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Why Carter Wants Schlesinger to Stay

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WASHINGTON, June 13 — President Carter's determination to stick with James R. Schlesinger, despite Congressional pressures for his resignation and despite advice from senior White House aides that the blunt-spoken Energy Secretary has become a political liability, tells a great deal about Jimmy Carter.

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Analysis

The President has already established a reputation for loyalty to subordinates under fire — Bert Lance, Andrew Young and Hamilton Jordan. His intimates say that, with critics assailing Mr. Schlesinger, the President is far from receptive to the idea of getting rid of him.

"His natural loyalty has been reinforced by seeing one member of his Administration after another made the whipping boy of the press and Congress," said one White House official. "He's not going to fire Schlesinger in this situation."

Mr. Schlesinger himself was thinking of looking for another job a few months back, after the final push for the truncated Carter-Schlesinger energy plan passed by Congress. Mr. Schlesinger's allies in the Administration were suggesting him as a replacement for Adm. Stansfield Turner, the controversial Director of Central Intelligence.

To friends, Mr. Schlesinger acknowledged that he was bored running the Energy Department and that he coveted some high national security post. At embassy dinners he seemed less interested in talking about energy than in jousting eagerly with liberals over how to handle the Russians.

In mid-March, pressures for him to quit boiled over. During a testy hearing before the Senate Energy Committee, two Democratic liberals — George McGovern of South Dakota and John A. Durkin of New Hampshire — called Mr. Schlesinger's policies "a disaster" and demanded his resignation.

"I have offered it several times," Mr. Schlesinger snapped back. "This is not a responsibility that is entirely pleasurable on a day-to-day basis."

Mr. Schlesinger later told friends that the President had refused to let him resign.

The ties that unite them are personal. They were forged early in the Carter Presidency when the two men worked together, in virtual isolation from political advisers, to devise the Administration's first energy program. Theirs was the affinity of problem solvers instinctively fashioning a textbook answer to the nation's energy problem rather than trying to create a politically palatable program.

As a Republican who was Ronald Reagan's foreign policy adviser in 1976,

Mr. Schlesinger is ideologically an odd man out in the Carter Administration.

On energy policy, he has clashed with liberals on the domestic policy staff, headed by Stuart E. Eizenstat. On foreign policy, he has collided with Secretary of State Cyrus R. Vance, who is more tolerant toward the Soviet Union than he is. On economics, his gloomy energy forecasts have occasionally upset Treasury Secretary W. Michael Blumenthal, who has been trying to bolster the dollar.

But none of this seems to trouble President Carter. Mr. Schlesinger's bent for stating the brutal truth, his puritanical accent on conservation and his disdain for America's profligacy all appeal to Mr. Carter's own views. The President readily borrowed the Secretary's battle cry — "the moral equivalent of war" — against wasting energy.

"The President believes in Schlesinger," commented one Presidential aide. "He's fascinated by that kind of person — Schlesinger, Mike Blumenthal, Harold Brown, Admiral Turner, Zbig Brzezinski — academic, professional, bright, sometimes arrogant, people who think things through rationally but sometimes in a political and social vacuum."

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The aide continued: "They are the people who are the greatest political liabilities to the President. They are the people who don't get along with anyone in the White House but the President. Well, Harold Brown doesn't fit that category, but Schlesinger is one of those people — the technocrats of policy. Jimmy Carter feels at home with them, respects them, needs them."

Others contend that the political cost of forcing Mr. Schlesinger out of the Administration could be too high. As a conservative Republican with hard-line foreign policy views, they assert, he could become an outspoken opponent of the President's arms control treaty with the Soviet Union if pushed out of office.

"Jim Schlesinger out of the Government is much more dangerous than Jim Schlesinger in the Government," said a high Energy Department official. "They don't want him out wandering around, speaking against SALT."

And President Carter cannot dismiss Mr. Schlesinger and make him a scapegoat for public dissatisfaction with the Administration's energy policy, White

House officials say, because that would be admitting that the policy was wrong.

Both the President and Mr. Schlesinger have been insisting that the heart of the energy problem lies with the refusal of Congress and the public to face up to the long-term energy shortage and to begin readjusting the American way of life to that new reality.

Almost everyone in the Carter entourage echoes what Mr. Carter himself reportedly contends in private: Changing energy secretaries would not change the facts. Anyone who replaced Mr. Schlesinger would inevitably come to the same conclusions about energy policy and would soon fall victim to the same fusillade that Mr. Schlesinger now bravely endures.

"You know, if you think about energy, Schlesinger is Carter and Carter is Schlesinger," said one highly placed Administration official. "If the President fires Schlesinger, it's his saying yes, there are real problems here beyond the problems in Congress and in the country. It's Jimmy Carter saying that the problem is the Administration's fault. And he cannot accept that."