

Interview with Richard Williams, Old Executive Office Building November 25, 1980

Interviewer: Emily Soapes of the Presidential Papers Project

Soapes: Did you, like Mr. Dogoloff and Mr. Angarola, work on drug abuse? I guess it was Section #92 under the Nixon Administration, or have you just come in the Carter Administration?

Williams: I came in April of '77 of the Carter administration, but I had worked in drug abuse in the law enforcement management part of the investigative program under the last presidential administration and the first year of the Carter administration.

Soapes: So you were not new to the White House staff then?

Williams: No. At that time it was part of the Office of Management and Budget, but it was a *special* office which was not directly involved with the rest of OMB's operations but was a special office that did oversight of the federal drug program. It is very much what we do now and what drug abuse policy is. And coming back this time it was, you know, even though it is a different organization, it was really very much the same job. It was not part of OMB even though the positions were elective positions, pretty much like the present office is not really an operating part of the Domestic Policy Staff but within the office it works pretty much like –

Soapes: Yeah. I was surprised to find that initially it was under Domestic Policy Staff. But when you came in April of '77, it was --

Williams: In the process of being organized as the office of Drug Abuse Policy which was a separate agency authorized by the Congress in '76. But President Ford –

Soapes: But was that Ford legislation?

Williams: Well, it was not Executive Branch legislation. There has always been a keen interest in having somebody in the Executive Branch who can provide the oversight of twenty something various agencies that are involved in drug abuse, but there is no central spokesman for the drug abuse program. All of these agencies do their own thing, compete with each other, and the idea of the federal drug abuse program is to put all of these agencies together in a coherent program, *all* of them working toward similar goals. And it is our job and has been the job of this office whatever the organizational configuration to provide a federal strategy, a central policy direction and then to ensure that all of these agencies are working under this strategy for the common goals and then to work pretty much as an arbitrator when a major disagreement exists. Of course modest conflict exists, which often happens between the health part, the law enforcement part, the education part. There are honest conflicts in that sort of organization whether they are resource oriented as to who gets the higher priority for resources or whether they are policy oriented as to whether it is more important to stop drugs overseas, whether it is more important

to stop them at the border. The level of law enforcement set the policy within the United States, whether the treatment activity should be superior or the law enforcement activities or vice versa. All of those things require somebody above the agency level and often above the department level to resolve them. If you can't do that by routine paperwork exercises, you try to handle them with the cooperation issues.

Soapes: So then, if you're quit being management enforcement now, are you in charge then of the management enforcement in those various agencies? Is that the way it breaks down?

Williams: Well, we have a fairly collegial office.

Soapes: Yeah, I gathered that.

Williams: In that it is a function of – but those are my primary areas of responsibility. But often, as with the rest of the program, some of the law enforcement stuff that I'm working on for the local groups closely ties to either intelligence activities, and we have another staff person for the intelligence coordination, both with the CIA, with the FBI--so if I decide if it's more intelligence than it is enforcement, and all this, but Mr. Bolton, Seymour Bolton, is our Intelligence advisor and often if it is an organizational question, then I let Warren Devine make the decision. If it is involved with Southwest Asia heroin which is a special province then it has a lot of law enforcement connotations.

I think one of the key things to see is that the drug abuse prevention function doesn't seem to be important enough to have a separate office within the Executive Office, but there are many things that on a balance of current national priorities would seem to demand a larger staff with its function, but if you look at the way energy, for example, started with John Love back in the earlier Republican administration, John Love's office was started very much like the Drug Office was started, when the individual who had come in was given oversight responsibility and was told to pull together all departmental functions and provide the kind of executive office services we now provide. Well, the energy program was equally diverse, had as many agencies if not more agencies involved and the office, frankly, was not as well put together and as competently staffed as was the initial drug office. And so it was early decided that the energy office with the executive office of the President wasn't sufficient to manage the energy program and it grew to a larger office, then to an *ad hoc* type agency, then to a statutory agency, then to a department.

Well, the drug program started out – now there is a great divide between that and the drug program now. The difference was the drug program started out with, I think, a very competent staff and it early set up a coordination mechanism that worked-- as opposed to the one in energy that didn't work. Because it worked, it never grew beyond the agency stage and in fact has reverted back to a basic operating staff. So you're not really comparing a six person drug staff to the rest of the Domestic Policy staff where you have one person who is responsible for a

functional area and monitoring that functional area. We do much of the active coordination which you would expect from a separate agency, but we do it with minimal staff and with a separate budget and a little bit of extra budget authority to hire some consultants and experts to help us out when we get into a specific area where we need some additional assistance. To me this is a very intelligent way, a very economical way, to handle this drug problem compared to the alternative of continually growing.

Congress didn't believe this would work, incidentally. That's why they forced the office of Drug Abuse Policy to form a private drug abuse force and consequently President Carter came into office to activate that existing legislation. But the Ford administration was opposed to the office of Drug Abuse Policy during the time that Congress was passing the authorizing legislation and they passed the appropriations authority as well. But President Ford still said that an office like ours in OMB was sufficient and the President elected to go ahead and deal with the agency that first year. Then I think that it was obvious that the agency level action really wasn't needed and he reverted back to the old form of organization accepted as part of the metropolitan staff instead of OMB after – one year after he laid out that –

Soapes: So I take it from the way you're telling it that you didn't disagree with reorganizing back to a smaller scale but you thought that it was effective at this level?

Williams: Well, it really didn't make any difference to us whether we were called OMB or whether we were called ODAP or whether we were called a part of the metropolitan staff because we have basically the same number of people, basically the same functions. We do *exactly* the same thing. The only difference was then there was additional money available for outside studies, for providing some additional financial support in special areas which under our current budget we just don't do. We probably could have, but we didn't. We just decided that that was one of the places that we really didn't have any business being involved in to begin with. We did the budget under the metropolitan staff which kept it a separate line item, but took out most of the other services and activities that were under the (OMB) administration.

Soapes: Creating an independent agency doesn't convey any kind of rivalry or status more than others and conversely –

Williams: Well, it was their management function, it was like an oversight and coordination function. The success of it is not based on the organizational, the formal organizational structure, it is based on the *real* priority that exists within the White House and whether you have a mentor within the White House staff at a very senior level who is interested. Without that mentor even the separate agency doesn't work. With that mentor, any organizational structure will work as long as it is adequate to provide the level of service.

Soapes: Do you feel that you got adequate support from Stu Eizenstat from that role?

Williams: Yes. However, in all honesty, I think that because there were so many negative drug events associated with the last two or three years of the Carter Administration – Chip’s alleged involvement, Peter Bourne’s resignation, and all the mess that was associated with it, the various allegations of cocaine use by members of the White House staff – that negative atmosphere caused, I think, sort of a natural assumption of visible toleration of drugs, not because there was any lack of concern on the part of the President, but it just wasn’t wise to have too much of a public perception. I think *that* Carter does have to work on.

Soapes: Yeah, I’ve heard substantially the same mentions from Dogoloff.

Williams: But I think we’ve been reasonably successful. Dr. Moye – I think it’s important that she has run some of our most successful activities from a management standpoint looking at what we have done that really worked well and what we haven’t, and what hasn’t worked well. Well, Moye’s Parent’s Initiative really caused the adolescent drug use campaign and has been one of the most spectacularly successful things that the Carter administration has ever done. The Northeast Initiative, basically, and the Southwest, has been very successful. Moye also ran that. And starting in mid ‘78 she ran a Southeast Initiative which was directed primarily at Florida and affected the states surrounding Florida and over part of Texas on the Gulf Coast directed at drug smuggling from the Caribbean. I ran that one.

Soapes: So it’s –

Williams: During that time we had a real amazing record as far as seizure of illegal drugs coming in the United States. We reinforced all of the Border Patrol activities in the Southeast, both immigration to the Border Patrol, all the customs activities, put extra investigators to the Drug Enforcement Administration, and worked very closely with Florida with the state government, particularly with Jim York (?) and the Florida department of law enforcement in helping them establish information systems and getting additional support for them. During that time our record of seizures was very large and we changed the rules almost as far as causing the shortage of marijuana in the United States during that period with the result of some spectacular successes that the federal enforcement activity primarily the Coast Guard, seizing large shipments of marijuana off the coast of Mexico.

Soapes: The publicity about that, you have no way of knowing if it may well have discouraged more traffic.

Williams: You never can measure the success of what you are doing. One of the visible results or effects of this was that many of the drug smugglers changed their destination. The drug smuggling went further west along the Texas coast and came further up the east coast to avoid the concentration of enforcement activities that we had going down in the Caribbean peninsula and even further. That, I think, was a very successful activity of the Carter administration.

Soapes: So your work is really more concerned with cutting supply and the management –

Williams: My - our activity is basically – you can structure the drug abuse prevention program several ways. Either in a supply reduction, demand reduction, and a supply reduction side includes diplomatic activities overseas, prescription (?) overseas, interdiction of the drug en route to the United States, either in another country en route, on the high seas en route, or as they actually cross the United States border, whether it's at an airport, a seaport, (?) or somebody carrying it through a port of entry. All of those are border interdiction rights (?) and then once it gets inside the United States, the federal activity basically is directed at high level traffickers, not at the street level pushers or individual users. That's all, plus all the progress reports associated with this associated with this interdiction effort, investigating effort, part of the supply effort.

In the demand effort there is frequent rehabilitation, prevention, education activities associated with stopping the user from actually using it either by convincing him it is the wrong thing to do or after he gets in trouble, providing him with sufficient treatment and rehabilitation so that he doesn't go back and do it again.

Now another way to look at it is the three way: function, the international activity with domestic law enforcement activities which includes port immigration and cost related activity which includes mostly demand reduction. That three function way of looking at it more closely matches the organizational approach, because international staff (?) is primarily State Department with a lot of activity on the part of Justice, Agriculture and Treasury in support of all this. The domestic law enforcement police (?) is basically Justice and Treasury, and sometimes they take on specific activities to work at the level below where the federal stops and then on the *cost* side come up with all the demands that primarily end up in the departments of Education and Labor in support of activity. You can look at it either way –

Soapes: with a great deal of interagency work –

Williams: Well, because it is so complicated and so much defensive a concept, that's why we are here. And that's why we are likely to continue to be here, because it's not something that – it seems peculiar that the executive branch when a new administration comes in, it is a little difficult to understand what we're talking about, but there is this very unique need for oversight that says we know how to play but that takes too long, of course. Either Congress or the general public calls for the administration's attention.

Soapes: And as we spent half an hour discussing this morning, we have seen indications in the paper that Mrs. Reagan, particularly, wants to be involved in –

Williams: The part that she seems to be most interested in is the part that we have been working on and we'll be really happy even more if she follows through, because the more it can also explain to you the competition currently underway that we worked with to get the National

Academy of Arts and Sciences and others in that family that they have a really major national award set out for the TV with an additional new program in primetime for active events. I assume that Lee (Dogoloff) told you about his work in getting the Drug Fair?

Soapes: Yeah, yeah.

Williams: (?) and its effect. Those are the kinds of things that we can do using the White House umbrella to encourage either commercial activities and expect local government to do things they might not otherwise do. It really doesn't cost us any federal resources at all and without someone to really work with them and encourage them, why they are the sorts of things that never get done.

Soapes: Yeah, can you at this point – I know you're not at a stopping point because this is just coming out –

Williams: We're not at a stopping point in the battle –

Soapes: It's an ongoing problem; it's an ongoing function of some staff no matter who they're referring to. Can you evaluate the success at this point of an arbitrary thing that can be done?

Williams: Not really. I think that you never can measure in - in the law enforcement part, you never can really measure in any sense of accomplishment or any critical measure of productivity exactly how well you're doing, because the more seizures you get, it may be an indication that you're really doing a good job in the law enforcement area, or it could be an indication that the problem is getting so much worse that and that is just so much more there that you're really actually behind.

Soapes: Or maybe you just didn't know how much there was when you started.

Williams: Because typically the drug smugglers do not commonly report their income or report their level of activity so you have a lot of guesswork associated with it, but we believe that one of the biggest things that happens is that there will be a fairly significant change in public attitude and that will do more than any amount of federal law enforcement activity that we could ever come up with. Once we start getting negative peer pressure instead of - and I (?) peer pressure, one of the thoughts of any kind of presentation, particularly among young folks is the peer pressure, and to try new things, and to try different things, and do them both. Well, I think we're seeing now a very significant reverse peer pressure that where 10% of the high school students may be using marijuana on a regular basis, they are under severe peer pressure from the 90% because they do not want to be involved and they are very vocal about it now. Where a previous concern was that the 10% will affect a larger number where it seems now that it is changing around to where the larger number is affecting the 10% which is a very positive sign as far as I am concerned.

Soapes: There is no way you can pronounce success, but there is further concern –

Williams: Well, the rate of use of marijuana has ceased to grow. The last several reports we have gotten have shown that the use rate has stabilized among high school students and that's a gain, a significant gain because it had been getting worse and worse each year. It would be nice if it would stop there, if it would stabilize and just not grow - a really significant thing.

Soapes: I know when we are talking about law enforcement and management we can't be too specific. Is there anything else that we should add to this? I am –

Williams: Well, I think one of the things that has been particularly useful to the program is encouraging state level activity. Marie and I made a couple of trips to Puerto Rico and as the directors were meeting with the governor and the commissioners of Panama and the federal enforcement people of Puerto Rico, we set up a joint state and federal task force, not an operating task force, in fact we investigated that (?) portion country, but a coordinated task force which finally sat down, looked at what our needs were and worked out a system of coordinating the state activities and all of the federal activities on the island in a way that think has been a very significant improvement. The common complaint had been that Hugh Gray and the narcotics squad in the Panama City department worked well together, but no one else talked to them and no one else talked to each other and the Governor was so upset about it and wanted the task force because Puerto Rico had not been known as a major traffic point for drugs in the United States. They were mainly a destination and it is interesting that most of the heroin business in Puerto Rico comes *from* the United States, from either Chicago or New York and goes into Puerto Rico. So what we tried to do was set up a task force which has been successful and then tie into the (?) network which works back into Chicago and New York. And we've done a lot of work along the Southwest. Fortunately it worked and Mexicans when they were not using the helicopters to spray open country, they on their own initiative used it to spray marijuana, because basically marijuana, as you know, is a problem within their own country. And of course a lot of that is sold in the United States and as a result of that assistance, our continuing that assistance into the Carter administration, why we were very successful in reducing the level of drug traffic from Mexico and of course that kind of dried up the drug activities along the Southwest border relative to the massive amount of traffic on the southeast end, so we shifted a lot of resources from the southwest border to the southeast.

Soapes: Sometimes, I wonder if it's not like a brushfire. Once you put it out one place, you have it pop up somewhere else.

Williams: Well the whole drug problem is that way because once you concentrate in Turkey (?) and succeed in Turkey then they look for a new source, more profitable than Mexico. You put out Mexico, and apparently we've spent a lot of effort in Southeast Asia, primarily Burma. And of course a natural drought always helps. We've had several major assists from periods of

drought drying up poppy fields literally and then we started an initiative against Southwest Asia, primarily Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran and that (?) basically has improved that (?) in a response to (?) epidemic and seems to have worked pretty well as a preventive activity because the level of Southwest Asian heroin in the United States has not grown in accordance with anybody's prediction. We seem to have been reasonably successful there. Moore can tell you a lot more about that – you can trust in her.

Soapes: Yeah, I definitely want to talk to her because the parent programs Dogoloff talked about to some extent and the treatment idea and also the Southwest heroin. (?) Those seem to have been the areas that we mentioned, the ones where the resources were out there and (?) seen a change.

Williams: One thing, I think, that is noticeably different in the Carter administration in my experience of previous administrations was the level of cooperation between the agencies, particularly between the drug enforcement administration and the Customs Service. Historically those two have been very competitive and particularly at the Washington level with Mr. Dunsinger as the Administrator of Drug Enforcement Agency and Bob Casey as Commissioner of Customs. They have worked exceptionally well together and much of the Washington level hassle that I worked with when I was here before has effectively disappeared because of this.

That's not to say that there are still not quite a few areas that are subject to some interagency disagreement but at least there is a lot of good working together and in a friendly tone as opposed to (?) that is fairly common to the history of the drug enforcement activity. There are still several things that need to be done.

Soapes: Would you like to mention them or is it too sensitive to do so?

Williams: When we started-- the office started this policy--one of the first things we did was a series of policy reviews. We selected the six most important policy areas and set up a review team composed of people from our office, *led* by people from our office, and composed of people from all of the agencies involved with policy review of each of those policy areas, published a report in late '77, early '78 on each of the policy areas and then we used that report as the basis for drafting 1979 federal strategy for drug abuse prevention which is a major unique strategy document which was published under the auspices of the Strategy Council but our staff put it together, and published it and border management is an area that has been studied by the past four administrations, each one coming to the same conclusion that there was obvious need for the organization to combine the federal patrolling activities between ports of entry under one agency and to combine the inspection of people at ports of entry under one agency. We had proposed that a Border Management Agency be created combining the Border Patrol, Immigration Service, Substance Control, the Customs Service, all of the inspectors who are in the primary inspection at ports of entry and that basically the Immigration and Naturalization

Service and the United States Customs Service be combined into the border management agency which would accomplish all of those functions and still leave the technical and strategic available for secondary inspection from the other agencies who have similar responsibilities like (?) Service and the Agriculture Department and the Plant and Animal (?) inspection findings. Unfortunately, we were a little too early with our recommendation because at that time the President's reorganization project was struggling at *all* functions with the federal government and because we had a plausible and politically feasible reorganization, they felt that we – they were not ready for that specific a reorganization proposal because they were in the process of looking at broader areas and frankly didn't realize that the politics of broader management of an organization required some limiting of the thinking. They wanted to talk about first-start involvement, they wanted to look at the recent function of the State Department's consular service and because they added in my judgment these additional considerations, every additional consideration took on a new set of adversaries and made it so complicated that there really wasn't any hope for the Board of Management reorganization after they asked us to comment on the Coast Guard and (?) in the Consular Service and these considerations and their recommendations – why they sank their own boat. Now argue that where the Board of Management and Organization is concerned. I expect that to come up again.

Soapes: I was going to say, do you see that as kind of a –

Williams: Oh yes, a lot of it (?) but that's a far more (?) of ports of entry, (?), primary inspections. Like I say if they'd recognized through the years and were still looking for the opportune time, opportune in a political sense, to get it together and get it through Congress, because it is not only a practical substitute but a (?) and still is. Our 1977 report is still valid without change.

Soapes: So then you assume there is much prepared that you perceive –

Williams: I anticipate that (?) every administration that comes along will undertake that project until one of them succeeds.

Soapes: Are there any other initiatives that we should put in that category –

Williams: Now one of the areas that we may not have talked about was the creation of a domestic intelligence advisory group as part of the policy review and operation. There was a committee established with an acronym of CCIDC. Now that's not the (?) It is the National Narcotics Intelligence Committee. I would have to get out the exact acronym the computer made but it is a *domestic* intelligence advisory group involving the federal enforcement administration, the group, all of them as an intelligence committee that have domestic intelligence requirements. The CIA, the foreign intelligence people who have narcotics policy assignments sit in as observers, and one of the finer purposes is to publish an annual intelligence estimate as to the source of narcotics worldwide and the (?) who abuse. That's three annual reports published now

and that's an innovation in the system that has worked very well and was involved in an early executive order in the policy area that has given the EPA(?) some bona fide intelligence responsibilities and then the initiative which (?) establish this public image.

That's been a very sensitive area, you know. The FBI gets involved in intelligence activities and the CIA being associated with domestic intelligence, both of those have been very sensitive, particularly sensitive (?) in the study—

Soapes: But are not now?

Williams: Well, they're still sensitive, but we managed to set up the system that doesn't draw any flak.

Soapes: That should be able to, right there—

Williams: That's right. But we've been—Among those other things, I think those were the significant events. A lot of the activity has been just the day-to-day coordination and providing the deviation [could this be “mediation”, Winnie?] and arbitration necessary to be able to work on short time goals.

Soapes: Yeah—Let me ask you: if we needed to get in touch with you from the Library say in five years to talk more about this sort of thing, where would be best to try and find you?

Williams: Well—

Soapes: Some people say “Well, I may be moving” and they give us an alumni association. Think you maybe—

Williams: No, I would suspect in the next four or five years, you'd be able to find me—you could find me at my home address. I don't know what—

Soapes: So, check around the Washington area is the best thing.

Williams: But if you call it seeking membership in the alumni association, I'm kind of involved with the Association of Domestic Policy of the Armed Forces—has a fairly active alumni association with regular meetings. That would be one way to find me.

Soapes: It is also hard to project where you're going to be. So if we could get one or two alternative places. I appreciate your talking about functions today and it might well be that in another five or six years, it would be a good idea to come back to many of the people we have talked to and see what their feelings are at that point about the work they've done.

Williams: Yeah, well, I've enjoyed it.

Soapes: Well, thank you very much.