-wide mandatory health-insurance program" and a "drastic reorganization of the health care services in the U.S."<sup>36</sup> Although we could go on, one more example from foreign affairs must serve: since "the old international institutions no longer suffice," Carter feels that "the time has come for a new architectural effort."<sup>37</sup>

Since special interests—"those who prefer to work in the dark, or those whose private fiefdoms are threatened"—care only about themselves, they prevent inclusive decision-making.<sup>38</sup> To avoid this pitfall, Carter wants to restructure the federal bureaucracy, the health system, the welfare system, the tax system, the criminal-justice system, and international institutions.

According to Carter, the comprehensive approach offers a final, decisive solution to problems. On the basis of his experience with government reorganization in Georgia, he has become a lead-

ing advocate of what is called the one-step process.<sup>39</sup> In the Middle East, he wants to devise an "overall settlement rather than resuming Mr. Kissinger's step-by-step approach."<sup>40</sup> He contends that with Soviet cooperation we can achieve "the ultimate solution" there.<sup>41</sup> He aims at achieving an "ultimate and final and complete resolution of New York City's problems, fiscally."<sup>42</sup>

### **Predictable, Uniform, Simple**

Who can object to making governmental policy predictable so that people know what to expect?

Predictability is preferable, but is it possible? To be more precise, is predictability for one agency (and its clients) compatible with predictability for others?

Is predictability consistent with uniformity, another managerial quality that President Carter seeks? One could get broad agreement, for instance, on the desirability of smoothing out the economic cycle by maintaining a steady low level of unemployment. A major instrument used to accomplish this objective is varying the level of government spending. Immediately it becomes evident that predictability in employment (assuming that it could be achieved) is mutually exclusive with predictability in expenditure policy. Similarly, predictability for recipients of governmental subsidies means that all who meet the qualifying conditions receive the guaranteed sum. However, predictability for governmental expenditures (and, quite possibly, for taxpayers) requires fixed dollar limits, not open-ended entitlements. Yet if there are limits, potential beneficiaries cannot know in advance how much they will receive. Since all policy results cannot be predictable, decisions about whose life will be predictable and whose won't are political as well as administrative.

The same is true for uniformity and simplicity. Uniformity on one criterion—say, population—means diversity on other criteria, such as wealth or race or geography. Imagine that President Carter wishes to make good his promise to subsidize the arts, an intention we would like to see realized. Will money be allocated by population (which favors urban density), by area (which favors rural folk), by need (which favors those who are doing the least), or by past performance (which means that those who have will get more)? A uniform policy means that all these differences cannot simultaneously be taken into account.

Comprehensiveness, in the sense of fundamental and inclusive change, often contradicts predictability and simplicity. Fundamental changes, precisely because they are far-reaching, are un-

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likely to be predictable. That is how the cost of the food-stamp program grew from an expected few hundred million dollars to more than \$8 billion; it is also how indexing Social Security against inflation had the unanticipated consequence of (among other things) threatening to bankrupt the system. Thus, acting inclusively, so as to consider all (or almost all) factors impinging on a particular problem at a specific time, is, by its very nature, opposed to predictability, which requires that programs established in the past not be undone in the near future. But zero-base budgeting, the epitome of comprehensiveness, requires reexamination of all major programs every year, the very opposite of predictability.

### **With Slices for All, How Large a Pie?**

Uniformity also lives uneasily with comprehensiveness. Programs that are both uniform and comprehensive may be too expensive. For example, if public housing must be provided everywhere on the same basis or not at all, there may be no public housing. Similarly, a desire to have a uniform level of benefits across all welfare programs for all eligible citizens might lead to a choice between much higher taxes or much lower benefits. "Cashing out" all benefits from food stamps to Medicaid and Medicare might add up to so large a sum that it would not be voted by Congress. Hence, the choice might be between a variety of disparate programs or much lower levels of benefits. Upgrading all eligibles to the highest level of benefits will increase costs, and downgrading all to the lowest level will increase anger. Thus uniformity may come at too high a price in suffering or in opposition.

A word should be said about the relationship between uniformity and individuality. We do not always equate fairness with being treated like everybody else; we would, on occasion, like to be treated as individuals. To be uniform, regulations must place people into large and homogeneous categories. Every effort to take account of special characteristics in the population leads to its further sub-division and to additional provisions in the regulations. It is this effort to treat people in terms of their individual characteristics that leads to the proliferation of rules and regulations.

President Carter's desire for uniformity has led him to advocate a single principle of organization whereby administrative agencies are formed on the basis of function or purpose.<sup>43</sup> He would have all activities involving education or health or welfare



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or crime, to mention but a few, in the same large organization. As a general rule, one can confidently say that no single principle or criterion is good for every purpose. Suppose that reducing dependency on welfare is a major purpose of the Carter administration. Would this mean that education for employment, rehabilitation in prisons, improvement of health, mitigation of alcoholism, and Lord knows what else should go under welfare?

### **The New Look: Top-Light and Bottom-Heavy**

Carter's strain toward simplicity has led him to advocate reorganization of the federal government. Leaving aside campaign rhetoric about 1,900 federal agencies (a sum that equates the tiny and trivial with the huge and important), reducing the number of agencies at the top of the hierarchy necessarily increases the number at the bottom. If there were only 10 big departments, each could have 190 sub-units, and if there were 10 at each level, an issue would have to go through 19 bureaus before it was decided. The President might find this simpler because fewer people would be reporting directly to him. But he also might discover that finding out what is going on is more difficult. The existence of gigantic departments makes it difficult for anyone—Congress, secretaries, interest groups, citizens—to see inside. Conflicts between different departments about overlapping responsibilities and conflicts revealing important differences are submerged under a single departmental view.

One of the few things that can be said about organization in general is the very thing President Carter denies—namely, that a considerable quantity of redundancy (yes, overlap and duplication) must be built into any enterprise.<sup>44</sup> When we want to make sure an activity is accomplished, as in our lunar missions, we build in alternative mechanisms for doing the same thing so that one can take over when the other (or others) fail. Efficiency, the principle of least effort, must be coupled with reliability, the probability that a given act will be performed. A naive notion of efficiency, for example, would suggest that the elderly and the infirm be provided with either a visiting service or an office to which they can come or call. The more one wishes to assure that services to the elderly are actually delivered, however, the more one will invest in multiple methods. Of course, there must be a limit to redundancy; but if we ever actually succeeded in eliminating all overlap and duplication, most things would work only once and some things not at all. It is ironic that in the public sector, administrative reforms often aim at monopoly or concen-

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tration of power, while reforms in the private sector often aim at competition or dispersion of power.<sup>45</sup> Our constitutional mechanisms for coping with abuse of power, the separation of powers, and checks and balances are, after all, forms of redundancy. The House and Senate and Presidency overlap in jurisdiction and duplicate functions. That is why they quarrel and why we have been safe.

Carter's criteria cannot guide choice. Their proverbial character—look before you leap, but he who hesitates is lost—becomes apparent when they are paired with equally desirable criteria: the elimination of overlap and duplication detracts from reliability; predictability must go with adaptability; uniformity is worthy but so is recognition of individual differences. President Carter's criteria for decision-making, we conclude, are individually contradictory and mutually incompatible.

### Zero-Base Budgeting

The practical embodiment of Jimmy Carter's administrative theory is zero-base budgeting. Here, if anywhere, we can learn what it would mean for him to practice what he preaches. Imagine one of us deciding whether to buy a tie or kerchief. A simple task, one might think. Suppose, however, that organizational rules mandate comprehensiveness; we are required to alter our entire wardrobe as a unit. If *everything* must be rearranged when *one item* is altered, the probability is low that we will do anything. Being caught between revolution (change in everything) and resignation (change in nothing) has little to recommend it. Yet this is what a zero-base, start-from-scratch, comprehensive approach requires. If one could actually start from scratch each year, the only zero part of the budget would be its predictability, for zero-base budgeting is a-historical. The past, as reflected in the budgetary base (common expectations as to amounts and types of funding), is explicitly rejected. Everything at every period is subject to searching scrutiny. As a result, calculations become unmanageable. Figuring out how everything relates to everything else or, worse still, how other things would look if most things were changed, defeats every best effort. Consequently, attempts to apply intelligence to programs about which something can and needs to be done are defeated by mounds of paper. The trivial drowns out the important because if everything must be examined, nothing can receive special attention. What did Carter do?

According to the originator of zero-base budgeting, the Governor concentrated his time on "reviewing policy questions, major

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increases and decreases in existing programs, new programs and capital expenditure, and a few specific packages and rankings where there appeared to be problems." In other words, he devoted his time and talent to increases and decreases from the previous year and a few problem areas, just as his predecessors had done.<sup>46</sup>

### How Well Did It Work in Georgia?

Interviews with participants in zero-base budgeting in Georgia (aside from showing that 85 per cent thought no shifts in spending had been made and the other 15 per cent thought shifts had occurred but were unable to recall any) reveal that, when fiscal conditions changed in 1974 and 1975, Carter asked for entirely new budget submissions.<sup>47</sup> Why? The departmental budget analysts in Georgia explained that their priority rankings changed under different funding levels. But the point is that a budgetary process must be able to accommodate change; if it has to be altered every time funding levels change, then zero-base budgeting is really a cover term for unknown and unspecified future procedures.

The main product of zero-base budgeting is, literally, a list of objectives. Rarely, however, do resources remain beyond the first few. The experience of the various federal commissions on national priorities, for instance, is that there is no point in listing 846 or even 79 national objectives because almost all the money is gone after the first few are taken care of. If you allow us one or two national budget priorities—say social security supported entirely from general revenues—you can skip the others because there won't be anything left to support them. Carter knows this. But he would argue that zero-base budgeting requires agencies to supply alternatives. Unless agencies are rewarded for reducing the size of their programs, however, they will manipulate their priorities, placing politically sensitive and otherwise essential items at the bottom, so as to force superiors to increase their income. This might explain why Carter did not lower the zero-base cutoff point to include lower priority items when there was an increase in funds or raise this point when there was a decrease in funds.<sup>48</sup>

On balance, the people who conducted the interviews feel that the zero-base system has benefited Georgia's administration because it increased information about, and participation in, the budgetary process. However, these increases might just as well have resulted from the introduction of *any* novel procedure which

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centers attention on the budget. The investigators also believe that as the participants gain more experience, shortcomings will be overcome. Perhaps; it is always possible to believe that more of the same will lead to improvement.

### Measuring "Success" in the Carter Era

The overwhelming emphasis that President Carter places on procedural instruments could leave his administration vulnerable to massive displacement of goals; that is, it could result in having success defined, at least within his administration, by degree of governmental effort rather than by degree of social accomplishment. To use prisons as an example: the amount agencies spend, the number of new programs they initiate, and the uniformity of their procedures could replace increase in rehabilitation or reduction in crime as measures of success. That is how agencies succeed in making the variables they can control—i.e., their own efforts and procedures—the criteria against which they are measured.

By putting the emphasis on agreement about objectives, as Carter does, critical problems of how to relate people and activities so that citizens get good results tend to be subsumed under generalities about the desirability of having objectives. If public agencies must have objectives, they prefer a greater rather than a lesser number, so that the consequences of their activities are likely to fit under one of them. Moreover, the objectives of public agencies tend to be multiple and conflicting because different people want different things. Consequently, the objective of limiting the costs of medical care can (and does) coexist with the opposing objective of increasing the quantity and quality of such care. Reconciling these differences is not made easier by telling bureaucrats that their strategic behavior—staking out multiple objectives so they can always claim they have achieved something—has become sanctified as a virtue.

Why, if our views have any credence, has Carter come to hold untenable beliefs about procedures for making policy? Perhaps they were inculcated at Annapolis; but one could just as well argue that he chose to go there because he wanted an instrumental approach to decision-making.<sup>49</sup> No doubt his father's influence was important ("My daddy . . . was a meticulous planner like me."),<sup>50</sup> but this could have become mere compulsiveness instead of a well-developed pattern of thought and work. No candidate since Herbert Hoover, the Great Engineer,<sup>51</sup> would have thought it important to talk to the public about so arcane

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a subject as zero-base budgeting, going so far as to include it in his five-minute television spots last year. Perhaps these views make sense to Carter under the circumstances within which he has operated in the years since he has become a public figure.

Let us remove the burden from Carter and place it where it belongs, on ourselves, by asking why a highly intelligent political executive might interpret his experiences so as to reinforce his belief in an instrumental-cum-technological view of public policy-making. Why, to us, does Carter seem to know worse rather than to know better?

At the outset we can dispose of the cynical view that Carter's ideas on procedures are purely political—that favoring efficiency, opposing the “bureaucratic mess” in Washington, promising more service at less cost<sup>52</sup> are simply non-controversial positions that project a useful image of a candidate as an effective manager. Reorganization not only suggests rationality, it is also a useful cover for gaining control over positions and agencies that would increase the proposer's power (*viz.*, Carter's proposal that the President appoint the chairman of the Federal Reserve Board).<sup>53</sup> Coördination is often a synonym for coercion. To all this we reply, “Yes, but.” Yes, politicians are (and ought to be) political, but Carter pursues his procedural proposals above and beyond the call of duty or interest—and he acts on them. No one who has read his gubernatorial messages or observed the consistency and tenacity with which he personally pursued zero-base budgeting, reorganization, and all the rest can doubt his commitment.<sup>54</sup> Carter cares and Carter acts. Why, then, does he persevere with unsuitable procedures for public policy-making?

### Why Is Carter a Good Executive?

Carter knows himself well enough to believe that he would avoid many pitfalls of his procedures by applying himself to Washington's problems with energy, intelligence, and a demand for excellence.<sup>55</sup> We agree. In fact, we think it is these attributes—and not his procedural principles—that have brought him whatever success he has enjoyed as an executive. (Other life-forms experience a phenomenon called “adverse selection,” in which general success is mistakenly attributed to specific attributes that are then wrongly selected as worthy of propagation.)

Yet if Carter is mistaken in his procedural approach, as we think he is, he may be on solid ground in an area that we have not covered—the area of public confidence. He recognizes (and has emphasized) that citizens have a right to understand their

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government if they are being asked to support it; simplicity and predictability of governmental activity could help in achieving that support. If citizens are to regard government as fair and equitable, their perception that services uniformly treat like people alike might well give them that impression. Carter's concern for how government looks to the people might motivate him to prefer procedures to improve that appearance.

A concern for appearances as a prerequisite for obtaining support to undertake action apparently animates Carter's behavior in other areas as well. His three election campaigns (for the state legislature, for governor, and for president) may be fairly characterized, we believe, as socially conservative, whereas his actions in office have thus far been politically progressive. He takes care to identify himself with the social stance of the electorate so that citizens will feel he is one of them—even if all of them will not be able to agree with programs to distribute income or services in favor of the disadvantaged. As governor of Georgia, his need to keep close to the electorate limited his financial aspirations for state spending; but he did spend new monies for the rural poor, for the mentally handicapped, for prisoners, for those who had the least. After Watergate, no one should look down upon efforts to improve the appearance as well as the performance of government.

But what happens if appearance goes one way and performance the other? Suppose, in other words, that the demands of public policy-making are at odds with the appearance of order and neatness. Objectives are often multiple and conflicting; varied interest groups formulate and reformulate their goals and alliances; there is no single organizing principle good for all times and purposes, nor a single locus of authority in a federal political system. Symmetry, simplicity, uniformity—hence understandability and predictability—may not be achievable if we also want a welfare state and pluralistic politics. How much confusion and complexity is *built in* the things we want government to do and the ways a democratic society insists on doing them? The Carter administration will enable us to put this hypothesis to the test.

We are concerned that President Carter will pursue procedures regardless of their efficacy, and that he will regard opposition to his procedural prescriptions as, if not exactly the work of the devil, at least irrational, a product of ignorance and special interests, not subject to the usual rules of evidence. The comprehensive, scientific approach, which is supposed to work to promote harmony, has as a basic assumption the lack of conflict. If agreement does not result from openness, if seeming support for

long-range goals breaks down under short-range pressures, will President Carter be able to tolerate the frustration?

His own recipe for controlling conflict is to make it boil over; comprehensive change, in his view, forces opposing interests into public debate where Presidents can confront and overcome them. But how often can this be done? Agitating some of the interests some of the time is not the same as upsetting most of them most of the time. Interests are people, lots of people who depend on government, the very same people to whom Carter must appeal for support. If he can space his appeals out so that he is not fighting on every front at once, he may have a chance; but if he has to fight simultaneously on many fronts, he (and the nation with him) may be in for a difficult time.

### **"He-The-People"**

If he does not get his way, President Carter has promised to go directly to the people. He wishes both to incorporate and transcend group interests. Incorporation works by including virtually all groups in the initial stages of policy formation. Through coöptation, he hopes to commit them to support his programs (or at least not to oppose them vigorously). Transcendence works by investing hierarchy with morality. In order to reflect the people's will, the best way to organize government is to make it democratic at the bottom and centralized at the top.<sup>56</sup> The President, then, as chief hierarch and ultimate definer of the public interest, leaps over group interests through direct contact with the populace. President Carter would rather interpret the inchoate desires of the mass of people than bargain over who gets what the government offers. Nor will he content himself with being the mediator of contending interests, merely keeping the score and announcing the winners. Group interests breed divisiveness, while the public interest breeds unity. Instead, "he-the-people" will interpret their victory.

President Carter's theory of governing suggests opportunities for leadership but also obstacles to success. To reorganize the executive branch, he will have to overcome the clientele it serves and the representatives they elect. To put through major reforms, he will need financial support from a Congress accustomed to making its own budget. Should his initiatives falter, private interests may appear to have triumphed over the public interest. According to his own philosophy, he will be compelled to appeal to the people to protect his programs. But in the end, even the people may prove ungrateful; for if they fail the President, it will

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appear that they have given in to their private interests instead of standing up for their public duties.

The most worrisome aspect of Jimmy Carter's theory of public policy-making is his assumption that discussion will lead to agreement on long-term objectives, which will assure support for present programs. Carter's views on conflict could survive only if past objectives determined future administration. This view of policy politics is untenable because the price of agreement is likely to be vagueness and because administration involves altering ends by changing means. When specific acts require a choice between how much inflation versus how much employment, or how much preservation of natural resources versus how much consumption, it becomes evident that agreement in general need not mean (and has often not meant) agreement in particular. Since conditions change, the agreements that Carter negotiates in time of plenty may have to be renegotiated in times of austerity. Administration of programs would be of little interest if it did not involve continuous redefinition of objectives.

### **Jimmy Carter as President**

What, then, is Jimmy Carter likely to do as President? Contingency may overwhelm concern. Another huge oil price increase, a resurgence of inflation, or a military involvement may do more to shape what a President will do than his own initial ideas worked out under much different circumstances. Personality may prevail over policy. From listening to his policy pronouncements, who would have predicted Franklin D. Roosevelt's eagerness to abandon the deflationary, low-spending policies he advocated during his first presidential campaign? Confronted with crises, policies frequently pass away, but long-learned modes of problem-solving often remain. FDR's administration was characterized by eclecticism. He had a willingness to try and a readiness to abandon programs, an incorrigible optimism as well as a love of conflict, even when (or precisely because) it led to contradictions that gave him room to maneuver. These operative administrative theories proved more permanent indicators of his behavior than his past policies. So too, we think, Jimmy Carter's theory of governing will better indicate his behavior in office than what he says about substantive issues.

Like most Americans, we voted for Carter and worried about him at the same time. Contrary to our fears, there is evidence that Carter can (and does) learn from experience. On busing, for example (we are not passing judgment on the correctness of



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his stand but rather on his way of thinking about the problem), Carter realized that wealthy parents often avoid the policy by sending their children to private schools or by moving their family out of the area. Despite good intentions, it is mostly the black children who get bused and pay the price. The policy did not achieve the immediate objective of school integration or the more distant objective of better school performance. Carter's proposal has been to substitute a voluntary program for the mandatory one. He places emphasis upon changing the school system from within by getting black persons in administrative and teaching jobs.<sup>57</sup>

Another area in which his policy indicates a positive response to past unsuccessful attempts is his handling of racial and civil disturbances. As Governor of Georgia, he discovered that the normal, massive presence of state troopers during civil disorders not only served to aggravate the situation but used up enormous police resources. So he set up biracial community civil-disorder units composed of three persons dressed in civilian clothes. After the disorder, the units were replaced by permanent local committees.<sup>58</sup> When Carter tried to influence the choice of legislative leaders in Georgia, he learned this caused more trouble than it was worth. He vowed not to do it with Congress. Many more examples exist. The question is whether Carter will apply the same standards to procedures, including procedures for handling conflict, as he does to policies.

Read this as a cautionary tale for President Carter and his supporters. There is, after all, no reason to believe that former President Ford followed better procedures or even that he paid much attention to procedures at all. Because Carter is explicit about his own philosophy, because he cares about procedures, we have been able to be critical. But people who care are also likely to perform. If they care too much, however, they might substitute rigidity for right action. Having been forewarned, perhaps Carter will be forearmed to search for weaknesses in his strengths.



## NOTES

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27. Jimmy Carter, National Press Club, Announcement Speech for Democratic Presidential Nomination, December 12, 1974.
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32. *National Journal Reports*, July 17, 1976, p. 999.
33. "State Structural Reforms," *National Journal Reports*, April 5, 1975, p. 506.
34. *National Journal Reports*, July 17, 1976, p. 999.
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37. Eleanor Randolph, "Carter Hits 'Lone Ranger' Foreign Policy of Kissinger," *Chicago Tribune*, June 24, 1976, p. 5.
38. Carter, Announcement Speech, December 12, 1974.
39. *National Journal Reports*, April 5, 1975, p. 506.
40. *U.S. News and World Report*, July 26, 1976, p. 18.
41. "Where Jimmy Carter Stands on Foreign Policy," *Chicago Tribune*, May 8, 1976, p. 10.
42. "Excerpts from an Interview with Jimmy Carter," *New York Times*, March 31, 1976, p. 20.
43. This principle has had a long history, having been proposed in 1911 by the President's

Commission on Economy and Efficiency: "Only by grouping services according to their character can substantial progress be made in eliminating duplication." Quoted in Peri E. Arnold, "Executive Reorganization and Administrative Theory: the Origin of the Managerial Presidency," paper presented at 1976 Annual Meeting of American Political Science Association, Chicago, Illinois, September 1976, p. 6.

44. Martin Landau, "Redundancy, Rationality, and the Problem of Duplication and Overlap," *Public Administration Review*, vol. XXIX, no. 4, July/August 1969, pp. 346-358.

45. Lewis Dexter has emphasized that modern Western society has followed the route of competition not monopoly as a means to clarify issues and procedures. He cites the example that U.S. anti-trust laws are "deliberately designed to impose redundancy and duplication on industry." See Lewis Anthony Dexter, "The Advantages of Some Duplication and Ambiguity in Senate Committee Jurisdictions," p. 174. First staff report, Temporary Select Committee of United States Senate on Committee Jurisdiction, chairman Adlai Stevenson, issued September, 1976.

46. Peter Phyr, *Zero-Base Budgeting: A Practical Management Tool for Evaluating Expenses*, New York, John Wiley and Sons, 1973, p. 97. Quoted in Aaron Wildavsky, *Budgeting: A Comparative Theory of Budgetary Processes*, Little, Brown and Co., 1975, p. 295.

47. George S. Nimier and Roger H. Hermanson, "A Look at Zero-Base Budgeting—The Georgia Experience," *Atlanta Economic Review*, July-August, 1976, pp. 5-12. In 1974 there was an increase in available funds, and in 1975 a decrease.

48. Nimier and Hermanson, pp. 5-12.

49. See, for example, Vice Admiral Hyman G. Rickover's speech delivered in Brooklyn on April 9, 1958, p. 5, in which he complains about inefficiency in bureaucracy: "If over-organization lengthens our lead time we must heed Thoreau's cry of 'simplify, simplify.'"

50. Quoted in Bruce Mazlish and Edwin Diamond, "Thrice Born: A Psycho-history of Jimmy Carter's Rebirth," *New York*, no. 9, no. 35, August 30, 1976, p. 32.

51. Hoover was an unrelenting champion of organization by "major purpose under single-headed responsibility" as a means for making agencies easier to manage and more efficient. See Peri E. Arnold, "Executive Reorganization," pp. 13-14, 20. Securing broad reorganization authority subject to Congressional veto is also the approach Carter took in Georgia and hopes to repeat in Washington. See *U.S. News and World Report*, July 26, 1976, p. 17.

52. Although Carter, like any good engineer, knows it is not possible to maximize simultaneously on more than one dimension, his language sometimes suggests the opposite: ". . . I assure you that my primary concern will be providing the maximum amount of services for the least cost." State of Georgia, *Governor's Reorganization Message*, March 1, 1971, p. 18.

53. The Reorganization Act in Georgia, for instance, removed an entire administrative level, leaving those positions open to appointment by the Governor. See T. McN. Simpson, III, "Georgia State Administration: Jimmy Carter's Contribution," paper delivered at 1973 Annual Meeting of the Southern Political Science Association, Atlanta, Georgia, November 1-3, p. 10.

54. For a discussion of Carter's contribution to Georgia administration, see Simpson, p. 10.

55. Carter's qualities as an executive are evoked in the instructions he gave to members of the study group involved in making recommendations for reorganization in Georgia: "Studies of this nature are a full-time job. You cannot drop by to chat with a department head for a few minutes and then go back and write a report. If that were all that is required, I would do the study myself during the next two months. Somebody has to get out in the field and find out what is really happening and why. That is not a part-time job; it means spending eight hours a day working with the state employees and another four or five hours that night analyzing what was learned. It means writing and rewriting the report so that each point is clearly and concisely stated, backed by adequate detail, able to stand up to any question and practical for implementation." State of Georgia, *Governor's Reorganization Message*, p. 18.

56. In New York City, John Lindsay "rationalized" the city administration by consolidating and eliminating all intermediate structures, thus forming the "Office of Collective Bargaining." It soon became the sole target of public-employee union demands, thereby greatly strengthening the union's position. In Jack Douglas's apt description, the rationalization "swept away all the hedgerows behind which he [Lindsay] could have hidden." See Jack D. Douglas, "Urban Politics and Public Employee Unions," in *Public Employee Unions: A Study of the Crisis in Public Sector Labor Relations*, Institute for Contemporary Studies, San Francisco, California, 1976, p. 103.

57. "Issues Reference Book," p. 21.

58. "Issues Reference Book," p. 21.