

changes also redefined the relationship between the Department of Energy and its field offices, with headquarters responsible for program policy and planning and the Department's operations offices and special-purpose field offices responsible for program execution.⁸³

One week after his inauguration, President Reagan lifted all remaining price and allocation controls on gasoline, propane, and crude oil, allowing domestic gasoline and oil prices to seek free market levels. Shortly after that, the President rescinded the National Energy Building Temperature Restrictions, which had been promulgated in July 1979. Considering the President's actions, the Department of Energy proposed withdrawing several contingencies of the Standby Federal Emergency Energy Conservation Plan since "an unregulated market may now provide sufficient assurances of an orderly adjustment to any future energy supply interruptions."⁸⁴ In effect, the Reagan Administration's actions suggested that America's energy problems had been caused by federal interference in the marketplace.

Edwards announced in February the formation of the twenty-two-member Energy Policy Task Force to advise him on the development of energy policy. Composed of leaders from both the private and public sectors, the task force's first assignment was to help the Secretary in developing the third national energy plan, which was submitted to the Congress in July 1981.⁸⁵

The Reagan Administration's national energy plan, titled *Securing America's Energy Future: The National Energy Policy Plan*, broke sharply with that of the previous administration. Two basic principles unified Reagan's energy policy plan:

- The Administration's Economic Recovery Program, which reduced federal spending, taxes, and regulation; and
- The Administration's confidence that national energy decisions and policy were best made by the free market.

Self-conscious of the sharp departure they were making from policies begun in 1973-

1974, the administration's energy planners observed that "all Americans are involved in making energy policy. When individual choices are made with a maximum of personal understanding and a minimum of governmental restraints, the result is the most appropriate energy policy."⁸⁶

According to the plan, a major responsibility of the Federal Government was to foster increased energy production. As steward of the outer continental shelf and of 762 million acres of the public domain, one-third of the land area of the United States, the Federal Government controlled access to an estimated 85 percent of the Nation's oil, 40 percent of the natural gas, 40 percent of the uranium, 35 percent of the coal, 85 percent of the tar sands, 80 percent of the oil shale, and 50 percent of the Nation's geothermal resources. "The Federal role in national energy production," the plan urged, "is to bring these resources into the energy marketplace, while simultaneously protecting the environment."⁸⁷ The plan also emphasized the need for the Federal Government to help fund the development of long-term research with high risks but potentially high payoffs.

Reagan energy experts nonetheless declared in the plan that the Federal Government had no responsibility for supporting research and developing technologies that private industry could fund. Nor should the government subsidize or intervene to maintain artificially low energy prices. Not unmindful of the impact of high energy prices on the poor, the Reagan Administration argued that social policy should not be confused with sound energy policy. The needs of the poor, the energy policy plan stated, should be considered as a whole and not just in terms of the price of heating oil, gasoline, or electrical energy. The President was confident that his economic recovery plan, which dealt directly with the burdens of inflation and unemployment, would provide the greatest relief to the disadvantaged. Nonetheless, the administration pledged continued assistance to the neediest households through block grant funds to be administered by state and local governments.⁸⁸