

of a question, he would overturn the decision by planted stories and leaks to the media. Simply relying on facts puts you at a disadvantage.

RALPH L. STANLEY



Special Assistant for Policy to Transportation Secretary Drew Lewis; assistant to Chief of Staff James Baker III; Chief of Staff to Transportation Secretary Elizabeth Dole; Administrator of the Urban Mass Transportation administration; Executive Director of the White House Conference on Small Business. Mr. Stanley is

now senior vice president of the Municipal Development Corporation in New York.

“A needlessly confrontational or hostile relationship with the press will do more to frustrate policy implementation than anything else.”

Each of the administration positions I held was a challenging policy-making role, and working directly for Drew Lewis, James Baker, and Elizabeth Dole was the greatest political apprenticeship one could imagine.

In a gradualist public policy process where policy decisions never seem to be final, it is difficult to point out a single accomplishment exclusively my own. However, I do believe that my tenure as Urban Mass Transportation Administrator (UMTA) brought about a long overdue national debate about what federal subsidies had actually bought for urban mobility, rather than measuring the program by merely what had been spent, which has been the tendency in Washington in many areas of unbridled spending. The courage to advocate the president's program of spending cuts rather than apologize for them resulted in a 25 percent overall reduction in federal funding for transit, less than hoped for, but progress nevertheless. There were, and are, too many officials in the administration who failed to remember that President Reagan was elected to reduce spending rather than add to it, and who viewed budget cuts in their own programs as unnecessary or unfair.

Ossified Congress

The budget debate also allowed me to implement a program of privatization in urban transportation that has become a major policy movement. The merits of privatization as a means of governing, as a way to deliver a good or service to an area or constituency, holds great promise for conservatives in the future. One cannot merely say “the private sector will do it,” but rather one must show how that can be induced.

My single greatest disappointment was the inability to

engage the Congress, whether a Republican Senate or a Democratic House, in a substantive policy debate on urban mobility. The federal mass transit program has spent \$43 billion in 20 years and the number of people using mass transit has declined. That in itself is a perfect indication that the federal program was *not* achieving its policy goals. Urban mobility remains a problem in our nation's cities, and despite the obvious need for reform, no real policy review was initiated by the legislative branch. It is a perfect example of the current ossification in Washington. Liberal advocates of more spending often criticized me for polarizing the debate by focusing on the failures of the program. But that polarization was needed to highlight the different choices for policymakers. Privatization in urban transit remains a viable alternative to the thoughtless continuation of federal subsidies, but this choice has not yet been reviewed thoroughly by the Congress.

My greatest lesson about Washington was the role of the modern media in shaping the debate. I welcome the role of the press, and although a conservative, I still believe that the majority of reporters are open to new ideas on policy. Liberal activists, special interests, and others long ago learned the value of a favorable press, but the press cannot be taken for granted.

During my tenure at the Department of Transportation, the *Washington Post* reporter covering transportation policy, Doug Feaver, was the single best informed member of the transportation community I met in five years. He was receptive to new ideas, and would report them fairly. To succeed in public policy, it is necessary to work closely with members of the press and not exclude them needlessly, but instead try to explain the rationale behind your policy decisions. A needlessly confrontational or hostile relationship with the press will do more to frustrate policy implementation than anything else.

Need to Build Coalitions

With the benefit of hindsight, I would have changed my strategy on the implementation of our privatization policy. The ideas and strategy that have been ably outlined by Stuart Butler were extremely helpful in organizing coalitions and marshaling support to buttress policy.

The byzantine process by which federal policy is often formulated in today's Washington requires the ability to advocate policy initiatives to the media, Congress, special interest groups whose focus is increasingly narrowed, as well as pockets of interest within the executive branch. There can be no substitute for government experience for dealing with each of these groups, and the strategy of privatization coalition building is something I wish I had begun earlier. Instead of attempting to organize a coalition of groups that currently benefit from the program, I spent a year advocating the policy without that coalition.



JOHN A. SVAHN



Assistant to the President for Policy Development, 1983-86. Mr. Svahn is now a private businessman.

“Compromises in the personnel process allowed some really incompetent and/or uncommitted people to hold very high positions. When this occurred, the Reagan agenda usually went on the back burner.”

Probably the greatest Reagan administration accomplishment I have been involved with was the California welfare reform instituted by Governor Reagan from 1970-72. In 1981, the same group of people accomplished the same set of policy and law changes at the federal level, but then the country understood the need for the changes. The program was much more controversial in 1971.

Solvency for Social Security

While I was in Washington, surviving the Social Security crisis of '81-82 had to rank at the top of my accomplishments. I was soundly ridiculed by the liberals and left-over New Dealers for the May 1981 announcement that the Social Security system would be unable to pay benefits on a timely basis in October 1982. I was eventually proved to be wrong; the system didn't run out of money until November 1982, one day after the election in which over 20 Republican House seats were lost solely on this issue. Four months later, the great bipartisan coalition came together and enacted changes that will keep the system solvent for a few decades. It was a long tough battle, but in the end the Congress looked at the options and chose the only two available: They cut benefits (mostly in the future) and raised taxes (mostly in the present).

Personnel was a major disappointment. The administration began with a fairly cohesive process for screening candidates for capability and philosophical credentials; with some notable exceptions, policy positions were occupied by conservatives and Ronald Reagan supporters. As the administration grew older, conservatives left: some out of frustration, others because of mistakes. Compromises in the personnel process allowed some really incompetent and/or uncommitted people to hold very high positions. When this occurred, the Reagan agenda usually went on the back burner.

Another disappointment was the process for making policy in the White House. Too few advisors had direct

access to the president, and some of those who did had a total lack of policy awareness, so recommendations frequently went to the president without having been thoroughly thought through by the staff. The result was a number of policy decisions made by President Reagan that would have been attacked vigorously by candidate Reagan. Among the most disappointing were the expansion of the Medicare program at the expense of the private sector; the inclusion of heart transplants in Medicare; the reversal on Social Security after the Republican Senate had voted a COLA reduction; and the endorsement of the 1985 farm bill, which resulted in the Reagan administration spending more in one year on farm subsidies than the Carter administration did all four years.

I hadn't realized before how “revisionist” Washington is. What really *happened* has little to do with what the public reads in the papers or sees on the networks. From official revision (the press secretary explaining what the president meant to say) to the unofficial (a high White House official who refused to be identified), the events of each day get changed into someone's personal belief as to what did, or more often what should have happened. Revisionism has risen to new heights in this administration and it probably will continue until the last memoir is written.

Knowing what I know now, I would have spent more time encouraging young conservatives to join the administration and work in government rather than stand on the sidelines and criticize.

NORMAN TURE



Under Secretary of Treasury for Tax and Economic Affairs, 1981-82. Mr. Ture now is president of the Institute for Research on the Economics of Taxation.

“The entrenched career service personnel will capture the political appointee with stunning speed.”

No part of the Reagan domestic program was of greater moment than economic policy, and no aspect of economic policy was more important than tax policy. To reduce the deadening weight of the federal government on the nation's economic life—the heart of the Reagan economic policy—required the elimination or at least the moderation of those features of the federal tax system that distorted the free market's price and cost signals, resulting in misallocation of production resources.

The initial targets in tax policy were reduction in the statutory—marginal—tax rates in the individual income