

miles per gallon that “would break the auto industry and throw a lot of people out of work.” Clinton admitted that he favored raising fuel efficiency standards but said that the standards should not necessarily be written into law if the standards could not be achieved. He stressed that he was “a job creator, not a job destroyer.” In their stated positions, the Republican and Democratic candidates differed on several other energy issues as well. Bush favored oil and gas drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and on the Outer Continental Shelf. Clinton opposed. Bush defended nuclear power as a “proven electricity-generating technology that emits no sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, or greenhouse gases.” Clinton criticized the “proliferation” of nuclear power plants because of safety concerns and questioned the long-term environmental and safety viability of Yucca Mountain and the structural integrity of WIPP. “Both of these proposals,” he asserted, “must be rethought.”

Equally interesting, however, were the similarities between the two major candidates. The Bush and Clinton proxies tried to outdo one another in extolling their man’s depth of commitment to energy efficiency, natural gas, and renewable energy. Burton claimed that Clinton would be “a lot more pro-active” in these energy areas. “You’ll find a Clinton energy department,” he observed, “paying more than lip service to things like energy efficiency and conservation standards. You’ll see an effort in renewable energy like you haven’t seen in fifteen years. It’s part of a big picture strategy.” Bush loyalists defended the President’s record. Deputy Secretary Stuntz noted that spending on conservation and renewable energy had gone up dramatically during the Bush Administration, with the renewable energy budget up by approximately two-thirds since 1989. John Easton, Jr., assistant secretary for domestic and international energy policy, asserted that Clinton “would like to do what the administration is already doing, increasing energy efficiency and natural gas use.” Easton added that it was “hypocritical” for the Clinton campaign to favor natural gas and oppose drilling on the outer continental shelf.²²⁹

Both candidates also opposed extensive new energy taxes. Clinton’s vice-presidential running mate, Senator Albert Gore (D-TN) had advocated a carbon tax on fossil fuels, but Clinton did not support this concept unless it was “revenue neutral” and could be accomplished without hampering industrial competitiveness or raising consumer utility rates. Bush said that he would not support a carbon tax because the relationship between greenhouse gas emissions and global climate change was not yet well understood. Both candidates opposed increases in the gasoline tax as well. Clinton viewed the gasoline tax as regressive, and Bush favored the free market and opposed any new taxes. In contrast, Perot, in one of his rare energy pronouncements, called for a \$.50-per-gallon increase in gasoline taxes.²³⁰

GRADING THE DEPARTMENT

In the waning weeks of the Bush Administration, Admiral Watkins provided the media and the public with a retrospective evaluation of his four-year tenure as secretary of energy. He noted that when he took the helm the Department had been a “rudderless vessel.” Field activities were not attached to Headquarters. The Department had “no discipline, no conduct of operations, no reports coming in operationally, no five-year waste management plan.” Reactors were shut down for safety problems. “We had lost our compass somewhere,” Watkins observed. “We had no oversight. . . [T]he culture was . . . production of weapons and no attention to environment, safety, and health issues.”²³¹

Watkins assessed that after four years he had cleaned up a “bit more than 50 percent [of] the mess.” The foremost accomplishment, according to the outgoing secretary, was the implementation of “a new management culture that understands the need for compatibility between our defense mission and protection of the environment.” In the area of environmental cleanup, the Department had given “first priority” to rectifying past problems and bringing all facilities into environmental compliance. Also important were the development of both a “smaller, less diverse, and less expensive” nuclear weapons complex and the