

Jordan, Georgia, and the Establishment

by Nicholas Lemann

The aide was in Washington for a special occasion: the signing, amid much pomp and circumstance, of the Panama Canal treaty last December. The course of the day's events eventually led him to the White House ballroom to hear President Carter make a speech, and there the aide found himself standing next to the President's top assistant, Hamilton Jordan.

Jordan stood there with a smile on his face as he watched his boss speak—as if he couldn't believe, the aide remembers thinking, that Carter had really come this far. But Jordan's reverie didn't last long; he began to be assailed by a stream of people who wanted to talk to him, to touch him, people who came not on any specific mission so much as simply to make contact with the man who is closest to the President. An official of the AFL-CIO came up, slipped his calling card into Jordan's hand, and whispered, "Have *him* sign it, will you?" Jordan, stone-faced, put the card in his pocket. The aide remembers thinking how arrogant and cold Jordan was. He tried to make conversation; Jordan put the aide off with a few brusque words.

Half an hour later, the aide and his

boss, an out-of-town politician, were ushered into Jordan's office for a scheduled appointment to talk politics. There were some tennis rackets stacked against a wall, classical music on the record player, people coming in and out. This was a different Jordan: relaxed, charming, soft-spoken, his feet up on the table, ticking off instinctive judgments about the aide's boss' political future. A possible race would be brought up, or a campaign issue, and Jordan would say, yes, that'll work, or no, that won't, the country is getting too conservative for that. The aide remembers being amazed that somebody could seem so different in two settings over such a short period of time.

In the same way, the friends of Hamilton Jordan are amazed now at the difference between the Jordan they know and the Jordan they read about in the papers. The Jordan they read about looks down women's dresses at fancy parties, gets into nasty scenes at bars, won't return phone calls or answer letters, and regularly alienates and offends people in Washington. The Jordan they know is not just warm and friendly but unusually and remarkably so—cordial, gracious, unaffected, a man who regularly goes out of his way just to be nice to people.

Even discounting the way someone

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White House Photo

in a job like Jordan's tends to be deified by his acquaintances, it's striking how often people's first impressions of him are centered around his niceness. "He's one of the most charming people I ever met, just tremendously charming," one Carter campaign worker remembers. "Once they were about to hold a meeting in a room where I was, and they obviously didn't want me there. So Jordan came up to me and started to ask me questions—how was I, what did I think of this issue or that issue—and we were kind of strolling as we talked, and every time I looked up I was three steps closer to the door, until finally he had me out of the room entirely. Whereas the usual approach at moments like that in a campaign is to say, 'get the hell out of this room.'"

"I never saw a mean streak in him," says Steve Stark, a member of the Carter issues staff in 1975 and 1976 and now a law student. "It was rare that he was in a bad mood. He was always in a good mood." Jim

King, a political pro who joined the Carter campaign in 1976, says that at their first meeting Jordan "enchanted me—he reminded me of myself."

In the White House, where Jordan works out of H.R. Haldeman's old office, he is by all accounts remarkably immune to the officiousness that usually comes with his job. He's known, among the small portion of humanity that gets to see him regularly, for being open to argument, low-key, and judicious. He's not much of a self-aggrandizer or office politician, given the setting. He's said to be so gentle with people that's he's incapable of delivering a tongue-lashing to someone who does a bad job.

Jordan's friends—and the White House reporters, most of whom he has charmed—say another of his endearing traits is that he's fun-loving, meaning that he likes to go out after work, take a drink or two, and have a good time. His idea of how to spend leisure time, his friends say, was forged in the Phi Delta Theta fraternity house at

the University of Georgia, and that, along with a natural irreverence, is why he acts the way he acts.

But this explanation—Jordan as fun-lover—wears thin in the face of Jordan's behavior in public, which is that of a man who is nervous, self-conscious, and resentful.

Early this year, for instance, Jordan, newly separated from his wife, flew to Saudi Arabia to join the Carter traveling party there, supposedly because not much was happening back in Washington. He walked into a state dinner wearing a tie that was—well, loosened, according to people who were there, just doesn't describe it. It was pulled open to halfway down his shirt, far past the point of comfort, as if to make a statement to the assembled diners—and indeed, most of them duly noticed.

Another thing most people noticed about Jordan in the early months of the Carter administration is that he was an avid tennis player. The photographs that came out of the West Wing almost always showed Jordan dressed in tennis clothes. He wasn't wearing them just on the White House court (where he was, it's true, spending a lot of time), or in his office, but even at meetings where everybody else was dressed somberly. That he was wearing tennis clothes isn't as striking as that he wanted the world to think of him as wearing them.

He has also obviously wanted the world to think of him as a freewheeling, devil-may-care, Butch Cassidy type; *Rolling Stone's* cover photograph of Jordan and Jody Powell dressed as Butch and the Sundance Kid hangs in the most prominent place in Jordan's outer office, impossible for any visitor to miss. Another mask Jordan likes to wear is that of an aw-shucksing dumb old country boy, which he uses when dealing with people he doesn't want to open himself up to.

These are benign guises, although Jordan has less pleasant ones too. In his recent row with a woman in a

Washington bar, even taking the Jordan camp's account of what happened at face value, he was involved in unpleasanties that ended with the woman slapping him—not the kind of fate that often befalls to a simple fun-lover.

Jordan is relaxed and self-confident when he's playing to an audience of his boss or the last 12 years and his trusted co-workers, but in most other settings he seems to be a man in search of an image. The public Jordan has come into being in response to forces that are so strong they have made a kind and capable man powerfully ill at ease. No doubt some of these forces are psychological ones locked deep in Jordan's childhood, but some of them are quite plain. The America that Jordan isn't part of the America of Washington, of the East, of fine universities—has at every turn sent Jordan a message of hostility, and he has responded in kind.

There are people in America, like Jordan and Carter, who have made their way upward by fulfilling the needs and wants of a lot of people; and there are people who have succeeded by accumulating enough credentials and expertise to fulfill the needs and wants of one employer. During the course of this century in America the second group, the appointed, has come to have more power and prestige than the first, the elected. Partly as a result, the friction between them is immense, especially in a place like Washington, which is the repository of the ambitions of many players of the appointive game as well as the elective.

Most of the appointed class who are in the Carter administration could easily have been in somebody else's administration, which often blinds them to the virtues of people who could never have been in any other administration, like Jordan. At the same time, the proven ability of a Jordan to bring off a wild long shot is disconcerting to people who have

planned their lives so as to avoid wild long shots. So there's a feeling—made up of mixed condescension and insecurity—that Jordan doesn't deserve his job, that he should perform some functions and not others, that he should behave a certain way, that he may not be quite equal to it all. Jordan has been made well aware of that attitude, and it has provoked its own mix of hostility and insecurity—not only in Jordan, but in Carter and in his administration.

Prominent and Affluent

Jordan grew up different from what he now appears to be. He was born in September 1944 and raised in Albany, a city of 75,000 in south Georgia. He was no country boy—he came from a locally prominent and affluent family, one long active in politics. His father was an insurance man, but both his grandfathers had been politicians (one was mayor of Macon, the other president of the state senate), and his uncle and namesake, Hamilton McWhorter, is a former state senator and now secretary of the Georgia senate. Jordan was a bright and outgoing young man, though not, McWhorter says, overly studious. As a senior in high school he was governor of the Key Clubs of Georgia, a junior branch of the Kiwanis, and he was president of his freshman class at the University of Georgia. "He was always a leader," says Spencer Lee, a close friend from boyhood. "We always thought he was the most likely from our school to be governor one day."

There followed a period of drift in Jordan's life. He entered the university in the fall of 1962, and, he told Aaron Latham of *Esquire*, "I crammed four years of college into five years, almost six. A couple of times I just got tired of it and went home, and other times I had to. I didn't make the grades. If you fell below a certain average in a quarter, then you couldn't come back the following quarter." During this time,

in the summer of 1966, Jordan met Jimmy Carter, then running as a racial liberal in his first race for governor of Georgia, and became youth coordinator for that Carter campaign. The university's records show him graduating in 1967, at 22, with a bachelor's degree in business.

A Cordial Young Man

In the late summer of 1967, having been deemed unfit for military service because of flat feet, Jordan joined the International Voluntary Services and went to Vietnam as a volunteer. He wanted to serve his country, and he really believed in the Vietnam war, though he wouldn't for long. He was known among his friends there as an unusually cordial young man, a Southern gentleman. He was the best dresser of his group of volunteers, his Vietnamese pajamas always a little finer and fresher than his friends'. He picked up the language quickly and loved to play with Vietnamese children. He used to speak sometimes of his fondness and admiration for Jimmy Carter. After just a few months Jordan developed black water fever, and he came home to recuperate just before the Tet offensive. When he got well again, Jordan got a job he didn't like at the Citizens' and Southern National Bank. This whole stretch of Jordan's life, curiously, is often recounted inaccurately; it's usually written that he was a senior in college when he met Carter in 1966 and that he spent two years in the IVS, so that the period from 20 to 25 takes on an orderliness that it didn't really have.

The picture that emerges, then, is of a young man of intelligence and ability, of whom much was expected by family and friends, who had been casting about for a comfortable place in life. He clearly had some idealistic stirrings, if vague ones, and a strong interest in politics. His casting about came to an end when his life found its direction in Jimmy Carter.

Carter's second race for governor began just after his first one ended,

and for a time Jordan traveled the 35 miles from Albany to Plains every day to help out in Carter's driven routine of letter-writing and speechmaking. These were times when not very many people outside of the family were on the Carter bandwagon, when people who wanted to be on a winner's team were toiling in other vineyards. Those who were helping that early won, in return for their efforts, Carter's undying trust and affection.

Those Obscure Years

Jordan's relationship with Carter was forged in those obscure years, 1967 and 1968 and 1969, when nobody was paying much attention. By 1970 Jordan was Carter's campaign manager, and since then his position as intimate advisor and chief political strategist to Carter has been, as far as it's possible to tell, unwavering. In those years of life when his future compatriots on the White House staff were polishing up their resumes at Yale or Harvard Law School, when his old friends from high school and college were settling comfortably into the kinds of business jobs that had made him restless, Jordan was off tilting at windmills.

That doesn't mean he was starry-eyed, though the successful 1970 campaign, which Jordan masterminded, was not a pretty thing. Carter won by emphasizing his close ties with George Wallace and Lester Maddox, and appealing generally to the dark side of populism, to get past the concerted opposition of the Atlanta establishment. On the other hand, Carter's governorship was much more of a shining moment—his racial liberalism was by far the strongest and most discernable true belief of his career—and Jordan was the chief aide then, too, with the title of executive secretary. It was then, in another administration of outsiders, that Jordan first got his reputation as arrogant, as a rube, and as a noticeably sloppy dresser—the opposite of what he had been before.

In 1972 Jordan, ever ambitious for his boss, ran a small and unsuccessful campaign to get Carter nominated for vice president on the McGovern ticket, and later that year he wrote his famous 72-page memo urging Carter to run for president and explaining how it could be done. It's worth noting that the memo was far more prescient in its gauging of the public mood than in its explanation of how to court the national powers that be. On the one hand, Jordan saw long before Watergate became a first-rate burglary that public mistrust of government would be a major issue in 1976, and he knew New Hampshire and Florida would be the key primaries for Carter. But on the other, he suggested that the panjandrum of *The New York Times* could be brought into Carter's column through a little lobbying by the candidate's cousin, Don Carter, a Lexington, Kentucky newspaper editor.

'He's Gonna Win'

Spencer Lee remembers Jordan buttonholing him at the mini-convention in Kansas City in the fall of 1974 and telling him earnestly that Carter was running for president, that "I'm dedicated to the man and he's gonna win and I want you to help." A month later Carter announced, and Jordan was a campaign manager again.

Jordan had two specialties—making instinctive political judgments and drawing up comprehensive plans of battle—that, along with his closeness to Carter, were his strengths then and remain so today. The campaign for the Democratic nomination was worked out with sufficient forethought that Carter alone was canvassing Iowa in February 1975 and studying the logistics of Madison Square Garden right after the New Hampshire primary. Later on, Jordan's affinity for planning took on a baroque elaborateness that produced a 25-point scale for rating vice-presidential prospects and an unbelievably complicated "per cent of effort" point system for

allocating fall campaign time in the states. On issues, however, and on last-minute moves like deciding to let everything ride on the Pennsylvania primary, Jordan relied on his antennae. His rival campaign managers lived in Washington and had the inside track, but relentless work and planning and an instinctive feel for the public mood were what put Carter in front.

Running the Office

What Jordan wasn't good at was day-to-day administration. He was known for being impossible to get in touch with, for never being on time, for staying away from the office for days at a time. His overseeing of the Atlanta campaign headquarters left so much to be desired that a man named Paul Hemmann was brought in as "campaign administrator" to run the office. But it's a sign of how indispensable Hemmann was to the Carter camp that he's now the Secretary of Commerce's representative in Atlanta, and a sign of how serious Jordan's shortcomings were to his boss that he's where he is today.

During the national campaign Jordan also began a period of rough sledding within the Carter organization, whose roots lay in a simple phenomenon: after it becomes obvious that a man is probably the next president of the United States, a lot of people are going to try to get under his tent. What's more, when it's somebody like Carter, this second wave is made up of people who are strikingly different from those in the first wave. They were, a lot of them, Washingtonians and New Yorkers, veterans of Democratic Party politics, people who thought of themselves as deserving a place in any Democratic administration, no matter who was heading it. Many of these people offered Carter valuable expertise and fence-mending talents; but many also acted as if, Carter's lonely struggle having taken him this far, it was time for them, the pros and the experts, to take over and start calling the shots.

These people were shown only the bad side of Jordan. He became notorious for his eagerness to freeze them out. He leaked hostile items about the newcomers to the press. He kept Washington insiders from getting jobs they had been promised by others. In one infamous case, Stuart Eizenstat, the campaign's issues director, brought in an old Humphrey hand from Washington named Ted Van Dyk to help Carter prepare for the debates. Although they were working together in the same small group for several days, Jordan refused to speak a word to Van Dyk.

Jordan and his Kind

The case where Jordan felt most threatened, and where he reacted most strongly, was that of Jack Watson, Harvard-trained Atlanta lawyer and protege of Carter's friend Charles Kirbo, who ran the post-election transition. Watson, now secretary to the Cabinet, was given a lot of time and money to prepare for the new administration, and Jordan and his kind weren't part of the plans. The transition team, says one person who was in the campaign, "was all Harvard lawyers and people who knew each other from New York." Shortly after the election, Jordan found that Watson had allotted him just one assistant for the period until January 20. Within two weeks Jordan had set up a "personnel advisory group" that really controlled the transition, while Watson was relegated to developing supplementary budget information (and, ultimately, to his present less-than-crucial job).

To the people who had joined up under Watson's auspices in '76, Watson was a responsible and attractive person and Jordan a remote, hostile boor. Members of the official transition team, who were more Washington than Georgia, became so frustrated at their inability to get through to Jordan (who had taken to working at home) and his staff that they held a meeting to air their gripes. "People

were very angry," says one person who was there. "It was 'Hamilton this' and 'Hamilton that.' There were complaints and more complaints. There was a feeling of his escaping responsibility, of ignoring detail. Watson came over and talked to us and he was understanding, but what could he do?"

There were other, smaller purges during that time, of people who were relegated to second-rank jobs after having behaved immodestly. There was Greg Schneiders (he had become the man personally closest to Carter, or so he said; he is now director of special projects in the White House); Barbara Blum (she had told the press, before she was supposed to, the composition of the White House staff; she is now deputy director of the Environmental Protection Agency); Peter Bourne and Mary King (they were the most prominent Washingtonians in Carter's campaign, and got a lot of publicity; now they are the President's assistant for health issues and deputy director of ACTION, respectively). These titles may look impressive to the untutored eye, but to people who were at the top of a successful presidential campaign, they don't represent the fulfillment of any fondest dreams. King and Blum, particularly, were blackballed by Jordan for job after job.

Hamilton Jordan is now the most reliably controversial figure in Washington, praised and damned with great vehemence. The alleged cause of the controversy is a series of social gaffes Jordan has committed lately, but it really goes deeper than that. For one thing, Carter himself is as predictable as a grandfather clock and as strait-laced as a Bible instructor, which leaves Jordan as the receptacle of people's natural curiosity about the White House. For another, Jordan, rather than Carter, has come to stand for the Us against Them aspect of the administration, and that's a matter of deep emotional significance both to Us and to Them. Divorces, it's said, are triggered by minor and obvious

rifts that symbolize major and less visible ones, and so it is with Washington controversies: they're not as trivial as their supposed causes make them appear.

A Fishbowl Existence

Jordan leads a fishbowl existence now, and that's part of the reason he wears the masks he wears. He is constantly a center of attention; every move he makes is intensely scrutinized. One reason he doesn't return phone calls is that he gets 30 or 40 legal-pad pages full of one-line messages every day. Jordan's friends say he feels he's been unfairly robbed of his privacy. In the long White House denial of Jordan's bar imbroglio it emerges that from the second he walked into the bar he was besieged by people and that he was also trying to avoid seeing a reporter whom he'd been told was there. "When these fellows came in," the bartender told the White House lawyer who was investigating the incident, "they recognized right away that it was Hamilton Jordan and it was like—I have to say honestly that when celebrities come in, politicians are one of the few people that people run right up to. They don't run up to—I have had Clint Eastwood, Johnny Bench—they don't run up to them. They run right up to the politicians. . . ." Some rare people flower in this kind of atmosphere, but it would bring most of us close to the boiling point.

Of course, there are other ways Jordan could spend his spare time that would make him more popular—as one friend of his puts it, "He could go to some of these parties *they* want him to go to." *They* means established Washington, to which Jordan and the other Carter staff from Georgia are either (to hear them tell it) blissfully indifferent or (more probably true) quite hostile. Helen Dougherty, who was Rosalynn Carter's personal secretary during the campaign and the early days of the administration and has since moved back to Georgia, says

that Washington is "an awful city. Our life in Atlanta was looser, freer, more casual. We entertained only with our friends. Washington isn't our lifestyle. Our people aren't that interested in impressing people, and not that impressed by people."

An Honorable Tradition

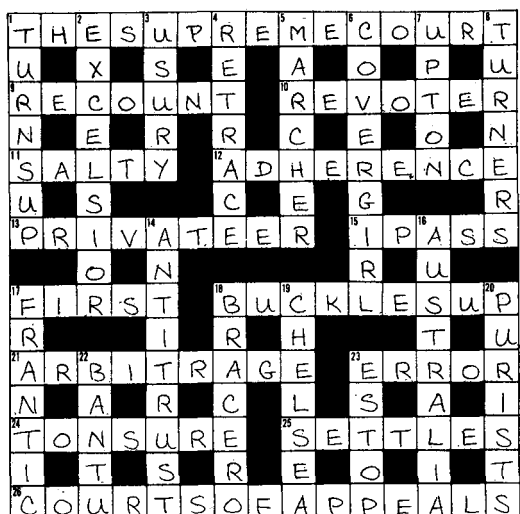
That's sounds like what's at the heart of the matter—the latest version of that honorable White House tradition, fear of the Eastern establishment. The classic victim of it was Lyndon Johnson. His biographer, Doris Kearns, quotes him as complaining to her about "those liberals on the Hill squawking at me about Vietnam. Why? Because I never went to Harvard. That's why. Because I wasn't John F. Kennedy. Because I wasn't friends with all their friends." And Johnson's successor was even worse; H.R. Haldeman, in his memoirs, has Nixon telling him at the beginning of his second term, "None of them in the Cabinet, do you understand? None of those Harvard bastards!"

In the Carter administration, the interplay between insiders and outsiders—sometimes hostile, usually quite subtle—goes on not only in the drawing rooms and bars, but in the West

Wing as well. In contrast to outside, Jordan seems to feel comfortable and secure there, partly because the hierarchy is unusually stable. There's not much chance of anyone's responsibilities changing. Newcomers aren't fully trusted. Since Carter became president, only Robert Strauss' duties have expanded dramatically, and Strauss is a glad-handing, political Mr. Fixit who does the bidding of whoever his boss happens to be. The lawyers on the staff, the New Yorkers and the Washingtonians, the Ivy Leaguers, have stayed right where they are, thank you.

On the other hand, Carter is obviously a man whose resentment for the credentialed and the anointed is mixed with awe, and in the early days he effectively turned over the substantive work of his administration to the technicians who populate the policy staffs of Stuart Eizenstat and Zbigniew Brzezinski. Jordan was left to fill political jobs, which he didn't much like, administration, Carter had Jordan and Powell handling outside pressures, politicians and the press. There was no sense that any of these men had traveled their long road with a firm agenda in mind for what they would do when they got to the White House.

The Answer to the March Puzzle:



Orchestrating the White House

But as the experts' handiwork began to have trouble getting through Congress, and as Carter's popularity began to drop, Jordan became more important. During the campaign, his specialty had been selling Jimmy Carter politically; now it became selling Carter's programs. The original energy plan was the product of James Schlesinger, and it didn't fly; future energy policy will go through Jordan before it goes out to the public. The U.S.-Soviet statement on the Mideast came out of Brzezinski's office and infuriated American Jews; from now on, Jordan will pass on all White House Mideast initiatives. The Carter administration's one great political triumph

—the apparently assured passage, after a long uphill battle, of the Panama Canal treaties—was completely a Jordan production, orchestrated with all the meticulous care of Carter's presidential campaign. Now Jordan passes on virtually everything that comes out of the White House, chairs senior staff meetings, and sits in on Carter's weekly meetings on foreign policy and intelligence. Before too long he'll probably be managing his second presidential campaign.

Meeting the Goals

But Jordan is still very much a non-expert, a man of instinct and common sense, someone who helps the Carter administration meet its goals rather than helping to formulate those goals. The latter role he hasn't taken on because everyone—including Jordan himself—seems convinced that it's not his kind of thing. People bring matters to Jordan after they're finished, and he looks at them and decides whether or not they'll work politically. Or Jordan holds meetings, where he listens quietly and attentively to everyone's point of view and decides which way will work best. Or he plans campaigns like the one for the treaties, with much detailed manipulating of the press, politicians, and celebrities. In this role, he's supposed to be astute, direct, and unpretentious. "He's not somebody to give you a Robert McNamara six-point analysis of a problem," says one person who has been in meetings with Jordan. "He'll say, 'I'm a little afraid of this or that.'" Whatever is the most important matter at hand—most recently, the coal strike—Jordan is coordinating the administration's response, trying to make sure Carter will choose a course that works.

The matter of whether the course is a wise one, Jordan leaves to others. He is reputed to be genuinely idealistic, to care about the people of America and about humanity generally, but the specifics of his ideology all come from Carter. His job is helping a

man he totally believes in to act as a conduit for his own undefined feelings of altruism. "I was amazed to perceive that in him," says Jim King, who for a year worked with Jordan in the White House. "I remember on the Panama Canal, talking to him—it's got no constituency, I told him, and how the devil are we going to get it through. Hamilton said we've got to do it. He said, Jim, it's right, I know it's right. He went into this long emotional thing. I said, this is the big league, Hamilton. He said, no, this is how it's gonna be, so let's figure out how we're gonna do it."

This attitude is partly admirable, but partly evidence of insecurity on Jordan's part: why can't *he* suggest that the Panama Canal be a priority of the Carter administration? The same kind of insecurity is evident in Carter—after all, the Panama Canal treaties weren't his idea, either; he just pushed them to the front burner. He may be a populist peanut farmer, but he has been anxious to explain to every interviewer who would be likely to pick up on it that he's also able to quote Reinhold Neibuhr and Dylan Thomas at length. He may be self-confident, but he's also the man who says the biggest disappointment of his life, besides the loss of the Georgia governorship in 1966, was being nosed out of a Rhodes Scholarship in his senior year in college. He may have as his closest and most trusted aides two men from south Georgia, but they stay away from the development of substantive policy; that, Carter has

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From the current issue of **NATIONAL REVIEW**. Write to Dept. W-2, 150 E. 35 St., N.Y., N.Y. 10016 for free copy.

put in the hands of impeccably credentialed Easterners. If Jordan's specific beliefs are passed on to him by Carter, Carter's are passed to him by these people.

That Jordan and Powell don't press the point is evidence that they're insecure too, but they're more openly hostile than Carter, especially Jordan. "Hamilton and Jody don't have to prove themselves with Carter," says one person who knows them both, "but when the suggestion arrives that they do have to prove themselves, that brings out their lesser traits." Just as a high-school boy meeting his date's parents can react with either sullen hostility or fawning obsequiousness but can't be relaxed and natural, it's impossible for outlanders to confront the establishment with equanimity.

The Voice of God

This nervousness about the establishment, when it's examined at all, is usually examined as a strange and needless neurosis: why in the world should presidents and their assistants feel the need to prove themselves to anybody? But the truth is that the lack of equanimity cuts both ways. The establishment is guilty of smugness and condescension as much as its opponents are guilty of paranoia and hostility.

For those who don't think snobbery plays a role in government, recall that Averell Harriman said, in the spring of 1976, about Jimmy Carter, "How can he be nominated? I don't know him, and neither do any of my friends." And ponder for a moment William Colby's fond memory, in his forthcoming autobiography, of the early days of the CIA: "It attracted what nowadays we would call the best and the brightest, politically liberal young men and women from the finest Ivy League campuses and with the most impeccable social and establishment backgrounds."

For another example, let's tune in to the public-affairs television show "Agronsky and Company" on Satur-

day evening, February 18, the week of the Jordan/bar controversy. The show is a panel discussion in which several leading Washington journalists mull over the issues of the day—tonight they're Martin Agronsky, the host, Hugh Sidey of *Time*, Elizabeth Drew of *The New Yorker*, and the columnists Carl Rowan and George Will, and the lead item is Jordan. Will weighs in first: "If he committed a sexual faux pas," he says, "it wasn't his first . . . it's beginning to damage the President." Then Drew, who is more sympathetic than the rest, explains that "they feel that people are out to get them and that Washington in particular is. What they don't seem to understand is that along with great power and along with great visibility . . . comes more attention and a certain kind of responsibility."

Now it's Rowan's turn. He speaks in the Voice of God tone that Washington journalists develop after a couple of decades—a booming, slow, authoritative bass that Sidey and Agronsky also use. "I think the major problem with Ham Jordan," says Rowan, "is that he is probably the last hold-out of that old Carter notion that they would come to town and be aloof from the Establishment. Jordan has not yet learned that nobody in this town is so powerful—including the President—that he doesn't have to try to ingratiate himself with some hostesses, with the press, and so forth."

'The Majesty of the Office'

On it goes:

Agronsky: "You can't help but relate the remarkable drop in the President's popularity . . . to incidents such as this."

Rowan: "The public perception is that he's got a bunch of slobs in the White House."

Sidey: "There is something in political leadership called class. I think it's very important . . . The Carter administration is, in my opinion, getting the reputation of simply not

having class.”

Will: “There comes a time when the office ought to be wrapped in majesty, not in blue denim.”

Agronsky: “George I think has in a sense the most important point . . . The majesty of the office—I really feel that matters so much. Well, majesty, if you like, is the wrong word in a republic, but the President should . . . be above it, as it were . . . The problem is, he’s being dragged down into the arena.”

Throughout the show these wise pundits insisted that nobody is out to get Hamilton Jordan, but it sounded to me as if somebody was. Over the course of his life with Carter, Jordan has taken on his unattractive accretions at times when people *were* out to get him—when he was being urged to step aside and let the experts take over, when he was being called a dumb cracker, when people who had taken no risks while he had taken many wanted to take his place and ignore his talents.

Rooted in Insecurity

In fact, Jordan has talents that go unrecognized by the establishment, which doesn’t share them—an understanding of the public will, a willingness to take a chance. Because Washington’s appointed class doesn’t heap laurels on people with these qualities, they often become hostile, as Jordan has. Of course hostility is rooted in insecurity, and it’s insecurity that is the real problem of the Carter administration. A more secure Carter might now be feverishly implementing a program of fresh and unorthodox solutions to our problems, or at least surrounding himself with people who are eager to do that. He’s not. It takes immense self-confidence to push hard for new ideas because it means risking the enmity and derision of the appointed class. While Carter is impressively confident of his ability to rise to the top of the American heap, he’s not sure enough of himself to risk being thought of as dense or irrespon-

sible by those whose respect is most important to him.

It is a complex story. Partly it is a matter of self-image: Jordan and Powell think of themselves as Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid and Carter of himself as a coolly rational, reorganizing manager, but there is not an important place in either of these images for making the substantive decisions and policies of government. Even more important is that in some way Carter and Jordan and Powell seem to have bought the establishment view that policy should not be made by rural Southerners who did not redeem themselves by going to Ivy League schools. They may resent this view—which is why Jordan behaves as he does—but it’s proof of its effect on them that the three demonstrably able, imaginative, risk-taking men at the top of the White House, at a time when the nation needs their skills badly, leave policy formulation to the cautious and the credentialed. ■

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The Regulatory Agencies:
What Should Be Done?

How Industry Regulates Government

What the FDA Won’t Tell You
About FDS

How Ralph Nader, Tricia Nixon,
the ABA, and Jamie Whitten Helped
Turn the FTC Around

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Memo of the Month

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

March 1, 1978

TO: ALL OEGB STAFF
FROM: PATRICIA BARIO, ASSOCIATE PRESS SECRETARY

On Friday, March 3, the Office of Media Liaison will be holding a briefing for 200 college editors. The editors are scheduled to arrive at 8:00 a.m. at the 17th Street entrance to OEGB, so you may wish to use another entrance when coming to work.