

became deputy administrator of the Economic Regulatory Administration. In 1980, she became administrator. From 1981 to 1989, O'Leary was vice-president and general counsel for O'Leary Associates, an energy consulting firm founded by her late husband, John F. O'Leary, who had served as deputy secretary of energy during the Carter Administration. In 1989, she joined Northern States Power Company of Minneapolis, Minnesota, and became senior vice president of corporate affairs in charge of environmental affairs, the legal and personnel departments, and public relations.²³⁹

O'Leary's appointment received mixed reviews from environmental and various activist groups. Some groups expressed disappointment with her lack of experience regarding weapons complex and cleanup issues. "We are concerned at this point," noted Daryl Kimball of Physicians for Social Responsibility, "that [O'Leary] does not appear to have extensive experience in [the nuclear weapons] area, which is about two-thirds of DOE." One environmental source expressed fear that O'Leary's inexperience could lead to her "getting rolled" by the Department's contractors. Other groups were more optimistic. The Safe Energy Communication Council, a coalition of environmental groups, applauded O'Leary's energy expertise and her apparent commitment to energy efficiency and renewable sources. The coalition expressed caution, however, "in light of her past support of [Northern States Power's] position favoring nuclear power."²⁴⁰

Trade groups and journals were more positive in their response to the energy appointee. The Interstate Natural Gas Association of America declared her to be "extremely capable." The American Gas Association was "pleased and proud" to see an executive from a member company nominated as energy secretary. The *Oil and Gas Journal* observed that O'Leary had more energy experience than any past energy secretary and said that she would reflect Clinton's "proconsumer, proconservation plans" for the Department. The journal also noted that the appointment, while of interest to the oil and gas industry, was "far from crucial." The Environmental Protection Agency administrator, and not the energy secretary, was the key player on United States energy issues. The nuclear industry, according to

Nucleonics Week, viewed O'Leary as a "mixed blessing." On the one hand, O'Leary possessed "first-hand knowledge" about nuclear operations and problems in the high-level waste program. On the other, the new secretary indicated that energy conservation, renewables, and natural gas would be high on her agenda. "We have no quarrel with these," stated Carl Goldstein of the U.S. Council for Energy Awareness, the nuclear industry's public relations arm, as long as their promotion was not at the expense of more "traditional" energy sources like coal and nuclear. "Traditional energy sources are still the mainstay," observed Goldstein.²⁴¹

CLINTON AND O'LEARY SET THE TONE

In announcing his selection of O'Leary as secretary of energy, President-elect Clinton noted that in the past the Department of Energy had been "sorely underutilized." For two decades, he continued, energy was the "Achilles' heel" of the economy. Money sent overseas for energy imports accounted for between one-half and two-thirds of the annual trade deficit, and "wildly gyrating" energy prices resulted in a destructive cycle of boom and bust in energy producing regions. The United States, Clinton contended, had "even fought a war, at least in part, because of our dependence on foreign oil." For "too long," he asserted, "we've gone without an energy policy."²⁴²

The President-elect observed that although most of the Department's budget currently was devoted to nuclear issues, the future demanded "a different direction and a different policy." During the campaign, he declared, he had made clear his energy priorities: "greater reliance on American natural gas, greater energy efficiency, greater development of alternative energy resources, a greater commitment to making good energy policy and good environmental policy good economic policy for America." The major task of the next secretary of energy, therefore, was to "redirect the Energy Department in these priorities." Of all the people he considered, O'Leary, in his opinion, possessed the "best mix" of "hands-on experience in both business