

out boldly on the “path of common purpose and the restoration of American values.” As he had predicted two years before, the energy crisis tested the very mettle of the Nation. Now he hoped it could serve as a standard around which Americans would rally.⁷² In his more detailed analysis, the President proposed establishing an Energy Security Corporation to produce oil substitutes, an Energy Mobilization Board to speed up the construction of non-nuclear energy facilities, and a ceiling on oil imports not to exceed 1977 levels.⁷³

DUNCAN APPOINTED SECRETARY OF ENERGY

Several days later, President Carter regretfully accepted Schlesinger’s resignation and selected Charles W. Duncan, Jr., to be the second secretary of energy. A Texan with a background in chemical engineering and management, Duncan had previously been deputy secretary of defense. After Duncan took office on August 24, the President asked him to chair the Energy Coordinating Committee, which included the secretaries of state and treasury and the national security advisor.⁷⁴

Duncan declared that his task was to carry out an energy program accomplishing the national objectives set forth by the President and assuring all Americans of a “secure energy future.” The new secretary pledged to maintain an active and open dialogue with all elements in society having an interest in energy matters. He emphasized that “market forces must be allowed to regulate the price and allocation” of energy resources such as petroleum. The Department of Energy, he noted in a speech on October 29, “should not be in the energy business.” This was up to the private sector, which had “the strength, the technology, the skills, the management and the marketing experience” to do the job. The proper role for the Federal Government, Duncan concluded, was directing, managing, and allocating federal resources, as well as providing “appropriate incentives for private enterprise” to undertake the necessary investments in the transition from an “oil-dependent economy” to an “energy-diversified economy.”⁷⁵



Secretary of Energy Charles Duncan (1979-1981).

Source: U.S. Department of Energy

Duncan was also expected to continue improving management at the Department of Energy. As originally conceived, the Department had been organized according to the evolution of technologies from research and development through commercialization. Instead, to streamline management and better define responsibilities for accomplishing Department objectives, Duncan moved toward the more traditional organization that managed programs by technologies or fuels. Large outlay programs in conservation and solar energy, fossil energy, and nuclear energy were now established under assistant secretaries independent from one another. In addition, the Secretary made administrative changes that essentially divided the Department into three components: (1) program offices; (2) public affairs, liaison, and other independent offices, boards, administrations, and commissions; and (3) administrative, management, and financial offices.⁷⁶

ENERGY CRISIS ABATES

The energy crunch abruptly eased in mid-summer 1979 as Americans adjusted their energy-consuming habits to decreased supply and increased prices and long lines at gasoline service stations evaporated. With a crisis atmosphere no longer surrounding the energy issue, Congress deliberated on the Carter Administration’s various energy proposals.