P.S. to the NEWS
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NEW STYLE SPOILS SYSTEM

It is reassuring to note that the new style "spoils system" -- the use of the vast powers of incumbency to assure reelection -- could not reelect Jimmy Carter to a second term. Carter was probably more skilled than any other President in history in the techniques of using the power, the personnel, the perks, and the payments of the federal bureaucracy to perpetuate his own political future; but it wasn't enough.

In olden times, the spoils system allowed the party in power to use government payrollers to do the precinct work necessary to win elections. The substitution of the Civil Service merit system was supposed to change all that. In fact, it only substituted the politics of the bureaucracy for the politics of the precincts.

Meanwhile, the vast growth of the power and money in the hands of the executive branch of the federal government has given to the "ins" a tremendous array of formidable political weapons. The Carter Administration used them all: the powers to grant or withhold information, to grant or withhold taxpayers' money, and to create news events.

Take, for example, the leak of classified data on the stealth bomber. This is a prime example of how the Administration was willing to sacrifice a major military secret to the goal of trying to reelect Carter.

It is obvious that stealth data were leaked in order to defuse Ronald Reagan's criticism of the way Carter has weakened U.S. strategic defenses under SALT II. Defense Secretary Harold Brown admitted to the House Armed Services Committee that he authorized the release of stealth bomber information over the objection of General R. H. Ellis, Commander of our Strategic Air Command.

The release of Presidential Directive 59 was another example of disclosing highly sensitive targeting strategy in order to try to mislead the voters into believing that the Carter Administration was doing more to defend America than it really is.

Early in his reelection bid, Carter began using federal money grants as a campaign tool. Jack Watson, White House Chief of Staff, told the National League of Cities in

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November 1979 that, "when all things are considered and everything else is equal, and it's a matter of discretion one way or another, the President will move in favor of his friends."

Transportation Secretary Neil Goldschmidt reminded the cities on November 20, 1979, that he represents the "political arm" of the Cabinet and that he would look for ways to deny funds to Chicago (in obvious retaliation against Mayor Jane Byrne for her endorsement of Edward Kennedy). Later Goldschmidt tried to solicit political contributions for the Democratic National Committee from railroad executives while the railroad deregulation bill was awaiting Carter's signature.

The President has many ways to remember his friends or punish his enemies with federal monies. Carter made a point of announcing federal grants in key states as though they were the result of his own discretionary generosity, especially in early 1980 before the primaries in Maine, New Hampshire, Florida, and Michigan.

Carter developed a "media plan" in which the alleged accomplishments of the Administration were written up in glowing news releases and distributed regularly to the press. All political appointees were required to participate in the Carter campaign and to make at least ten media contacts per week.

The Carter Cabinet officials collectively spent 110 days campaigning during October, including highly unusual politicking done by the Secretaries of State and Defense. Secretary Edmund Muskie used State Department speechwriters to prepare a political speech on the excuse that they worked only on its "foreign policy" sections.

U.S. Ambassador to China, Leonard Woodcock, called a news conference at the American Embassy in Peking to attack Reagan's Taiwan policy and to threaten that China would close the U.S. Embassy there if Reagan were elected. Secretary of Health and Human Services Patricia Harris took the prize for the most vicious attacks on the Reagan candidacy by attempting to equate Republicans with the Ku Klux Klan.

Then there was the use of government agencies to launch broadside attacks on Reagan's policies. Alan K. Campbell, director of the Office of Personnel Management, called a news conference to attack Reagan's plans for a hiring freeze. Fortunately, all this use of executive-branch weapons did not deceive the American voters.

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