
PART VII

THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION, 1993-

ENERGY AND THE ECONOMY

In his first post-election press conference, President-elect Bill Clinton said that the Department of Energy would play a major role in stimulating the Nation's economy and creating jobs. Clinton told reporters that he considered the secretaries of energy and commerce, in his opinion marginal players in many past administrations, to be crucial appointments. Given his economic policy pronouncements during the campaign and the economic changes these suggested, the President-elect noted, energy and commerce would be "very major appointments." He added that how the energy and commerce secretaries "pursue the missions of those departments will affect the success or failure of this administration's economic efforts."²³⁶

Clinton's energy advisers reiterated the centrality of the Department of Energy in the incoming administration's thinking. "Obviously the economy is job one," noted Bill Burton, and "energy will be part and parcel of economic policy." Burton observed that the Department had "gotten far away from its original mission as a centerpiece for energy policy." Under Clinton, he added, the Department would not be "a boutique agency anymore." In addition, Clinton's choice for presidential science adviser, John Gibbons, possessed an impressive energy background. The new director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy spent nineteen years at Oak Ridge National Laboratory and one year at the Federal Energy Administration. As director of the congressional Office of Technology Assessment, Gibbons dealt extensively with energy issues, maintaining that an energy policy should meet three overarching national goals: economic vitality, environmental quality, and strategic security.²³⁷

O'LEARY APPOINTED SECRETARY

If secretary of energy was a critical cabinet slot for Clinton, his ultimate choice to fill the position was perhaps the biggest surprise of the cabinet selection process. The President-elect sought greater diversity in his cabinet, attempting to bring in more women, blacks, and Hispanics than his predecessors had. He also attempted to achieve "personal compatibility" among and with all his cabinet, and he sought "team players." Early speculation as to whom Clinton would name for energy included, among others, Texas Land Commissioner Gary Mauro, Rep. Philip Sharp (D-IN), and Jessica Matthews of the World Resources Institute, but by early December the odds-on favorite was Senator Timothy Wirth (D-CO). Wirth, as chairman of Energy and Natural Resources's Subcommittee on Energy Regulation and Conservation, had long experience in both energy and environmental issues. For various reasons, none of these potential candidates proved the right fit for secretary of energy. Clinton then turned his attention to Hazel Rollins O'Leary. She had been on few lists of potential candidates, and she had not even met the President-elect until he asked her to Little Rock to meet with him on December 18. Three days later, Clinton announced O'Leary's appointment as secretary of energy.²³⁸

As an African-American woman, O'Leary helped Clinton fulfill his commitment to diversity, but the new secretary of energy-designate also held very impressive energy credentials. She joined the Federal Energy Administration in 1974, serving as director of the Office of Consumer Affairs and then as assistant administrator for conservation and environment. She was present at the creation of the Department in October 1977 when she