

Yes, the deficit is too high. The federal government still wastes an awful lot of money. And the economy would benefit mightily from a balanced-budget amendment to the Constitution and a greater role for gold in monetary affairs. But the economic glass is 90 percent full and getting fuller.

Prosperity and Security

This powerful resurgence of capitalism in the United States has made it possible for us to spend what has been necessary for our national defense, to rebuild our conventional and nuclear forces and our intelligence capability, and to lay the groundwork for a protective missile system that may become the cornerstone of our national security in the 21st century.

The Reagan administration has restored the prosperity and security of America. It is now up to us to see if we can keep it.

Disappointment on the Draft

My greatest disappointment was that we did not repeal draft registration. We came close, but we still waste a good deal of time and money doing something that only lulls us into a false sense of security. Instead of keeping rapidly changing computer lists of male teen-agers, we should be devoting our efforts and resources to building the combat capability of our reserve force, the only force we can count on to react quickly in a future military emergency.

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Defeat on Affirmative Action

For better or worse, the Reagan administration is generally perceived to have turned back the clock on affirmative action programs in the last seven years. My own experience, first as director of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and then as director of public liaison at the White House, however, tells me that this characterization is far from accurate. Indeed, the administration's victories in eliminating race and gender preference were few and the frustrations many. In practical terms, little has changed in the way affirmative action programs operate in the U.S.

Government contractors are still required to satisfy hiring and promotion goals based on proportional representation for minorities and women. The federal government itself still requires agencies to draw up affirmative action plans for blacks, Hispanics, Asians, handicapped persons, and others (the Civil Rights Commission's plan included alcoholics and persons identified as emotionally ill). While the courts and the Congress exerted considerable influence on the ability of the administration to achieve all its policy aims in civil rights, in these specific areas the administration wielded a free hand. With a single stroke of the pen, the president could have abolished quotas in the federal work force and in private sector employment involving federal contracts. Yet, despite much public debate and private wrangling between factions within the administration, nothing was done.

In 1985, an intergovernmental working group met to discuss revisions on Executive Order 11246 that would have put an end to requiring federal contractors to meet hiring goals based on race and gender preference. Months of protracted negotiations between representatives of the Department of Justice, the Department of Labor, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and the White House took place to draft new language. Members of the Domestic Policy Council and the Cabinet met to discuss proposed revisions.

Consensus was impossible because some members of the administration adamantly favored the use of racial goals and timetables in affirmative action plans and others feared that any action would light a political firestorm. The issue was never presented to the president so that he could arbitrate differences and establish his own policy. Consequently, President Reagan will leave office with almost all of the infrastructure of discriminatory affirmative action programs in place. This is a tremendous defeat for those of us in the administration who had hoped that Ronald Reagan might take a major step toward building a society in which individuals are judged (to borrow from Martin Luther King, Jr.) not on the color of their skin, but the content of their character.

Victory on Comparable Worth

While we may have lost the war against discriminatory affirmative action, some major battles were won on another civil rights front. When I am asked what I am most proud of having accomplished during my tenure with the administration, slowing the progress of comparable worth legislation immediately comes to mind. In 1984, the engine of comparable worth legislation seemed invincible. State legislatures, city councils, and county governments, even the federal government were rushing to enact comparable worth bills. In fact, one bill affecting the federal work force passed the U.S. House of Representatives with only a handful of members opposing. Even staunch Republicans seemed hesitant to take on this issue. Nonetheless, I proposed that the Civil Rights Commission consider testimony on comparable worth from advocates and opponents and then issue a policy statement to the president and Congress.

The hearings that were held in May 1984 (known formally as Commission Consultations) provided the most

extensive and impartial discussion of the issues surrounding comparable worth that had ever taken place. Following those hearings, the commission was able to release a policy statement opposing comparable worth, which has been cited in court decisions and in public debate. Later, after I joined the White House, I was able to assist in briefing members of Congress on pending legislation, which resulted in significantly greater Republican opposition to the bill when it later was adopted by the Democrat-controlled House. The Senate did not pass the legislation, which was reintroduced in the current Congress and is now pending.

The most surprising lesson I learned while in the administration was how little policy actually emanates from the White House, whether by design or accident. My chief reason for wanting to leave the Civil Rights Commission to join the White House staff was to be able to have a greater role in influencing administration policy on a broad array of issues. What I discovered was that the White House was more involved in process than policy. Most policy initiatives in this administration are firmly set by the departments and agencies with little involvement from the White House. Most White House activity centers on selling the policy to the public or securing passage of legislation to implement policy. Only when disputes develop between agencies on policy issues affecting both does the White House step in. However, the example of what happened to Executive Order 11246 illustrates that if the decision involves choosing between doing something and doing nothing, inertia usually wins.

In many ways I think I had far more influence on administration policy while managing a small agency than I did after I became a member of the senior staff of the White House. Had I known that, I would have been far less anxious to make that move.

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Whatever campaign victories or successes may lie ahead, the Reagan years will be for conservatives what the Kennedy years remain for liberals: the reference point, the



Drawing by Shelly Fishman for Policy Review

“Conservatives like to sound the alarm, but then don’t put together the troops we need to win political battles.”

—Adelman

breakthrough experience—a conservative Camelot. At the same time, no lesson is plainer than that the damage of decades cannot be repaired in any one administration.

In 1985-87, I monitored and encouraged the pursuit of devolutionary federalism, a fundamental Reagan goal. Progress, though substantial, was mainly indirect and *de facto*; I claim no significant personal policy accomplishment.

My principal assignment was to see that the administration had the political wherewithal to advance its policy agenda. In that realm lay important lessons and, perhaps, some modest contributions.

A unified, integrated political infrastructure is just as essential to policy success as are sound research and brilliant polemics. The mantra “ideas have consequences” lulls some enthusiasts into believing that ideas alone suffice, or that ideas attractive to leadership cadres must perforce appeal to popular majorities. We sometimes disregard Ambrose Bierce’s admonitory definition of “self-evident” as “evident to one’s self, and no one else.”

No Punishment for Disloyalty

The Reagan presidency saw the closest approximation yet to the sort of seamless integration of party and policy that characterizes parliamentary systems, and that will be necessary if a second wave of conservative governance is to occur. United by President Reagan’s ideas, persona, and successes, the Republican Party took the first primitive steps toward effective support of presidential initiatives.

At the White House, we gradually improved our performance in rewarding the contributions of party leaders and conferring on them the additional stature and recognition that would make them more effective at home. We developed germinal party mechanisms for public appeals and private lobbying. Regrettably, the necessary discipline of effective party government did not emerge. Almost never was a seditious Republican officeholder denied the bene-