DRAFT 4/6//07

Alaskan Earthquake Disaster Recovery

Dwight Ink

Introduction

Several months ago the bipartisan House Select Committee that characterized the response to Katrina as "a litany of mistakes, misjudgments, lapses, and absurdities all cascading together, blinding us to what was coming and hobbling any collective effort to respond." Tonight I will share with you some highly unorthodox, ~~but very successful~~, strategies used by fed govt in an earlier disaster, with the suggestion that you give some thought as to whether, in modified form, they might have saved some of the pain that ~~continues to be~~ suffered by those hit by Katrina. Or possibly adapted for use in future catastrophic disasters or terrorist attacks.

~~Before beginning~~, I should like to stress two things. First, a disaster of the Katrina magnitude presents a tremendous challenge, and it is not ~~humanly~~ possible to complete such a recovery without some mistakes, ~~frustrations, and~~ losses. Second, we should recognize that there were heroes in Katrina. ~~Further, at the federal level, which we will focus on tonight~~, the Weather Bureau and the Coast Guard functioned very well. But their good work was drowned in an ocean of incompetence and poor leadership.

Earlier disaster far less damage, but complex - greatest urgency

Without warning, a horrendous earthquake struck Alaska on ~~Good Friday~~, March 27, 1964. Measuring 9.2 on the Richter scale, and lasting roughly four minutes, it had a devastating impact. The ground rose or sank five feet or more in an expanse over 50,000 square miles where about 60% of the Alaskan population lived. Water and sewerage systems destroyed. The base of Alaskan economy, fishing, was especially hard hit. Small boat harbors were now either too shallow for most boats, or were too deep for the breakwaters to protect the boats from vicious fall storms. Most fishing boats were destroyed or severely damaged and the canneries were knocked out. The terminus of the Alaskan railroad had vanished into the water, as

Impact

Miss R. at N Orleans rose 1½ / wells in Indian.

had parts of neighborhoods and business districts in many towns. Highways had buckled, bridges had collapsed. People killed in California -

The initial *emergency* response by community groups and the federal government to help local governments provide food and water, medical assistance, and shelter, moved forward quite well despite the fact that there had been no warning. However, the prospects for the longer-term *recovery,* required to rebuild ~~and sustain a viable state~~, were very grim.

Earthquakes present recovery complexities beyond those found in most hurricanes.[1] Property lines shift, elevations change abruptly. They cause considerable hidden structural damage not readily identified, ~~or evaluated~~. ~~It is difficult to assess the behavior of underlying soils in the event of future earthquakes~~. In Alaska, thousands of deep soil tests were required to determine where it was safe to rebuild. The treacherous Bootleggers Cove Clay was buried well under the surface, and when saturated it reacted to the motions of an earthquake similar to a layer of grease above which the overburden slid unevenly toward the ocean carrying whole neighborhoods with it. Drilling rigs from the Nevada atomic energy test sites had to be slowly barged up the ocean to Alaska for the soil testing before rebuilding decisions could be made in numerous areas.

Economic issues were overwhelming in pre-oil Alaska. In addition to the body blow to the fishing-based economy, inflation worries loomed, ~~over reconstruction planning~~. Inflation had been a perennial problem in Alaska, so there were widespread fears that the strong economic pressures of the recovery operations would send inflation skyrocketing. The loss of state and local tax revenue, combined with large emergency expenditures, threatened to leave state and local governments without funds.

Making this dilemma truly acute was the knowledge that the short Alaskan construction season made prospects for completing the most critical construction

during the first year extremely dim. On arriving in Alaska, I was stunned by my inability to find any engineer who believed it would be possible to relocate, design and construct most critical public facilities before fall weather would halt outside construction. That would have meant that ~~about~~ a third of the Alaskan population would ~~likely~~ enter winter without water or sewage facilities, with little shelter, their jobs gone, and rising inflation. They would have had to abandon the state, ~~raising a serious question as to whether Alaska could still function as a state~~.

Within 24 hours of the earthquake, it had became clear that existing machinery at none of the three levels of government could not begin to cope with the complexity, magnitude and urgency of the ~~physical and economic~~ recovery faced by Alaska. Strong federal leadership would have to be brought into play very quickly for Alaska to survive as a viable state. Alaskan recovery would require organization and operating approaches never used before.

The evening of the earthquake I had watched TV shots of ground boiling, boats crashing into stores, and homes disappearing. People became seasick from the ground motion. I felt very sorry for whoever would have the impossible task of directing the rebuilding. Several days later, I was that person. This is what happened.

The President had quickly declared a major disaster, enabling the Office of Emergency Planning to help meet the initial response requirements of food and shelter. It performed this emergency task well, but it was not remotely capable of mobilizing the federal resources required for the recovery.

Despite no warning, within five days of the earthquake President Johnson had taken the bold action of appointing most of his cabinet as the Alaskan Reconstruction, Development and Planning Commission chaired by a powerful ally of his, Senator

Anderson. Unprecedented in our history, this innovative presidential action set an example for everyone else to take bold, innovative action in a way that no rhetoric or visits could. This is the first strategy that contrasts with Katrina.

Unlike today's effort to predetermine the structure and process with which to accomplish recoveries, the government was free to establish whatever seemed to best fit Alaska.

Policies. Because of the cabinet level of the Commission, and an unusually strong chair who was very close to the President, policies for the federal response were established in a remarkably short time, most of the important ones within the first two weeks of its existence. ~~Clearly, the crisis character of the recovery endeavor also helped, but new policies have rarely, if ever, been established so rapidly in other disaster recoveries.~~

Rebuild to Enhance Future Development. One of the most far-reaching policies established at the first meeting of the Commission was that of rebuilding Alaska in ways that would enhance the opportunity for future development of the state, rather than following the past practice of merely rebuilding what had existed before a disaster. For example, several boat harbors were to be rebuilt twice their size.

This decision paid off in important ways over the long term, but it greatly complicated the task of reconstructing sufficient public facilities and shelter during the short construction season to enable Alaskans to remain in the state when the severe cold weather returned.

Redlining Unsafe Areas. The most controversial policy decision of the Commission was that of refusing to provide federal assistance in areas that were determined to be especially vulnerable to future earthquake damage. The Commission was disturbed about the fact that the federal government kept providing families and business with financial help in rebuilding in areas that

repeatedly suffered from natural disasters, especially floods, and had to be rebuilt with considerable tax money from all of us. The federal government was not in a position to prohibit the return of people to such areas, but it became a new Federal policy to redline areas that were deemed high risk, and to deny federal assistance to anyone returning to those areas.

~~These and other new policies were established within about two weeks of a disaster that struck without warning!~~

Another contrast w Katrina!

Executive Director. Anderson gave remarkably strong policy leadership. However, ~~no matter how influential~~ a senator ~~may be, he/she~~ should not be placed in a position to direct executive branch actions, ~~even in times of crisis~~. Therefore, President Johnson called upon a professional career manager to direct the rebuilding within the policies established by the Commission. That task fell to me, the Assistant General Manager of the Atomic Energy Commission, placing me in the strange position of reporting both to a president and a senator.[2] This had never been done before or since.

I had no job sheet or specific legal authority. Yet as executive director of a cabinet committee, and because I also reported to the president and a powerful senator, I was in a position to make any operational decision that was needed, ~~even to the extent of assigning responsibility to different departments for reconstruction tasks~~.

Katrina, no one clearly in charge

Operating decisions that would typically take weeks often could be made in hours, or even minutes. However, some engineering decisions had to await the gathering of scientific data, sorely testing the patience of the Alaskans.

Katrina, no one clearly in charge

Since I was executive director of a Commission consisting largely of Johnson's cabinet, I was also viewed by cabinet members as their staff person assigned by the president to help them carry out their recovery roles. At the time, I did not fully appreciate how valuable this perception was.

Commission Staff. The Commission provided the political leadership, and developed the recovery policies However, its staff headed by the executive director handled the Commission operations. All staff members were detailed from agencies involved in the recovery except for several that were detailed from Congressional Committees. Only seven us served fulltime, in sharp contrast to the thousands in DHS called for under current plans.

We were able to function with an extremely small staff because our role, unlike ~~that~~ much of the DHS, was not to do the recovery work, but to mobilize, energize and coordinate the federal agency personnel who were the ones doing the work in cooperation with state and local public and non-public groups. This was a fundamental difference from today's philosophy.

As our small Commission staff exerted every effort to help the departments expedite their work, and make sure the departments received credit for their work, we were given tremendous support from the department heads

As a career leader not perceived as aspiring to political office, appointed for only a temporary position generally thought to be about six months, and with a very small staff detailed from various organizations, I could move very quickly without raising departmental turf concerns.

State Commission. As a counterpart to the Federal Commission, on April 3, 1964, Governor William Egan established the State of Alaska Reconstruction and Development Planning Commission. This State Commission had limited resources to draw upon, but it worked very closely with the Federal Commission. Its executive director, my counterpart, Joe FitzGerald participated in all my Alaskan meetings, and accompanied me on every community visit. The Attorney General of Alaska, Mr. George Hayes, was sent to Washington by the governor as his liaison with the Federal Commission. His Washington office was next door to mine, and he attended all Commission and Washington staff meetings. Both men had full access to Commission documents with the exception of a few personal notes from Anderson to Johnson.

Task Forces. ~~Again~~, unlike Katrina, we were free to tailor the recovery structure to the Alaskan situation, Chairman Anderson quickly appointed an Alaskan Construction Consultant Committee with members drawn from the Associated General Contractors of America and the International Union of Operating Engineers. Its role was to provide damage estimates with accompanying guides for emergency reconstruction planning. Nine federal interagency task forces were established to make special studies and prepare recommendations for early consideration by the Commission. These were Transportation, Ports and Fishing, Natural Resource Development, Industrial Development, Financial Institutions, Economic Stabilization, Community Facilities, and a Scientific and Engineering task force that might have been considered for Katrina.

Alaska Field Committee. An especially important part of the reconstruction organization was the Alaska Field Committee that reported to the executive director. This was a very active group tasked with helping to coordinate and expedite operations on the ground in Alaska. Chaired by the Regional Coordinator of the Department of the Interior, it consisted of the senior official of each of the 18 federal agency having field offices in Alaska. As with other Alaskan coordinating committees, the committee had no authority other than that possessed by its members representing their agencies, thereby avoiding the typical failure of so many committees becoming another bureaucratic level of government without the capacity to act, the worst of both worlds.

Guidelines for Staff Decisions. Several of the more complex decisions that had to be based heavily on technical assessments were left to the Commission staff within guidelines established by the Commission. One example that will be discussed later was the question of whether to provide assistance for the rebuilding of the town of Valdez unless it relocated. Another critical decision left to the executive director was the question of whether enough soil stabilization was feasible to permit rebuilding substantial portions of Anchorage and several other towns adjacent to

major earth movement that occurred during the earthquake. This decision rested heavily on what the soils studies would produce and whether satisfactory buttressing to stabilize the ground could be designed. **The Commission concluded that such decisions could be made much more quickly by a professional staff working on the ground than by political leaders in distant Washington. Today, professional career leaders would not be given that authority.**

Valdez. Within hours of my arrival in Alaska, Governor Eagan decided that he and I, together with some state and federal staff, should immediately fly in a raging blizzard through the Chugach Mountains to visit his heavily damaged hometown, Valdez, ~~suffering from low morale~~. No pilot thought the flight was advisable because of the hazardous weather, and it was truly a hair-raising experience as the plane lurched toward one rugged mountain peak after another in extremely low visibility.

With great relief, we finally landed on the little Valdez airstrip that clung to a narrow strip of land between the bay and a ~~steep~~ hill. Because of the heavy snow and wind, in order to ensure a quick take-off before the visibility totally disappeared, the engines were kept running while we scrambled out, dodging the propellers. The plane climbed to about 200 feet, and for reasons never established, suddenly dove into the adjacent bay. The governor and I commandeered the only undamaged rowboat we saw, and rowed out to the vicinity of the crash, but no sign of the plane or its occupants, including the commanding general of the Alaskan National Guard, ever surfaced. As we rowed back to shore, a crowd was gathering in stunned silence.

For a town already in shock from the earthquake, this tragedy constituted an after-shock with a large psychological impact. The governor disappeared to, as I later discovered, comfort family and friends grieving over their losses. **The snow stopped later, but it was ~~not~~ midnight that I was able to assemble the town council to discuss the town's future. Meeting with the Council, a number of townspeople also packed into the room. A reporter turned on a tape recorder.**

I began by stressing the vulnerability of Valdez to possible future disasters? I then explained the new Commission policy of not providing federal assistance to rebuild in hazardous areas, but said that the federal government would provide help to relocate the town about ~~six~~ four miles along the bay to an area with a rock base, should Valdez decide to do so.

The prospect of abandoning their community and beginning a totally new town was difficult to digest quickly, even though the move was only a few miles. To what extent could the town rely on promises of this bureaucrat from Washington, a man who was a total stranger.

In line with the philosophy of the highly impatient president I was serving, and the fact that a successful recovery required fast action, I was determined to begin this first round of community meetings by convincing people that the Alaskan recovery required decision making far more quickly than might seem to be reasonable. Although I did not issue an ultimatum that federal assistance depended on a community decision having to be made that night, I did explain why it was to their advantage to make the decision as soon as possible.

I talked about a new, much more reliable water and sewer system, a more reliable power grid, a new school, a modern town plan with better streets and good lighting, and a new, more adequate harbor that could provide a major economic boost. I talked about their opportunity that few communities ever have, one in which Valdez could "rise like a Phoenix" from the ashes of a disaster and design a brand new town in which to raise their families. The tide turned.

Finally, as dawn began to emerge, the council, with strong support from most townspeople in attendance, decided that in view of my promise of federal help, the town would move

~~Although~~ The heavy wind and snow returned in late afternoon the next day, shortly after dark a single engine two-seater defied the dangers of landing in the

narrow Valdez airstrip that no longer had lights. After a rough landing, the pilot advised against trying to take off during the blizzard at night, especially since the storm was growing in intensity. It was tempting to stay put, but I believed we should at least try to get back on schedule.[4] As we buckled in, he handed me a three-battery flashlight, and told me to shine it on the adjacent ~~hill~~ bluff as we sped down the runway and warn him if we came dangerously close. Although he said the hill rose less than 50 feet from the unpaved runway, I could not see it, and the flashlight revealed little but snow swirling outside the window. As we gained speed, I deeply regretted having decided to press on, but lacked the courage to say so. We did avoid hitting the hill or diving into the bay as the larger plane had done the day before, as we struggled into the sky.

That evening we landed in Seward, where we built on the Valdez meeting, and established a new intergovernmental partnership arrangement for the Alaskan towns that was, combined with a new, higher level of openness, very different management strategies than those employed in Katrina.

Openness.[5] We went to unprecedented lengths to plan and execute the Alaskan recovery in an open manner. Virtually all operational decisions were made *during* Alaskan public meetings with broad participation, no matter how many agencies and levels of government and public interests were involved.

Meeting in high school auditoriums of ~~each community, or churches if the schools were ruined~~ Seward, the businessmen and the public were invited to participate. During the meeting, we ~~would~~ agreed on a preliminary list of projects, each with an assignment of lead responsibility to some federal, state, or local agency. We ~~would also~~ established an initial estimate of costs and schedules, recognizing that these estimates would change as the design work progressed and budgets could be analyzed. People were understandably skeptical that we could take on this ambitious agenda for the first meeting. I was not sure how much we could accomplish, but it was essential to press as far as we could. We always tried very hard to create a partnership type of dialogue.

After Seward, we flew to Kodiak for a similar community session, and then to each of the most severely damaged communities scattered over many thousands of square miles in central Alaska. Instead of the customary approach of developing a separate local plan, a state plan, and a federal plan, requiring multiple clearances within each level, and then trying to coordinate them in the course of many meetings, each of these sessions laid the foundation for a single community plan in which all three levels would work together. Individual agencies would assume responsibility for certain actions and stand accountable for their execution. There was a Seward plan, a Kodiak plan, three Anchorage plans, etc. This partnership concept was basic to all that followed.

It is true that these public meetings in the various communities were time consuming. But this approach paid great dividends in the end.

Our unusual degree of openness resulted in the public being far better informed of decisions than would have been possible otherwise. Having witnessed the discussion, regardless of whether individual citizens agreed with all the decisions, they at least understood the reasoning behind them. This eliminated almost all the typical negative speculation about ulterior motives prompting certain actions with which they disagreed. ~~By indicating why certain suggestions could not be adopted, most people and organizations could better accept their rejection~~. In fact, our unusually open approach reduced the extent of opposition significantly, and increased a sense of citizen ownership in the adopted plans, providing a greater incentive to make sure the plans were successful. Further, as the work proceeded, we had to spend far less time than usual explaining and defending our actions. We were pleasantly surprised by the extent to which this initial investment in taking the time to open our meetings to public participation was more than offset by the later savings in time during the course of design and construction. ~~Finally, through~~ this opportunity for everyone to have their say and take different views into consideration, in combination with our intergovernmental team concept, we avoided potential criticism that the federal government was overstepping its appropriate role.

Debate and disagreement were inevitable, but decisions were reached in a fraction of the time a more orthodox approach involving multiple clearances and checking with Juneau and Washington would have taken.
Also, the convening of everyone in the same room resulted in peer pressure helping various groups to recognize the responsibility of leaders to provide leadership in assuming responsibility for their share of the recovery actions.

Scheduling. In the first meeting we had with various engineers in Anchorage, we were taken aback by their view that we would fail. I explained, with more hope than conviction, that we would be following an entirely different concept of construction schedules than they had ever experienced. I began improvising on the spot,
Instead of the customary approach of working from schedules based on past experience, and concentrating on how they might be tightened, I decided in the course of this discussion that we would begin by looking at what construction was so critical it had to be completed by mid-October and then work backwards to where we were on the calendar. We would establish whatever intervening milestones would, if met, enable us to reach our goals, regardless of what people might regard as feasible. In other words, rather than looking at what would be regarded as tight but reasonable, we would schedule ourselves to do whatever had to be done no matter how unreasonable the schedules might seem. We would simply have to invent new engineering and management practices and strategies to accomplish what had never been done before in peacetime. In several rebuilding situations where the task was straightforward such as a water or sewer line that did not require relocation, for example, I instructed them to base their schedule on reducing their normal time by 90%, if as the engineers were saying, that is what would be needed to finish by October.

In almost every case the typical time of construction was slashed by impressive amounts. We pressed the envelope in every facet of reconstruction. **Part of our savings was due to the fact that the long daylight Alaskan summers permitted double-shift and**

three-shift around-the-clock work. Considerable savings were also achieved through a streamlined process of scoping the contract work and awarding the contracts.[6] For the less complicated types of construction, we moved forward with construction while design was still underway.

We pushed the use of incentive fee contracts to new levels. For example, I was surprised to find that the Corps of Engineers did not use incentive contracting at that time, a policy we changed quickly. Not only was the Corps required to introduce major fee incentives for outstanding performance, substantial penalties were included for failure to meet established cost and schedule goals. Lawyers argued against the penalty component, but I thought potential litigation was a small price to pay for the incentive to avoid slippages and cost overruns that would result in fee penalties. **The fact that a few companies made high profits from incentive contracts that rewarded early completion and/or cost reductions drew no criticism from anyone**

Incentive contracts succeeded in part because project performance was monitored closely, and change orders reduced to a minimum. Further, very precise performance targets were established.

Process Streamlining. The need to depart from the usual time-consuming government processes extended well beyond physical construction into every facet of the Alaskan recovery effort. I was given to understand by Senator Anderson and the White House staff that we were to place the saving of Alaska over established agency procedures and practices.[7] I had tacit permission from the President through his staff, and similar permission from key Congressional committees through the efforts of Anderson, that we and the agencies could suspend any agency processes we believed to be jeopardizing the timetables required to avoid abandonment of the state. Another unprecedented strategy. Katrina has done little streamlining, to say the least.

We did not track the extent to which this flexibility was used, but I particularly recall telling the House and Home Finance Agency to forego public hearings on our urban renewal projects And since all of our urban renewal meetings were held in open session, with everyone having an opportunity to speak, there was really no need to repeat the process with the formal hearings that the regulations prescribed for such projects. We heard of no complaints.

We also learned that in a majority of cases, the time and effort devoted to federal processes could be greatly reduced through effective management even without resorting to a suspension of the prescribed procedures. Combined with only a modest tweaking of the formal system, proper management often made a dramatic difference.[8]

Adaptability. Whereas conventional wisdom calls for considerable specificity in predetermining responsibilities and processes to be followed in catastrophic recoveries, our approach to the Alaskan *recovery*, as distinguished from *emergency* response procedures, moved in the opposite direction. The lack of recovery procedures or guidelines at first appeared to be a handicap for us. However, we profited greatly from this lack of direction. **Had we been constrained by the detailed plans that exist today we could not have done the innovating on which success depended.**

For example, our Economic Stabilization task force quickly found out that the Labor and Treasury Departments were not in a position to quickly establish the machinery needed to control the reconstruction-induced inflation surge that worried everyone. Because of the expected rapid pace of reconstruction, and the influx of construction materials and workers, had it taken several months to get government monitoring and enforcement machinery organized and in operation, inflation would have already been rising rapidly, and it would have been difficult to arrest, much less reverse, the inflationary momentum. With some misgivings, I acted on a tip that the Agriculture Experiment Station in Alaska had excellent contacts in various communities and might provide the communications network needed to operate a volunteer wage and price control system. It was established within a few days. Through a great deal of public cooperation, timely help from the

media, restraint by business and labor, and considerable jawboning on our part, this most unlikely volunteer arrangement worked. It held inflation in check at virtually no government out-of-pocket cost to the taxpayers.

When complaints began to mount that the Small Business Administration was not equipped to handle the surge in low-interest loans needed for hard-hit small businesses to survive, my deputy director worked out with the SBA and several Alaskan banks an arrangement in which the banks handled most of the paper processing of these applications and could approve them up to $20,000 when there was 10% participation by the bank, and up to $250,000 when there was 20% bank participation. We made arrangements for the Treasury Department to issue checks within 24 hours of receiving the requests for disbursement. Several weeks after instituting these changes, the growing criticism of the SBA began to turn to praise. In October the Alaskans presented a *Koyana* (the Alaskan native word for "thank you") award for success in expediting disaster loan processes. .[9] Freedom to adapt quickly to a new problem and work out this expedited process within only a few days is another example of the value of having provided great operating flexibility to those involved in the Alaskan recovery.

Koyana award

Costs. Commission costs totaled about $60,000, while agencies used their own funds and authorities for their reconstruction activities. More important, tremendous savings came from the Commission's success in slashing the time normally required to complete the recovery projects, and avoiding inflation.

Oversight. The pressure we brought to bear on the agency personnel and the construction contractors to move quickly was enormous, creating conditions conducive to waste, poor quality construction, and abuse.[10] Our basic defense against this problem was the heavy emphasis we placed on use of competent, experienced people with proven integrity at all levels of the recovery. Schedules. Further, our Commission staff provided a surprising amount of monitoring itself, especially with respect to critical public utility projects

Oversight

To be effective, monitoring had to link early detection of problems with quick corrective action. The Commission staff had a goal of correcting every administrative delay within 24 hours of its detection. With respect to engineering problems, we tried to begin corrective action within 24 hours, but completion required varying periods of time.

Several days after my appointment, I called the comptroller general to request the assignment of several GAO personnel to begin monitoring our work immediately upon our beginning to obligate funds. If problems developed, I wanted to know about them as soon as possible so we could take corrective action while they were still small and easily dealt with.

Story of last trip & Egan's clothes.

Outcomes

The two principal goals of President Johnson and the Alaskans, preventing abandonment by a substantial portion of the Alaskan residents and the collapse of the state economy, were achieved. Alaska, soon aided by the development of oil, did move forward rapidly with economic development. The devastated communities did rebuild, including Valdez, which relocated to the safer location. Both Valdez and Anchorage were declared All American Cities several years later.

Five months after the earthquake, the Anchorage News in an editorial titled, "Government at its Best" lauded the "remarkable" performance of the Commission staff. It went on to say,

> "In many cases the normal rules followed by federal agencies were sprung completely out of shape to fit the post-earthquake needs of Alaska. Tight time schedules established for construction work became even tighter under the staff's constant prodding and watchful eye... **It was a rare day when a problem was posed without being accompanied by a solution."** It concluded with, "If more government officials functioned with the same type of positive outlook and attention to needs and details, that word 'bureaucrat' would fast disappear from popular dictionaries." [11]

On October 5, President Johnson sent a letter expressing his satisfaction, "The work done by the Alaskan Reconstruction Commission is in my view an outstanding illustration of cooperation among government agencies at all levels, and I want to especially acknowledge your contribution as Executive Director of the Commission…"

Governor Eagan said the Commission "accomplished more than an outstanding job" in behalf of Alaska, and then stated that the "Federal, State and local efforts were coordinated throughout the critical phase of the Rebuild Alaska program, in a way which, I am certain, has never been previously accomplished in the history of American disasters."[12] A year later, in reference to all the public and private groups that had been involved in the recovery, the Daily News wrote, "The comeback from disaster was so dramatic there hardly seemed to be a gap between destruction and reconstruction. The recovery period was almost as dramatic and breathtaking as the earthquake.[13]

---

[1] Because most of New Orleans is below sea level, Katrina presented difficulties beyond those ever experienced in prior disaster recoveries and does not fit the general pattern we find in most hurricanes.

[2] Senator Anderson had recommended my appointment based on my role in the Atomic Energy Commission that had brought me in close contact with him as chair of the Congressional Joint Committee on Atomic Energy. I had also served as the neutral "liaison" between Anderson and Lewis Strauss during the failed effort of Strauss to gain confirmation as Eisenhower's nominee for Secretary of Commerce, arguably the bitterest confirmation battle in our nation's history. Because the AEC had developed a strong reputation of good management, the BOB had also recommended my appointment. This background had earned me the trust of both Anderson and BOB, a factor that was of enormous help in the rebuilding. Even more important was the trust that Johnson placed in his close friend, Senator Anderson. Operating under tremendous pressure, this element of trust often substituted for the more typical formal communications and clearances.

[3] Having been a part of the government's career leadership, I had the advantage of understanding the basic roles of the different agencies and their capacity to act. And, as one would expect, I always discussed an assignment with the agency leadership before making the formal designation. I assigned the lead role of constructing Anchorage public facilities to the Corps of Engineers, and a comparable lead role in Kodiak to the Navy because of the facilities they had there. I assigned lead responsibility for restoring Native Alaskan villages to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, but withdrew the designation when it became clear that the agency was not equipped to carry out that role.

[4] We had arranged for public meetings at six communities over the following week, each involving public and private sector leaders, as well as the general public. I was very reluctant to permit delays to characterize our first series of visits.

[6] Based on our AEC experience, we relied more heavily on experienced managers, with a strong sense of public service to substitute for much of the conventional procedural underbrush that burdened much of government contracting. This reduced our exposure to waste and abuse that often accompanies contracting under pressure, in addition to saving much time.

[7] My AEC background was fortuitous in our streamlining efforts. Because of the urgency and national security importance associated with establishing the AEC, Congress had freed it from all government-wide

personnel and contract regulations, permitting it to simplify its administrative and expedite execution of its work.

[8] This Alaskan experience formed the basis for an interagency grant streamlining effort later ordered by President Johnson and was the basis for the first phase of President Nixon's New Federalism.

[9] Utilizing private firms to exercise approval authority in addition to the handling of loan processing worked very well during a short emergency period, but we would not have recommended this as a permanent arrangement.

[10] There were some instances in which we knowingly risked some reduction in quality in order to ensure operability before fall, especially in the rebuilding of roads that did not involve health or safety. This drive for speed did result in the need for some road repairs the following year or two, but it was essential for restoring a critically needed transportation system during the first winter.

[11] Anchorage Daily News, August 10, 1964.

[12] Letter to Dwight Ink, dated October 12, 1964.

[13] Page 1 of the special March 27, 1965 anniversary issue of the Daily News.