

Chapter Eight

April to June 1980

“A Co-Equal Third Contender”

Expectations were great that Anderson would make a dramatic announcement, and his Monday press conference at the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles was packed. Reporters were disappointed when he told them he was not ready to make a decision. He admitted that he had made a mistake by implying that he would do so after the weekend and said that it would be “two or three weeks” before a final announcement.¹

Privately, Anderson was leaning toward running, but he spoke cautiously that morning. After he announced that he would make no declaration, he admitted that he would “like to give people in this country a broader and better choice than they’d have with Carter and Reagan.” Although he had privately given up his GOP race, he said that he would continue to campaign as a Republican candidate. This gave him a platform to campaign and gauge if interest in an independent campaign existed. Yet, he was eager to disassociate himself was past party bolters and warned the press not to “put me in your book as . . . another George Wallace.”² He then set off on a two-and-a-half-day campaign swing through California.

The tour took on a great significance within the Anderson inner-circle. Since talk about an independent campaign was now public, this three-day tour would be a major factor in judging the public receptiveness to it. The results in California confirmed for Anderson how overwhelmingly many voters wanted him to continue in the race. It proved to be one of the best-received swings of his campaign. Each event on his schedule was well attended and drew very enthusiastic crowds. At an appearance before 2,000 at UCLA, he was cheered for a full minute

before he began to speak. Five hundred local businessmen attended a luncheon for him in that city, while several hundred others packed a fund-raising party later in the day in Beverly Hills. The next day he spoke to 1,000 attorneys at a luncheon of the Los Angeles Bar Association, before flying north to deliver a speech to a Stanford University crowd of nearly 2,000. Anderson even made an appearance at the University of California at Berkeley, once a hotbed of radical activism. A presidential candidate had not appeared on that campus since 1968, but a crowd of close to 5,000 greeted him with great enthusiasm. In the middle of the appearance, Anderson shouted down a few determined hecklers (who were supporters of Lyndon LaRouche) and “the crowd leaped to its feet to show approval,” one reporter noted. The campaign appearance that drew the most attention was an engagement at the Santa Monica Civic Center. The speech drew a crowd of 3,000 and had many Hollywood-types in attendance. Anderson was in top form, with forty reporters at his feet. There was a lull in the primary schedule so the political community was paying particularly close attention to Anderson. So overwhelmed was the crowd in Santa Monica that members of the audience were shouting “Third Party!” at him during his speech. Reporters, hearing a commotion going on outside and guessing that it might be a demonstration against the candidate, left to investigate and were shocked at what they saw: 500 more Anderson backers locked out of the auditorium by fire marshals chanting, “Let us in!” The reactions of the crowds on the trip were a major factor to Anderson.³ When the candidate returned to Washington on 9 April, there was no doubt how his west coast supporters felt about continuing his campaign.

Another positive factor was his fund-raising. After losing three consecutive Republican primaries, Anderson admitted that he expected there to be “some reduction in funds” given to his campaign. Usually contributors are less willing to donate to a candidate who has fared poorly at the polls or who might drop out of the race. But there was no significant fall in contributions for

him over the first ten days of April. He held four fund-raising events during the trip and raised close to \$50,000. “The people giving are not affected by these primaries,” aide Tom Mathews explained to a reporter. “They don’t care if he wins or loses as a Republican contestant.”⁴

Upon reaching home, Anderson continued to put the pieces in place for an independent candidacy. The decision was made in the face of the overwhelming conventional wisdom that stated there were too many hurdles for a candidate without an established party starting this late to win. His next step was to have two face-to-face meetings with David Garth. He also canceled a five-state campaign tour so that he could focus his attention on the decision. The meetings with Garth were important as they negotiated an agreement. Anderson needed Garth much more than Garth needed this campaign, and their discussions reflected that. “David had real reservations about doing this,” remembered campaign manager Michael MacLeod, who sat in on the negotiations. On the other side, Anderson was “in desperation to have someone with a successful track record and with experience.” MacLeod recalled that Anderson “would have told David and probably did tell David anything he wanted to hear.” Garth was accustomed to having complete control of a campaign, and he made it clear to Anderson that if he was to be hired, it would not be just so that Anderson could attach his new campaign to a successful name. MacLeod recalled: “I remember negotiations between Anderson, me, and David in the hiring process. And David was saying, ‘Now look, here’s the way I run a campaign. You’ve got to do it my way or I’m not going to do this.’ And John and Keke would have said ‘Yes, we’ll do it your way.’ Anderson would say all the right things and then revert to type.”⁵

It was an understandable decision by Anderson. He was not the kind of candidate who planned to bend to suit the wishes of his managers. He had no intention of changing. At the same time, he was going to pay Garth a large sum to join his campaign. He wanted Garth’s

professionalism, leadership, and campaign expertise to manage his efforts. He had every expectation that he would follow Garth's advice on the strategies of the campaign. If there were conflicts, John and Keke reasoned in their minds, they could be resolved. During the second meeting, Garth made his official commitment to Anderson. "He was the man I wanted," Anderson stated in a 1989 interview.⁶ Even though it was understood that Garth would diminish the roles and influence of those in the Anderson inner circle from the GOP phase, nearly all of the candidate's important aides wanted Garth to join the team and give credibility to the independent campaign. After observing firsthand how the primary campaign had been unable to cope with the rigors of Anderson's becoming a Republican front-runner, there was agreement among aides that more experience and leadership were needed.⁷

From Garth's perspective, there was also a lot about joining an independent campaign that made it attractive for him. "I did what I thought was going to be interesting and provocative from the point of view of what's worthwhile for the country. My feeling was the fact that John Anderson existed and represented a certain type of politics . . . was important. And, personally, I liked the guy," Garth remembered years later. "There was a part of him that's Midwest straight. I really responded to that after all the other people I'd seen in politics. I thought he was a very decent guy, and he wasn't an egomaniac, which I thought was amazing."⁸

Garth walked away from the meetings with Anderson believing he would for the most part play his customary role in this campaign. He remembered: "I said 'Look, I can be, to say the least, abrasive. And we don't have time in this campaign for the niceties of politics, if they do exist at all. You've got a lot of people who've invested time and effort and commitment to you, way before we came along. So it's going to be tough.' And in essence he said . . . 'I'm hiring you to do your thing. That's what I want.'"⁹

Garth also left the meetings believing that Anderson was serious about running the campaign through to the end. Initially Garth wondered whether an independent candidacy might be something Anderson would abandon once he understood the degree of difficulty involved or suffered some setbacks. After the meetings, he concluded that Anderson was very serious about such a candidacy and understood the rigorous process that went with it.

Anderson liked what he heard from Garth during the meetings. “He impressed me as being very resolute and very determined,” he remembered. Garth also seemed as though he would provide the leadership for this new campaign that the candidate and his wife so desperately wanted. “He was the kind of guy who really wanted to be hands on,” Anderson recalled. “He wanted everyone to know that if he was going to take the job, he was going to be the man who ran the campaign.” This was an important issue for Anderson. As was the case in the GOP phase, he had no interest in the political mechanics of the campaign. He felt that he needed to channel all of his energies toward being the best candidate possible. For Anderson, it was important for him to have a team that could take care of the details and strategy of a candidacy in Washington, without him having to get involved. There were, however, also some concerns about Garth. One was how accustomed he was to having candidates who followed his instructions blindly. Anderson wanted leadership for his campaign team, but he did not want a manager who demanded too much control. “While I had respect for his managerial abilities,” Anderson later reflected, “I didn’t think that the candidate ought to delegate to the manager what he was going to say and when he was going to say it.”¹⁰ From the start, those who knew both men were concerned about how they would work together.

Thematically, Anderson wanted to keep many of the elements of the Republican campaign in place for an independent race. He felt that the voters had reacted well to most of the

stylistic differences of his candidacy as opposed to the more normal political enterprises. Throughout the GOP race, he had eschewed the way candidates had traditionally run. He had emphasized specific policy stands, a refreshing directness, and a willingness to say and do things regardless of the political consequences. To Anderson, this was how a responsible candidate ought to run for office, and he went into the independent campaign with no plans to change. He wanted “to appeal to a lot of basic fundamental American instincts that politicians tend to ignore,” congressional staffer Robert Walker states. He believed that “we don’t have to run political campaigns according to the lowest common denominator . . . and that the American people would be receptive to it.”¹¹ But Garth had not witnessed firsthand how this had worked in the GOP phase, and how the consultant would react to this approach remained an open question.

Privately, Anderson was speaking bravely about the type of general election campaign that he wanted to run. He felt that in lieu of traveling around the country, trying to squeeze in as many appearances into each day as he had done as a Republican candidate, he could run a different kind of campaign. Instead of spending his time on the road, he suggested that he could headquarter his campaign in Washington. Throughout the summer, he could hold highly publicized briefings from his Capitol City office. Such appearances would allow him to introduce new ideas into the campaign and to make major policy pronouncements while at the same time keeping a high presence in the race. These briefings would be easy for television and the press to cover, which would keep his name in the news. More importantly, such a strategy would allow him to preserve his resources. By maintaining a high profile in the media, he would reduce the need for such a high level of voter contact, perhaps to only two or three days a week. On those trips, he could set the tone for his campaign by making well-researched, hard-hitting speeches. To Anderson, who wanted to run more of an issues campaign than a traditional, road-

show-type campaign, this made practical and political sense.

This point of changing his approach to travel had been driven home to Anderson during the recent campaign swing through California. He was a hard-working candidate, and he had enjoyed almost no rest over the past year of campaigning. At age fifty-eight and in good shape, he found campaigning rigorous, and he was nearly exhausted. Meanwhile, his schedulers were struggling with his new popularity. Once, Anderson had been so low in the polls that his staff had taken almost any opportunity to get him to appear in front of a crowd. Now, his schedulers were inundated with offers and requests. The campaign swing through California was packed with events, and Anderson was finding it more difficult to summon the energy to perform at a high level. For his appearance in Santa Monica, he had arrived exhausted and angry with all the events that were on his schedule around California. He was able to feed off the energy of the crowd and give an outstanding speech on that occasion, but he wanted a new campaign run differently. He did not want to market himself in “retail” fashion as he had in early 1980.¹²

Anderson’s motives for running as an independent seemed to be much the same as those he had had when deciding at the end of April 1979 to run for the Republican nomination. He still sought to be a voice for moderate politics, and he believed that his conservative economic and liberal social policies were deeply rooted in mainstream American thinking. He also continued to think that he could raise the debate to a higher level through his straight talk on issues and willingness to challenge voters with unpopular positions. He believed that his presence in the general-election race would increase involvement in the political process and energize a lethargic electorate. In addition, he had some public-spirited motives. It was clear that the voters were not pleased with the Carter-Reagan choice, and his running as an independent would give them an alternative candidate. He believed that there was some political turmoil in the U.S., and the

volatile atmosphere necessitated that someone emerge beyond the major-party choices.

Personally, Anderson believed that Reagan and Carter were terrible choices, and he felt that he was the only one in a position to be a viable third candidate. As in his decision to seek the GOP nomination, his electoral possibilities did not play much of a role in this decision. As long as an independent campaign did not result in his embarrassment, he was in favor of trying it. “It will take a miracle to elect me [as an independent],” he admitted to a journalist in early April.¹³

As the campaign moved towards a formal announcement of an independent candidacy, Garth, Michael MacLeod, and Ed Coyle were busy reshaping the campaign team. There was turnover from the GOP phase and, following Anderson’s desire to create a more professional organization, dozens of new positions were created. Most of the staffers who wanted to continue working in the effort were given positions in the independent campaign, although a few (particularly among those in the field) were let go. The plan was for Garth to remain working from his New York office. His day-to-day supervision involved the media advertising, the road show, and the press operation. This meant the reassignment of several campaign aides. Robert Sann, who had produced Anderson’s television spots during the primaries, was reassigned to supervise the print advertising. Garth would create all of the television and radio spots in the independent phase. Mark Bisnow, who had been Anderson’s traveling press secretary and occasional speechwriter, was also reassigned. Garth wanted more control of the press operation and picked a former writer from the *New York Post* and local New York television reporter, Mike Rosenbaum, to handle the press operation on the road. Washington attorney George Lehner, who had some State Department experience, became the speechwriter on the road with the candidate several weeks after the announcement. Bisnow worked mostly in the campaign’s Washington headquarters. Tom Wartowski and Bill O’Donnell, the two personal aides who had

been working by Anderson's side in the Republican phase, were also reassigned. Garth inserted Zev Furst, one of his top deputies from his New York office, into full-time work with him on the independent campaign. Furst would play a major role in the new candidacy's leadership and serve as Garth's principal assistant on the campaign. Kirk Walder, who as political director of the GOP phase had supervised the field operation in each of the four targeted states, was reassigned to work with MacLeod and help administer the new campaign.

In the Washington DC headquarters, the team was also rebuilt. Although he remained campaign manager, MacLeod's role changed. He now focused on coordinating the campaign between Garth, the DC headquarters, the direct-mail operation, and the candidate. He also made most of the major financial and budget decisions. Ed Coyle, as deputy campaign manager, supervised the day-to-day operations of the campaign and hired most of the new department heads. The campaign was changing and quickly becoming big. The scheduling office was expanded to a staff of five. Mike Fernandez, a former member of Jerry Brown's 1980 campaign staff, was chosen to run that department. Francis Sheehan was hired as finance director. He had worked with Coyle in the 1976 Udall campaign (and was among nearly a dozen people from that campaign who would work in the independent phase) and supervised three others in the finance department, as well as the caging operation. Unlike the GOP phase, in which donations had been sent to Rockford, it was decided to move this operation to the campaign headquarters in Washington. Over a dozen people were hired to do the complicated and tedious job of cashiering donations. When Ed Morgan departed, two new figures were chosen to direct the fund-raising and special events operation: Tom Mader (a former Common Cause vice president and aide to Melvin Laird) as director, with Bob Bedard as his deputy. In the press office, Dick Stout joined the campaign. A veteran reporter, who had played a major role in the 1976 Udall campaign, he

was a prominent figure in Timothy Crouse's best seller, *The Boys on the Bus*. Stout was well known and respected in political circles.

The research operation was also greatly expanded. In mid-March, there had been two paid staff members in that department, plus a few part-time volunteers. A couple of months into the independent phase, it had expanded to over three dozen staffers. Clifford Brown remained the director, but Robert Walker (a congressional staffer) and Alton Frye (the Washington director of the Council on Foreign Relations) were also given major roles and status as equals.

Instead of having two field directors as they had had in the GOP phase, the new phase would have a national field director and five regional coordinators, each of whom was in charge of a group of ten states. Later in the campaign, one of those regions was divided in half, resulting in six regional coordinators. Many of them had full-time assistants. Once the independent campaign reached mid-summer, nearly 250 people were working in the DC headquarters.

Numerous changes also took place in the field, given the changing circumstances of Anderson's race. Offices were being opened and staffed all across the country. Eventually Anderson would have paid staffers working in forty states. In the days that followed Anderson's announcement, Coyle and his deputies had the nearly impossible task of having to name coordinators in each of the fifty states so that the petition work could begin and have hands-on, local leadership in place.¹⁴ Top-level positions were often filled quickly, but it took time to fill all of the lower-level positions that were created. It was a long process. In the Northeast region, the campaign went from three paid staffers in mid-April to over sixty.¹⁵ It took six to eight weeks for this new organization to begin to take shape. With a few exceptions, everyone who was brought into the campaign had no previous connection to Anderson. Also, the majority of those who joined the team in prominent roles had some campaign experience. It was the opposite

manner that the team had been assembled for the GOP phase. By the time this process ended, no department in the new campaign remotely resembled the old one, in structure or in personnel.

The decision to change the shape and scope of the organization was a direct result of the experiences of the primaries. Once the GOP effort failed, leaders on the campaign team looked for easily identifiable reasons for that defeat. One was the failure to make progress in 1979, which put them so far behind. Another was a lack of a capable campaign organization until it was too late. A third was the lack of a winner's mentality. The campaign team never thought big. Clifford Brown remembered, "That was the tragedy. You could never convince them that they could really go the distance until it was beyond the point where you really probably could have. I don't blame them in a sense. We were at the bottom of the polls and many never quite understood how Jimmy Carter took hold or George McGovern took hold."¹⁶

Inside the headquarters, staffers would joke that the GOP campaign had been "ninety percent candidate and ten percent organization." Coyle and MacLeod attacked these deficiencies so they would not be repeated. They were determined not to make the same mistakes. Staffers with experience would play the key roles in the new organization. Instead of waiting for success to come, the new team would be large and talented enough from the start to take advantage of strength in the polls. Unlike the GOP phase, leaders thought big in the early stages of the new effort. To observers, it was clear that after having waited for money and support to come to build a campaign around in 1979, a new candidacy would have sufficient infrastructure from the start.

Preparations soon began for a formal candidacy announcement. Garth suggested it should come around the time of the next primary in Pennsylvania, and 24 April was chosen. Anderson was over 20 percent in the polls across the nation without one day of campaigning or an announcement, and the interest in this new campaign was building. On television, reporters had

spent much of the two weeks that followed the voting in Wisconsin discussing his third-party option. The primary schedule had a lull of nearly three weeks, and speculation about Anderson's future in the race dominated the coverage. Some of the reporting centered on how third-party candidates of the past had fared and the problems that would exist for Anderson in respect to ballot qualification and financing. Since there was no information from the Anderson camp on which way the candidate was leaning, the speculation itself was also much of the story. "Will he or won't he?" began one such report by Morton Dean on CBS.¹⁷

This ended on the morning of 17 April, when Anderson conducted an interview with *Washington Post* writer Dan Balz at his congressional office. The nation was clamoring for information about his ratiocinations (as he called them) on an independent campaign, and he was now ready for the first time to speak publicly about them. Since a final decision had been reached, he was more comfortable discussing matters in a forum where he would not have to refuse to answer questions. Although Balz was not expecting a categorical answer of whether he would run, Anderson openly told him that he had decided to go forward with a new race. The response stunned the reporter, who had thought that Anderson would not reveal his plans in an interview with a single reporter. Balz gave him an opportunity to reconsider whether for political reasons he wanted them in print. Anderson thought about it and said that he saw nothing wrong with it, but he first wanted to let other newsmen know so that they would not think he was playing favorites with the *Post*. In the next few hours, interviews were quickly arranged with a series of journalists, while others were told that he was "leaning toward" making a run.¹⁸

The week between Anderson's statement about his intention to run as an independent and his actual public announcement was chaotic. Once the final matching-fund check was received, his team moved quickly to get the campaign's finances in order before his announcement. At the

same time, some division existed between groups of supporters who had worked in the GOP campaign and those who were supporting the independent candidacy. These problems were most apparent in states with early ballot access deadlines. For example, supporters in Michigan who had started gathering petitions on its own to qualify Anderson as an independent were publicly denounced by the organization that had been built for the GOP primary campaign. Meanwhile, a third group that was being bankrolled by Stewart Mott, and which had to work independently from campaign officials to comply with federal election laws, created further confusion. Briefly, it appeared that there were multiple factions of the campaign. At the Washington headquarters, not much was done to clear up any confusion. The priority of Anderson's advisors was to get organized for the independent phase and to maximize the impact of the candidacy declaration. "We wanted to keep it as suspenseful as possible," Ed Coyle recalled.¹⁹

* * * * *

As Anderson moved forward with his independent campaign, it seemed prudent for him to take some lessons from his GOP campaign. There were problems within his nomination campaign that, if not addressed, would cause greater harm as a general election candidate. In addition, the way the two winning nomination campaigns were waged were indicators about the direction those campaigns would likely in the fall.

One matter was the conservative GOP candidate's inability to mount any kind of challenge to Reagan. At the start of 1980, many Republicans had doubts about his campaign. Reagan's potential problems were real: among them were his age, his tepid support of the Republican ticket in the fall of 1976, the public perception of him as an extremist and a programmed candidate, financial mismanagement in the pre-election year, and infighting among his advisors. When the campaign began, it appeared that other conservatives in the party would

have ammunition to mount serious challenges to Reagan's support. In 1979, John Connally had raised a tremendous amount of money, had widespread backing from the big business community, was winning more media attention than any of his Republican rivals, and was picking up support in the polls. There were also periods in the pre-election year when it appeared that Phil Crane and George Bush were making inroads among the GOP right wing. Yet, by the time the voters went to the polls, none of them was able to win the kind of support that suggested conservatives believed in any option other than Reagan. In the case of Connally and Crane, they never were able to cut into Reagan's support at the polls and both were out of the race quickly. In the case of Bush, he turned his campaign into one aimed at more moderate voters. At one time, Reagan's team had real concerns about the Connally effort. "If Connally had developed credibility, his vote would have come out of ours," Reagan pollster Richard Wirthlin later stated, "and in a multi-candidate race, this would have posed a danger."²⁰ It was clear to the Anderson team as they looked to November that Reagan had a united conservative base behind him.

Yet, moderate Republicans reacted differently. By any objective standard, there was more infighting among the second tier of candidates with one another, than there was collective action against the front-runner. There was tremendous competition among the Republican candidates early in the race over who would emerge as the prime alternative to Reagan. In the last few months of 1979, all of the GOP candidates (including Anderson) spent an unusually large amount of time attacking Connally, especially after it was revealed in mid-December 1979 that he was rejecting public funding for his primary campaign.

When after the Iowa caucuses it became clear that Bush had seized the position of alternative to Reagan, it brought an unusual reaction from the other Republicans. Instead of the other candidates becoming more focused on cutting into Reagan's shaky support after he had

suffered his defeat, the focus for the others in the race became Bush. The other candidates spent the four weeks that followed the caucuses attacking Bush and his advancing status in the race, instead of trying to use Reagan's collapse in Iowa to get the front-runner out of the race.

The same dynamic occurred with Anderson in Illinois after his surprising performance in New England. After those near victories, the Republican candidates had another opportunity to prevent Reagan from running away with the nomination. Instead, the remaining candidates in the race spent the entire Illinois campaign attacking Anderson because they did not want him to become the alternative to Reagan. As with Bush after Iowa, this tactic worked.

Conversely, Reagan never got this kind of treatment. When he debated three Republican opponents in South Carolina in late February, almost all of the attacks were against the Democrats and few were against him, the front-runner in that primary. The television advertisement campaigns of Howard Baker, Connally, and Bush (in its initial phase) included not a word of criticism of Reagan.²¹ By the time non-conservative Republicans had picked Bush as the alternative candidate to Reagan, the race was essentially over. The GOP nomination campaigns were more about wooing voters from Reagan by not alienating them than they were about directly challenging Reagan. Later in the campaign, Bush had a modest streak of primary victories, but they barely caused a ripple because Reagan had such a commanding lead. In the end, Reagan never got the kind of treatment of other front-running candidates (such as Ford or Carter had in 1976 or Walter Mondale in 1984). For Reagan to be defeated in the fall of 1980, it was clear that Anderson was going to run a more coordinated campaign against him.

Lack of political support was another issue that hurt Anderson as a Republican in 1980 and that he would face as an independent in the fall. Although Anderson did get some Republican support from Ripon Society members, he had almost no help from elected officials in

the party. In 1979, he was able to get some modest support from other members of the House. He was running a long-shot campaign, and at that time it seemed understandable that he was lacking in big name support within the party. By March 1980, however, this had changed. Anderson had established himself as a moderate force in the party, was now a nationally known figure, and had a genuine following of supporters that few others in the party at that moment could match. Yet he still was unable to win mainstream political support in the GOP. After his emergence as one of the front-runners, he tried but failed to win support of big name Republicans that would have legitimized his candidacy. In failing to win the support of governors like James Thompson, William Milliken, Lee Dreyfus, and Richard Thornburgh, Anderson could never credentialize his candidacy as others had in similar circumstances in past presidential elections, such as Carter in 1976. Dozens of moderate politicians elected to high office had endorsed Howard Baker, but after Baker dropped out of the race in early March, not one jumped to Anderson. The rejection by Thompson was particularly noteworthy. Anderson was desperate to demonstrate his Republican credentials to Illinois GOP voters, but Thompson sat on the sidelines and endorsed no candidate rather than lend his support to Anderson. In fact, the only endorsement of an elected official that Anderson won during the period when he was running well in the primaries was that of S. William Green, then a first-term U.S. congressman from New York City.²²

Anderson was, for the most part, a loner in the House of Representatives. Other than Morris Udall and a few others, he did not have a cluster of fellow congressmen with whom he was close. “Anderson didn’t have a bunch of buddies in the House who he could get political support from and who would help him,” aide Vicky Golden Markell remembered. He had never made an effort to mentor other members of the House or to win support for his pet causes by trading votes with other members. As Gerald Lipson, a one-time member of Anderson’s House

staff, explained to a *Time* magazine reporter, “[Anderson’s] not afraid to go against the tide. In some respects, he is more comfortable when he is bucking the trend.”²³ In the fall of 1980, winning support as an independent was going to be a potent issue and more difficult than ever.

Another lesson that was vividly demonstrated during the primary season was that the conservative movement in America was enjoying a strong rebirth. What Anderson discovered in this campaign, much to his disappointment, was that the Republican Party was much different from what he had thought it was when he chose to run in 1979. While he was well aware that the party had been drifting rightward for some time and that the movement had become more pronounced since the defeat of Gerald Ford in 1976, a fundamental shift had occurred. Anderson knew that a liberal Republican had little chance of nomination when he started his campaign. But what he found was a Republican Party different from what he expected. Reagan’s conservativeness—unorthodox when Barry Goldwater had run in 1964—now represented mainstream thinking in the party. Much had changed in the GOP since George Romney and William Scranton’s failures to win nomination and the recent death of Nelson Rockefeller. An analysis of the votes that Anderson did win running as a liberal-to-moderate Republican makes it clear that he was never able to break through among voters who were now in the mainstream of the party. This made winning the nomination virtually impossible and changed the face of the fall campaign. Either Carter or Anderson was going to have to unite non-conservatives behind them to win the fall election. If, as expected, Reagan could improve on Goldwater’s 38.5 % of the vote from 1964, a split of the remaining vote would mean a likely Republican victory.

Lack of early money in his campaign was another important lesson from Anderson’s defeat. Although in the end he did raise a respectable amount to fund his GOP race, when that money was raised proved a critical issue. Until early in 1980, the campaign had been a bare-

bones operation. His lack of money colored every decision made in the campaign, from the experience level of the staffers that he could afford to hire, to the ambitiousness of initiatives such as travel, fund-raising, ballot appearances, and direct mail. Early in the campaign, decisions were made based on the campaign's financial condition that proved critical down the road. There was only enough money to build a real field organization in two of his four key states. Aides logically chose the earliest two, and the lack of progress in the others would haunt them. If an independent candidacy started similarly, Anderson would have no credibility.

Other matters in the GOP campaign loomed large as well. The campaign team had to rely on volunteers to get Anderson onto most of the primary ballots, and this reliance failed them in Pennsylvania. Some of the state coordinators that Anderson had running his campaigns were volunteers—not by design, but because this was what his effort could afford. The campaign team decided that it did not want to pay the filing fee of \$1,500 to appear on the South Carolina ballot. Later, when a televised debate was scheduled to take place in the state, Anderson was refused the opportunity to appear because he was not on that ballot. The campaign also lacked the funds to test the direct-mail waters in the last four months of 1979. When his advisors finally gave it another chance after the Iowa debate (only because they were offered a no-money-down deal), they raised a huge amount of money through direct mail. If they had had the money to try this a few months earlier, it could have had a critical effect on his ability to win. By the time he did get the money to compete at the same level as his competition, he was so behind in planning, organization, and staffing, that he was unable to catch up. Such an error could not be repeated.

The final three months of 1979 had proved a critical moment in the Anderson nomination campaign. After episodes of defeat and lack of public interest, aides resigned themselves to a strategy that once the voting had started and more public attention turned to the race, Anderson

would hopefully emerge from the GOP crowd. His aides never thought big or believed in his chances. Until he started doing well, there was never a true sense of urgency in the campaign. They adopted what they felt was the best realistic strategy: keep the ship on course and hope for good things once the voting began. But this was critical time that they could never recapture. Anderson emerged so far behind his rivals that it proved impossible to ever catch up. “I was very chagrined at what I perceived as a lack of willingness to take risks in a situation where risks were inherent in the nature of things,” one aide remembered. “It was very clear to me that, if the thing started to go, that all sorts of potential was there. But it was exceedingly difficult to convince people [in 1979] that this was the case.” While Anderson did enjoy a startling rise in the first few months of 1980, it did not have the base that it needed to build from.

“There wasn’t enough, early enough,” pollster Dick Bennett stated in assessing the Republican campaign. Another commented, “It started too late, too cheap, and was too fractured.” Research director Clifford Brown agrees with these assessments. “By the time the campaign thought it might have a chance of getting the nomination, it was too late to do the things that would have enabled him to get it,” he remembered.²⁴ If Anderson’s independent candidacy did not get off to a better start, it would be fatal.

Anderson’s inability to take advantage of some of his opportunities on television, especially those in front of a national audience, was another lesson from his defeat. The televised Iowa debate had been a breakthrough moment for him. Anderson distinguished himself from the others on the stage that night, and it helped him become known around the nation. During his closing statement he spoke with emotion and intensity. Generally, television is a cool medium and the best performances do not approach the edge that Anderson flirted with that night. In the weeks that followed, however, when he had other opportunities to debate in front of national

audiences, he seemed to cross that line. In the New Hampshire debate, for example, he tried unsuccessfully to duplicate his performance from Des Moines. But he came across the airwaves as being too intense. In Illinois, his opponents ganged up on him and were successful in trying to make him look angry and strident. “What progressively happened during the campaign . . . was that Anderson got more intense in his public speaking, and we needed desperately to reduce the intensity,” aide Robert Walker remembered.²⁵ Conversely, Reagan was glib and folksy in both of those debates, and his performances were helpful parts of his victories in those primaries. For an underdog campaign, Anderson’s opportunities to appear before a national audience were crucial. His ability to take advantage of those opportunities would be vital for success in the fall.

This was also true to some extent in Anderson’s appearances on paid television. Like every campaign in 1980, Anderson and his team believed that its television advertising campaign would be a crucial element in its success. For the primary campaign, he had tried to get David Garth in the fall of 1979, before choosing Robert Sann. Sann had experience and proved a fine choice. He produced ads that were distinctive and of good quality. When money flowed into the campaign unexpectedly in the first three months of 1980, much of it was poured into advertising. In the four key primary states for Anderson, his advertising budget was greater than, on par, or near par with his competition in each instance. Often, it was money that came into the campaign’s coffers in the final few weeks before the voting that paid for this advertising. This meant that Sann, instead of being able to create a layered and sequenced advertising campaign, was often unable to incorporate the necessary element of strategic planning into it. He found that as he bought time on the air late, the most coveted positions on the television schedule were frequently not available. He had to take what had not been purchased. In the end, Anderson’s television advertising did not prove to be a decisive factor. Somewhere between the spots, the

message they contained, the times that were purchased, and the way they were viewed by the voters, they did not resonate as hoped. While paid media had proved to be the difference for many campaigns prior to 1980, for Anderson it did not. In the fall campaign, with David Garth now on board, the importance of an effective paid media campaign was greater than ever.

One of the biggest lessons from Anderson's GOP defeat was the lack of depth in the campaign. Until primary night in Massachusetts, most aides in the campaign had resigned themselves to the idea that he would never be anything more than an outspoken second-tier candidate, liked by the media and ignored by the voters. Anderson and his staff never believed that success would come, nor did they invest sufficiently in the campaign's future. Unlike almost all other presidential contenders, Anderson never went into debt anticipating that spending money early would help him be prepared when public support did come. Furthermore, no real plans were made for the future beyond his four-state strategy, which ended with the Wisconsin primary. Then, the confluence of the success in his direct-mail campaign, the positive attention that he won from the print and electronic media, and his near victories in Massachusetts and Vermont occurred. All of a sudden it was a new campaign, and Anderson was among the GOP front-runners. He was expected to have an effort that could compete. When he and his team had to fight toe-to-toe with Reagan in Illinois, they did not have what was needed. Reagan's team was savvy, experienced, and prepared for this critical contest. Meanwhile, when Anderson got to Illinois, his preparation in the state could not compare. The campaign's unwillingness to think big early finally caught up to it. At this critical moment, organizationally Anderson was trounced and the loss was one from which his nomination campaign did not recover.

Anderson was never able to build a team that had enough depth to match the task at hand. Aides found that running a campaign for president was a vastly complicated and difficult

process. It was full of challenges with creating an organization, building a competent team in the headquarters and in the field, developing workable strategies, and dealing with hundreds of details each day. In the primary period, the team that ran his campaign, especially at the lower levels, could not handle such an enterprise. Anderson had as much trouble with major issues early in the campaign (such as lack of money and coverage), as he did with minor issues later on (such as qualifying for ballots, dealing with increased amounts of donations, scheduling, and organizing early in primary states). “There was a continual problem of things becoming unglued because they were not receiving the right level of attention,” aide Bart Doyle remembered. “During the Republican campaign, I never got a sense that there was a real long-range strategy beyond what was going on today,” aide John Wade added.²⁶

In fact, some staffers believed that Anderson’s abilities and vision of how responsible candidates ought to run for office were completely responsible for his emergence. To aides like Wade, Anderson deserved all of the credit. “There wasn’t one person in the campaign headquarters that brought Anderson . . . [to the point where he could] set up a serious independent challenge to the presidency. Not one person in that office had a single thing to do with it. It was Anderson’s brain and his rhetorical ability on a stage to fire people up. We didn’t do that. We couldn’t keep up with Anderson’s ability. The Republican campaign did not rise to the level of the quality of that spokesperson out on the stump.”²⁷

But the one-man show could only take Anderson so far. It helped him emerge from the crowded field, but by Illinois the shortcomings of the campaign organization finally caught up to it. As an independent, the quality of his management and organization were again going to be major factors in his performance.

One of the elements of his loss in Illinois was the decision by his team to try to downplay

“the Anderson difference” type of campaign he was running. Instead, in this primary where his Republican credentials were considered vital, the decision was made to build the campaign around his background as a party leader and Republican loyalist. In the state where Anderson was best known, the team believed that the case could be made that he was less the maverick that he had been portrayed as in the media, and more a person who had been a staunch Republican for a quarter of a century. If anyone knew the real John Anderson who had backed Republicans from Goldwater to Ford, it would be the voters of his home state. Since it had been theorized that Illinois primary voters were wondering if Anderson was Republican enough, at the time it seemed to make sense to build the campaign around his impressive GOP credentials. This turned out to be a tactical error. It was not possible for Anderson to prove he was Republican enough in a race with Reagan and Bush, two men who had spent the last fifteen years working for the party and its candidates, as well as preaching the conservative gospel. At the same time, the decision to downplay the Anderson difference was a negative. This was the manner that he had been attracting voters, and it was a message that had proved to work for him around the country in the climate of the 1980 election. When he backed off that position, it was a strategic error that hurt his efforts to win the critical primary. It also gave his managers for the independent phase insight on what Anderson’s appeal as an insurgent truly was.

This strategic decision underscored the lack of political expertise that the Anderson team had in the primary period. Only three of his top aides had presidential campaign experience, and the lack of seasoning showed, particularly in Illinois. Reagan’s team approached that primary brilliantly. The strategy against Anderson was to define him substantively, instead of stylistically. Reagan and his surrogates spent the Illinois campaign talking about Anderson’s stances on issues that would disturb Illinois voters. Reagan (and his advertising) spoke about the

fifty-cent gas tax, the ways in which the cuts Anderson had supported in Naperville would affect the voters, and his positions on social issues. The combination of this and the Anderson decision to downplay “the Anderson difference” took the legs out of the campaign. He no longer had the same kind of appeal to voters that he had enjoyed in New England. “When it got down to who is John Anderson,” pollster Dick Bennett remembered, “the Republican voters [in Illinois] said, ‘Well, that’s nice, but I’m not going to vote for him. I don’t want that at this time.’”²⁸

If Anderson had been able to recruit a more experienced and savvy team of advisors, this sort of development might not have happened. In the time that Reagan was defining Anderson, there was almost no reaction from the Anderson team. Anderson was running hundreds of commercials in Illinois, but they were out of step with the campaign that was being run against him. As Reagan traveled the state and talked about how Anderson was going to tax already over-priced gasoline at fifty additional cents per gallon, there were no commercials on Illinois television explaining the 50/50 plan and how it would have no negative financial effect on most Illinoisans. Anderson became the candidate with ideas that were unpalatable to the voters, instead of the candidate who was different, who had new ideas that were good for the voters of Illinois, and who rejected politics-as-usual.

The lack of an experienced team was also a factor in the decision not to actively contest the Connecticut primary. Once Anderson became a front-runner, his team believed that they could continue to pick and choose where they could compete in the GOP race. This was another tactical error. They skipped contesting the Connecticut primary, thinking that since it was not part of their four-state strategy, the loss would be ignored. But the rules changed once Anderson became a front-runner. In spite of what the campaign team thought, the loss in Connecticut was a major one, nearly on the same level to the media and the public as Illinois had been. Then, as

Anderson tried to bring his campaign back to life in Wisconsin, instead it was reeling from back-to-back losses rather than just the single defeat they had envisioned. Furthermore, by ignoring Connecticut, the Anderson team gave Bush the chance to run without active competition in that state and let him get back into the race. When Bush won in Connecticut, it helped energize his campaign in Wisconsin, which took more votes away from Anderson. Bush's revitalized campaign in Wisconsin helped divide the moderate vote between him and Anderson, which in turn helped Reagan win that primary with only 40 percent of the vote.

The inexperience of his team was also clear after his performances in New England. Faced with a new campaign, his aides made several poor strategic decisions. One was their belief that Reagan would be easier to defeat in a one-on-one contest than Bush. When his electoral performances put Anderson into a role of greater prominence in the campaign, his team's decision to focus its energies on knocking Bush out of the race (instead of Reagan) was a mistake. The Anderson campaign team, just like those of the other candidates in 1980, continually underestimated Reagan's effectiveness. This decision by Anderson's team was one that it came to acknowledge as a mistake in the wake of events in Illinois. "Maybe we wished for the wrong thing," national field director Jane Fowler told a staffer late in the GOP phase.²⁹ As a general election candidate, it was clear that Anderson had to have a stronger, more experienced team, which could stand toe-to-toe with those who were managing the major party candidates.

Although Anderson had emerged from the obscurity of northwestern Illinois to become a major factor in the presidential election between the first of the year and the beginning of April, the progress he had made would have little effect as he traveled down the general election road as an independent with heavyweights like Carter and Reagan. This new campaign was different. Unlike in the Republican phase, which he began almost as a complete unknown, Anderson,

despite his non-party status, was now a national figure. The obstacles he faced to winning the GOP nomination would pale in comparison to those he would face as an independent.

* * * * *

After a restful weekend in Florida, Anderson stood before a huge gathering on 24 April at the National Press Club in Washington to make his fourth candidacy announcement in the past year. While his first three announcements had been small occasions, now more than 150 members of the media, a dozen camera crews, and hundreds of supporters filled the ballroom. This was a major news story, at the top of almost every afternoon newspaper in the nation. As a measure of how important this was, *Time* and *Newsweek*, the two leading news magazines in the nation, each chose Anderson to be the cover story for its upcoming edition. They had a combined circulation of nearly 7.5 million. These magazines not only would provide his new campaign with credibility, but they also reached into the higher-income, better-educated, active voting communities that would be his base in this campaign.³⁰ At 21 percent in the polls before his announcement, John Anderson, independent candidate or not, was a force.

In his announcement, Anderson stated that he had “gone back to reconsider the reasons that led me at the very outset” to run for the presidency. “I remain convinced now that our nation is adrift in what Churchill would have called a gathering storm.” He added that the major party candidates had offered no new ideas or plans that were able to meet the current economic, employment, and energy crises. “The major premise of my campaign has been that America must build a new ethic of sacrifice and sharing, of conservation and saving, if we are to begin the process needed to restore a sound economy and maintain a stable democratic society,” he added. “It is a time for vision, not nostalgia. It is a time for honesty and boldness . . . Our nation needs a choice in November. Not just a choice among candidates. I mean a choice of course for the

nation. I want to offer that choice. And I believe the American people will want to respond.”³¹

Anderson also gave some specific details about this new effort, which would be called the “National Unity Campaign.” He said that at that moment, he was announcing only the formation of an exploratory committee for an independent campaign. He stressed that until a series of financial and political questions were answered, he could not make a formal candidacy declaration. This gave him the option of abandoning this race if he found that the systemic obstacles to running could not be overcome. In effect, he was setting up a process he could stop at any time. He also freed his fifty-seven delegates for the Republican convention and distributed an accounting summary of his GOP campaign.³² After an FEC audit in early May, it was determined that \$401,000 in unused matching funds would be returned to the Treasury and the remaining \$713,000 would be transferred to his independent candidacy.³³

During the press conference, Anderson also explained his decision to run as an independent, rather than as a third-party candidate. Although this had important effects on his campaign, he felt that a campaign that might be viewed as a threat to the two-party system would be seen as too radical. Anderson wanted his campaign to be viewed as a temporary aberration to the two-party system, which in this instance had failed to produce acceptable nominees. He announced he would run with no other people on his ticket (besides a vice president and electors) and with no party structure. Throughout the campaign, he would be careful to note that he was not running against the two-party system, but only against the candidates that it had produced. He also made it clear that he would remain a Republican, which was the same thing other candidates in his position had done. “Anderson didn’t want people to think he was a splinter party,” one aide said. “He wanted to be seen as a one-time alternative.”

One of the most important factors in determining how successful this independent

campaign would be was how seriously the media treated it. If Garth and the campaign team could not get the print and electronic media to cover the new Anderson candidacy and treat it as a credible alternative, the campaign would have almost no chance of advancing past also-ran status. The initial television coverage was mixed. Anderson was covered on the networks. His high status in the polls was mentioned, as was his strength among specific voter blocs and the general dissatisfaction with the Carter-Reagan choice. All three network news programs spent at least five minutes of their broadcasts describing his announcement, and it was the lead news item on two of the three. But they were less than enthusiastic about his chances of doing well. “With the odds and legal and financial obstacles stacked against him,” Bob McNamara said on the *CBS Evening News* just after his announcement, “John Anderson is faced with becoming a footnote and not the phenomenon of campaign ’80.” “I don’t think John Anderson is going to be much of a factor” in the race, Bruce Morton told viewers on the same program the next night.³⁴

On the same day as his candidacy declaration, petitions in New Jersey were due to qualify Anderson for his first ballot as an independent. A total of 800 were required, but close to 4,000 were submitted. It was the first step in what would prove to be a long and difficult journey.

As often happens in presidential campaigns, unforeseen events can play a major role. In the case of Anderson, such an event occurred at a most inopportune moment. Just as he was about to bask in the glow of the nationwide publicity from his independent candidacy announcement, events abroad seemed to conspire against him. In this instance, it was the failed Iranian rescue mission late in the evening of his declaration day.

For over five months, the Carter administration’s efforts had failed to win the freedom of the hostages or their transfer to the Tehran government. The White House team had a good understanding of recent history. Impatience was a well-established American trait in a long-

standing dispute, as the war in Vietnam had vividly demonstrated. Voters wanted the Iran situation resolved and, while the situation had helped Carter in the public opinion polls initially, his team was fearful that could reverse. The drafting of a plan for military action against Iran had been in preparation since the hostages first were taken, but Carter had resisted this type of measure. In early April, when President Abolhassan Bani-Sadr had failed to gain control of the hostages from the Islamic radicals as expected, Carter decided to go forward with the proposal.³⁵ It was a bold plan to enter the nation covertly, storm the city with a highly trained force, and physically remove the hostages from captivity.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff drafted the intricate plan. First, eight helicopters would fly from the aircraft carrier Nimitz to a remote site in a desert south of Tehran to meet six C-130 small planes carrying ninety commandos, fuel, and supplies. The next night, trucks purchased in Tehran by American agents would carry the rescue team (who had been hiding in the mountains outside the capital) into the city. This trained force would attack the two buildings where the Americans were being held, overpower the guards, and free the hostages. Next, the commandos and the hostages would be brought to safety in Saudi Arabia, first by the trucks and then by the helicopters and two large planes that would be waiting at an abandoned airstrip near the city.³⁶

Military experts later argued that the plan was too complex and dependent on too many variables to succeed, but Carter was assured by his advisors that the chances for the mission's success were good. But the rescue attempt fell victim to circumstances that doomed it almost from the outset. The carefully constructed plan began to fall apart within moments of the commencement of the raid on 24 April. In fact, it proved to be a tragic comedy of errors. First, three of the eight helicopters planned for the mission became unusable: two developed mechanical problems in the desert, while the other got lost in a sandstorm. Second, the remote

Iranian desert location proved to be less than secluded, as the rescue team had three different encounters with groups of Iranian citizens traveling across the desert. Then, as the force was preparing to evacuate, one of the operational helicopters lost control and collided with one of the C-130 planes. Eight servicemen were killed and several others were badly burned in the crash and explosion that ensued. In a panic, the survivors abandoned the scene, leaving behind the four remaining helicopters and the dead in the flaming wreckage.

Hours later, a visibly shaken Carter reported the details of the event. While the administration had a long list of failures and episodes of incompetence, this was a disaster from which his presidency would never recover. As the details of the botched mission were revealed, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance resigned (he had opposed the mission, had lost a power struggle with National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, and told Carter that he would leave office regardless of the outcome). The media began to speculate about the treatment of the hostages after the militants learned of the plan to rescue them forcibly. “Carter’s rescue mission was a flop before it was even conceptualized,” foreign policy expert Paul Nitze remarked years later.³⁷

For Anderson, the account of the botched mission became the nation’s top story on the day following his announcement. While his new campaign was not ignored, the military debacle in Iran stole much of his thunder. The top story in most of the nation’s newspapers was the rescue story and pushed him down the page. Gone too were 7.5 million copies of *Time* and *Newsweek* with Anderson’s face on the covers. Each decided to run cover stories on the mission.

Despite losing some of the expected coverage, the news from the pollsters remained positive. The Anderson team, concerned about saving resources for the fall, made a decision to not invest in polling for the period following his announcement. Instead, they relied on information gleaned by pollsters who worked for national magazines or polling organizations.

Two major polls had been taken in recent weeks to determine exactly how unsatisfactory the choice of Carter and Reagan was to the American voter were of particular interest to them. One showed that 50 percent felt that both the expected nominees were an “unsatisfactory choice for president,” while a Yankelovich/*Time* poll found the total to be 58 percent. Another survey conducted on 25 April showed that 22 percent of the nation’s voters were supporting Anderson as an independent, while 16 percent said they were still undecided about him.³⁸

More than anything, there was a feeling among observers that the Anderson campaign could not be ignored. While it was difficult to predict what would happen to it, he was a realistic contender. As journalists Jack Germond and Jules Witcover later wrote of this period after his candidacy declaration, the new independent campaign “was treated more seriously by the political community than any of its kind in more than half a century, and with good reason.”³⁹

* * * * *

The results of the first several weeks of the National Unity campaign were mixed for Anderson. The viability of his campaign rested upon his success in this test period, and there was little margin for error. A failure in any important area could have been devastating and he was in a political life-or-death situation. In that respect, he and his team overcame the political obstacles. In each of his public tests, he was successful. But, in some less visible aspects of his campaign, the news was not all good.

In respect to his ballot access situation, the early news was positive for Anderson. In each instance, he petitioned successfully without much difficulty. The campaign team, however, found that this work was a great deal more costly and time consuming than hoped. Frequently, petitioners had to cope with face-to-face rejection and nasty insults. Many of his volunteers found the work demoralizing and were easily discouraged. Access to ballots was also found to be

much harder and complicated than most political work. For example, the campaign team discovered that some states required candidates to submit separate petitions for voters from each distinct congressional district, county, city, or town. In these states, this frustrated the campaign's initial idea of using busy shopping centers, sporting events, concerts, and public parks as places to amass signatures. Some states required that only local petitioners collect the signatures. This complicated the campaign's plans to develop a group of expert petitioners and move them from state to state during the qualification process. The work was also difficult on the candidate. He spent the first several weeks of the independent campaign traveling the country, making speeches, and kicking off the local ballot drives. "It was a very trying thing," Anderson recalled. "It was a long trail of tears going around doing it, and I was the one who had to carry the main burden."⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the campaign team did meet each of the mandated requirements. Anderson had important early tests in Michigan and Massachusetts, and his team poured attention into these two states. There were tough quotas (a minimum of 18,399 and 39,245 signatures, respectively) with little time (a week and a half after his announcement) for Anderson. Thus, political commentators watched these efforts closely. They believed that his ability to mobilize his forces quickly would be indicative of his new team's political skills and would give reporters a sense of his capacity to gain credibility as a third candidate in the race.

Anderson was able to meet the necessary requirements, but in each instance this was only a part of the process of qualification. In Michigan, the team submitted over 62,000 signatures, but this only allowed him to compete in a 5 August primary election. On that day, voters would have the option of either voting in primary elections of the major parties for congressional and local offices, or in a party-qualification election. In the latter, non-major party candidates needed three-tenths of 1 percent of the vote to qualify for the general election ballot.⁴¹ Michigan was

thought to be a particularly important state for Anderson since neither Carter nor Reagan had ever displayed much electoral success there.

In Massachusetts, Jane Fowler led an extraordinary ballot effort. In two weeks, 3,000 volunteers collected over 100,000 signatures.⁴² But, Anderson's petitions were challenged before state officials could certify his spot on the ballot. His opposition in the case was a Massachusetts housewife whose expenses (it was later learned) were being funded by the Democratic National Committee. The challenge was based on the sore-loser statute in the state law that some interpreted to deny candidates who sought the nomination of one party from running in the general election as an independent. There was some debate whether this law applied to presidential candidates in Massachusetts, and this became an important legal test case for Anderson. Similar statutes existed in eight other states (including California), and knocking him off those ballots would have destroyed his campaign. Despite not yet winning official certification in either state, he did cross two important public political hurdles. His successes were reported in-depth across the nation, and these events were considered important victories.

Petitioning did prove to be difficult work, but it also rallied sympathies toward the new independent campaign. As people learned through newspaper and television accounts about what Anderson had to go through just to reach equal ballot status as his major party competition, many citizens felt a strong sense of outrage. To a lot of them, the issue was not whether Anderson should be president, but whether he ought to be allowed to compete. It inspired thousands of people to get involved. Paul Sieracki remembers: "The ballot initiative really juiced people up. It got people focused and gave them a new goal. That brought out some new people and energized other people who stayed behind. In many respects, it reenergized the campaign."⁴³

The ballot qualification procedure provided other benefits. Anderson's success in

petitioning in New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Michigan was national news. Since the networks had concluded that the major-party nomination campaigns had lost much of their news value, the early developments of the independent candidacy drew a great deal of attention. Three weeks after his announcement, CBS News ran a long story examining Anderson's progress in qualifying for ballots, raising money, and attracting crowds to his rallies. It was a very encouraging report. The piece also focused on his status in the polls, noting a survey in the state of Connecticut that had him running tied with Reagan at 32 percent at the top of the race, a California poll that had him 1 percent behind Carter, and a Long Island poll that had him 7 percent behind, at 23 percent.⁴⁴ The Anderson team began to see how ballot and polling progress could give them a tangible measure through which his achievements could be judged.

Although Anderson had made some positive steps in the ballot qualification process, soon after these initial victories he decided to replace Arnold & Porter, the law firm that was handling his legal work. Arnold & Porter was a nationally prominent firm with the clout to bring together firms from across the country to assist Anderson in his legal problems. Since ballot-access legal issues existed throughout the country, being represented by such a prominent firm had benefits. In the weeks that followed Anderson's announcement, the firm assigned partner Alex Bennett to supervise the project. Bennett and a squad of close to a dozen Arnold & Porter lawyers (as well as close to half a dozen others on the campaign's own in-house legal team in the headquarters) began to review the relevant laws, make recommendations about administrative practices, and oversee the ballot work. But the campaign realized that the combination of the hours and Arnold & Porter's expensive billing rate (\$160 per hour) made having one of the nation's best-known law firms representing them was an extravagance that it could not afford.⁴⁵

Around this time, Washington attorney Mitchell Rogovin had a meeting with officials

from the campaign. He was well known to those in the Anderson organization from being an Anderson family friend and a supporter during the GOP phase. He also had many high-profile clients in Washington and had been a prominent local lawyer for the previous two decades. He had helped negotiate the freedom of the prisoners of the Bay of Pigs invasion, had served as chief counsel for Common Cause, the CIA, and the IRS, as well as heading the official inquiry into the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant accident. He had a reputation as an aggressive and skilled lawyer. He offered to take over the legal work for the campaign and gave several important inducements: he would give the work his full personal attention, and his rate (\$95 per hour) would be less than three-fifths of Arnold & Porter's. Rogovin also promised to involve several additional partners from his firm in the work, as well as three associates who had worked as clerks for the U.S. Supreme Court. On 16 May, he took over control of the legal work for ballot access.⁴⁶ It would be a role that he and his team of lawyers would perform brilliantly.

Anderson cleared those initial ballot hurdles, but he still faced other battles. The most important one was his legal test case against early filing requirements in Ohio. By the time of his announcement, the deadline to submit petitions as a non-major-party candidate had already passed in five states. As soon as he declared as an independent, the Anderson team worked quickly to gather signatures necessary to meet the requirements in those states, even though the deadlines had passed. When Anderson turned in his petitions with the requisite signatures and had them rejected by the state, he would have grounds to file his lawsuit. In his Ohio case, Anderson's suit stated that the 20 March filing date was "unreasonably early" and denied his supporters their constitutional right to vote for whom they chose. The complaint asked that the deadline be set aside so that he could appear on the November ballot. Similar cases were prepared in each of the other four states. These five states represented fifty-two electoral votes,

but the Ohio case was the critical one because it was most important to Anderson electorally.

In a bold stroke, advisors devised a plan that could win them tremendous coverage out of these legal suits. Instead of having the campaign's lawyers argue one of the cases, they initially planned to have Anderson do it. As an attorney, he was sufficiently accomplished to argue the matter. The sight of this underdog arguing his own case for fairness was sure to be national news. It would be a rare moment of true political and legal drama that was sure to sway attention and sympathies towards his ballot fight. But despite the potential of this spectacle, the idea was dropped. "We decided in the end that it would be taken as too gimmicky, not as serious and professional," campaign lawyer George Frampton recalled. "It also heightened the risk. If we [the campaign's lawyers] lost in one or two states and won in a bunch of states—that was terrific. But if Anderson went in a courtroom and argued and lost, he would never live that down."⁴⁷ Although the campaign was desperate for support and this kind of attention, this proved to be a greater risk than they were willing to take.

Anderson was also successful in raising money in this early period. To reach his goal of between \$12 and \$15 million by November, he needed to average \$450,000 per week in contributions. The fiscal realities of an independent campaign meant that failure to raise close to that sum was certain to cripple his race. But the first few weeks of this campaign proved fruitful. Although Anderson's fund-raising totals had decreased in the middle of April from his March pace as he sat on the sidelines making a decision about running as an independent, contributions picked up dramatically once he officially entered the race. He raised \$500,000 in the first two weeks of the new campaign and more than \$1.2 million in the four weeks after his candidacy declaration.⁴⁸ The political community regarded this as a victory for him. While he was slightly behind his intended total, most analysts agreed that his receipt of \$50,000 per day was a

promising sign. The financial support that he received was thought to be an important gauge in his quest for legitimacy. The willingness of supporters to donate reinforces their feelings for a candidate. By contributing, they proved their support for Anderson was real.

The majority of Anderson's fund-raising came through a direct-mail campaign similar to the one he had used during the primary season. By direct-mail standards, he continued to raise money at an astounding clip. "Anderson has been a fund-raising success story unlike any other since Common Cause ten years ago," Roger Craver told a reporter late in April. "It took Common Cause twenty weeks to build a list of 100,000 contributors," he added. "Anderson will reach the 100,000 mark . . . within ten weeks."⁴⁹

The direct-mail specialists at Craver, Mathews, Smith, & Company used their extensive library of progressive mailing lists to try to increase financial support for Anderson. Rob Smith told one reporter that one "liberal-oriented" direct-mail letter brought in \$300,000 in donations in May and added 25,000 new contributors to Anderson's list. Craver, Mathews, Smith, & Company were not only seeking new donors but also channeled some efforts towards reapproaching those who had contributed during his GOP campaign. This proved an excellent strategy: 85 percent of those who were reapproached gave either equal or increased contributions to the independent phase. By early June, Tom Mathews was stating publicly that he expected the list of donors to grow to over 300,000 by the end of the campaign. He told one reporter that he expected Anderson to collect \$8 million through mail solicitations, and another \$4 million through special events, as well as newspaper and television appeals.⁵⁰

The direct-mail strategy was to search for new donors after Anderson's announcement as an independent. "We spent three or four months prospecting for new names as aggressively as we could," aide Ed Coyle remembered, "the strategy being that when it was over, that you would

have a file of names of donors. Then, you would mine those names in the fall.” This was a major strategic and financial decision. The direct-mail campaign was now very different from what it had been in the GOP phase. Previously, the FEC had matched receipts up to \$250 from the mailings. Anderson was getting good returns on his mailings and then getting the receipts doubled in public funds. Once he announced as an independent, however, those matching funds ceased. In the independent phase, his mailings had to be profitable on their own. The decision to seek new donors had the potential to be costly and possibly lose money. While the experts were confident that once found, donors would give again and again, the cost of finding them had the potential to be more costly than the initial contributions received. Still, it was the same kind of aggressive decision by his direct-mail specialists that had brought his campaign out of the financial doldrums in February and March. They knew that for an independent campaign to succeed financially, some risks had to be taken. Early in May, the first group of 500,000 letters (from a total of 2,250,000 that would be sent out during the month) was mailed.⁵¹

Aides in the finance office also developed strategies to maximize the impact that big donors could have. They created a National Finance Council for Anderson, where wealthy supporters were asked to recruit ten new \$1,000 donors. Since individuals were limited to making a \$1,000 contribution in the independent phase, it was theorized that their most effective assistance would be to find other supporters for Anderson among their family, circle of friends, and business associates. Within two months, the campaign had nearly seventy members on the council. To motivate them, the campaign held a closed-door session for them one day during the summer in Chicago. At the event, the contributors were stroked by campaign aides, received updates on the ballot access situation from Mitchell Rogovin, met David Garth (who showed samples of upcoming Anderson television spots), and rubbed shoulders with the candidate.⁵²

A pair of court rulings during this period also buoyed Anderson's financial situation. One allowed him to mail political literature at a reduced postal rate. In 1978, an amended postal law had given the major parties the right to send third-class mail at the rate of 3.1 cents per piece, rather than the normal 8.4 cents bulk rate or the regular 15 cent first-class rate. After Congress acted to restrict the subsidy to the major parties, the New York Civil Liberties Union filed suit on behalf of several of the excluded groups (including the Libertarian Party and the Peace and Freedom Party), charging postal-rate discrimination. On 6 June, a district court ruled that this provision was unconstitutional under the First Amendment and equal protection clauses. He ordered that the special rate be extended to all presidential candidates, including Anderson. This was an important victory for Anderson, who was expected to save up to \$500,000 as a result.⁵³ A second ruling from the FEC concerned the \$1,000 contribution limit. It was ruled that Anderson's nomination campaign and his independent campaign would be treated as two separate candidacies for the ceiling on donations. Thus, individuals who had made contributions to the Republican phase could do so again (up to the \$1,000 limit), instead of that limit being in force for the two phases combined.

Perhaps the most important victory that came out of the early phase of the independent campaign was a symbolic triumph. As Anderson traveled into the uncharted waters of a non-party presidential campaign, regardless of his status in the polls, he wondered if his new campaign would be taken seriously in the media. If writers, editorialists, and television news producers decided to ignore this new campaign, that decision alone would end his chances of running a credible effort. "He's going to be made or broken in many ways," David Garth told two reporters at the time, "by how the press interprets the reality of the candidacy." In 1976, the media had not taken Eugene McCarthy's independent campaign seriously, and it had crippled

that effort. “That was absolutely a concern,” press secretary Mike Rosenbaum recalled.⁵⁴

Fortunately for Anderson, the McCarthy precedent was not the case for his campaign. When reports about the presidential campaign appeared following his announcement in April, it was done so in the context of Anderson as one of three candidates, rather than neither of two major candidates or two candidates and a spoiler. The writers at the *Washington Post*, for example, felt he was a major candidate and deserved coverage. “He was potentially a very significant player in the politics of 1980,” columnist David Broder said when asked about the decision to cover Anderson. Part of that equation seemed to be that there was an expectation that this would be a different kind of campaign, as it had been in the GOP phase. “It was a good story. He was just an interesting guy,” David Wood of the *Washington Star* remembered. “It was constantly good copy, and that’s what really drives a lot of the coverage, especially in the beginning.” These feelings spread through the political community. Republican pollster Robert Teeter reflected a commonly held view when questioned about Anderson. “All the signs say it won’t work, but you can’t write it off,” he told a pair of syndicated columnists in April.⁵⁵

Some of the credit for this should go to Garth. He spent much of his time in the early months of the campaign courting reporters and media elites. He was well known in the political community and had clout among those who were considered decision makers in the group. Garth was able to call influential columnists, producers of network news programs, and editors of national newspapers and magazines to discuss the Anderson campaign. Often, he would invite them to lunch at his Fifth Avenue office in Manhattan and get them into discussions about how Anderson was doing in the race or whether he ought to get coverage afforded a major-party candidate. The concept was that if Garth could get Jules Witcover and Jack Germond to take Anderson seriously and write about him in their column as a credible candidate, it would

influence other reporters to do so as well. His efforts were generally successful, especially in the early months of the independent candidacy. Throughout May and June, he helped get influential members of the media to take Anderson seriously and look at him as a major candidate. While he was less successful in getting them to believe Anderson had a real chance of victory, the coverage seemed to be moving in the right direction.

Anderson's good fortune in the early weeks of his independent candidacy continued when the expected major-party nominees had troubles on the campaign trail during the late spring. Although both races appeared decided, Carter and Reagan had found it impossible to knock out their competition in late April and early May. As a result, each was forced to remain attentive to their primary races and continue to battle during a time they had initially hoped to use for rest and general election preparation. After impressive victories in Connecticut and Pennsylvania, both George Bush and Ted Kennedy resuscitated their campaigns.

The revival of the Kennedy campaign late in the spring was a particularly important development for Anderson. His campaign gave a voice to the same anti-Carter feelings among liberals and moderates that would be needed to fuel Anderson's independent candidacy. Kennedy's reemergence as a contender was unexpected by the political community. The Carter team, having seen how an appeasing Gerald Ford had almost been defeated for the nomination in 1976 against Reagan, went after Kennedy with everything it had. After Carter defeated Kennedy in Iowa by 28%, it appeared the Kennedy campaign was over early in 1980. By February, his campaign was low on money, all of his staffers went off payroll, and party VIP's started dropping hints to reporters that Kennedy should withdraw. Unlike his brothers, Kennedy's campaign was operating under new campaign finance laws, which did not allow him to rely on a few wealthy, dedicated supporters. Yet, after Kennedy lost primary after primary in early March,

he kept plugging away resolutely. He refused to become discouraged or complain, like the spoiled man of privilege that many of those covering him assumed him to be. After a few months on the campaign trail, he found his voice as a populist fighting for the ignored Americans who had been left behind as Carter pursued his agenda that rarely addressed liberal concerns.⁵⁶

In the week that preceded the concurrent Democratic Party primaries in New York and Connecticut, Kennedy's perseverance paid off, and there was a dramatic shift in the Democratic race (aided by a botched vote on a United Nations Security Council resolution on Israel). White House pollster Pat Caddell found that Kennedy and the questions about his character were disappearing as the key factor in the race and the doubts about Carter were reemerging. All of a sudden, an anti-Carter protest vote was hitting full force. Caddell's polling showed a 13 percent shift in New York towards Kennedy in a two-day period.⁵⁷ Kennedy went on to win in New York and several other primaries. Just as aides of Anderson would note, Kennedy's managers observed that "the less he thought he could win, the better candidate he was." The victories revived interest and financial support for his effort. Kennedy kept hammering away at Carter on the campaign trail about the American economic situation, the energy crisis, the Rose Garden strategy, and the hostage situation. "No president should be reelected because he happened to be standing there when his foreign policy collapsed around him," Kennedy said one day on the campaign trail.⁵⁸ He also made the case of why liberals could not support Carter, either in the primaries or the fall. Kennedy reminded liberals that Carter had never made the issues that were critical to them (such as national health insurance, the ERA, or the Humphrey-Hawkins Full Employment Act) a priority. These criticisms gave voice to those feelings among voters. This not only hurt Carter, but it also helped Anderson. At the heart of a winning Anderson coalition was the support of unhappy liberals. Anderson also needed the nation's economic problems to push

other disenchanted voters in his direction. In an indirect way, Carter's inability to resolve the hostage matter also helped Anderson because it hurt Carter's chances of reelection. If Anderson could pass Carter in the polls prior to Labor Day, this would be one way to cut off the wasted-vote and spoiler arguments that were traditionally used against non-major-party candidates.

This was also a period of the campaign where Reagan had faced increasing scrutiny and negative press attention. While reports of verbal errors and misstatements of facts had been a part of his coverage since his announcement, as it became more certain that he was going to be the Republican nominee, this attention increased. In Reagan's basic speech, he used a series of anecdotes and vignettes as factual underpinnings of the issues he raised. He would catalogue episodes for his audiences that demonstrated a malfunctioning bureaucracy or governmental waste. As members of the media began to research some of these statements, it was learned that many of the anecdotes that he had been using for years were exaggerated, inaccurate, or misleading. Reporters began listing the factual errors that regularly came up in Reagan's speeches. One day in April, *CBS Evening News* devoted six of its twenty-two minute broadcast to this issue. In the weeks that followed that report, similar pieces appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*, *Time*, and *Newsweek*, as well as on NBC News and again on CBS News. Early in the primaries, his careless statements had not had much of an impact, but as the general election approached, there now appeared to be different rules. Even minor irregularities were being fit into the context of the bumbling candidate out of control and raised questions about his grasp on policy matters critical to a potential president. Reporters continued to raise doubts about Reagan's propensity to delegate details to staff in a way that seemed imprudent. They also renewed questions about Reagan's vitality and his ability to withstand the rigors of the office. They noted that his campaign schedules frequently had midday periods that were denoted as

“staff time,” which were euphemistic references to the candidate’s afternoon nap.⁵⁹

The official securing of the major-party nominations were stalled, but the considerable support Anderson received in the remaining Republican primaries as a candidate who had dropped out of the race gave him another boost of legitimacy. In contests such as the District of Columbia (27 percent on 6 May), Indiana (10 percent on 6 May), Maryland (10 percent on 13 May), Michigan (8 percent on 20 May), Oregon (10 percent on 20 May), Idaho (10 percent on 27 May), and New Mexico (12 percent on 3 June), Anderson received a surprisingly large part of the vote given his independent status. Most striking was the 3 June closed Republican primary in California. On that day, nearly 350,000 GOP voters, close to 14 percent, went to the polls in support of a candidate who had already dropped out of the race. After his announcement that he would run as an independent, he won almost 600,000 votes. Political commentators also noted what Kennedy voters said that day in exit polls: that 34 percent of them intended to support Anderson if Kennedy did not win the nomination and that 40 percent of them said that they would refuse to vote for Carter in the fall.⁶⁰ The fact that so many voters would go to the polls and cast their ballot for a candidate who had repudiated the race made a strong statement about the public’s dissatisfaction with not just Carter and Reagan but both.

The popular support that Anderson was winning in the polls was the most important indicator of the success of his campaign. The conventional wisdom suggested that if he could either pass the crucial 30 percent mark or overtake one of his major-party rivals in the polls, he would be in a position where the voters would view his victory as possible. This would also preempt the wasted-vote argument and the belief that he was a spoiler in the race. Surveys showed his support in the 20-to-22-percent range nationally on his announcement day, and the prospect of shoring up his existing base and raising his support by 8 to 10 percent over four

months on the surface did not appear to be extraordinarily difficult since so many voters did not know much about him.

Yet, to make that jump in support proved a major challenge to Anderson and his team. Much of the steam that had helped him emerge from the bottom of the GOP field for the voters in New England had been lost. He experienced the same pattern of press coverage as that of other previously obscure presidential candidates. The cycle had gone from “he has no chance” in mid-1979 to “he’s a special candidate” in the first two months of 1980. When he had his electoral successes in New England, it became “he may be the next big thing.” But by late spring, the message of the coverage had become “let’s consider him dispassionately.” These stages of coverage were similar to the ones experienced by George McGovern in 1972 and Carter in 1976. How the print and electronic media had initially portrayed Anderson had been a major factor in his success, but that coverage was changing. The first few weeks of the independent phase hinted strongly that the media viewed his candidacy as a serious one, but the overwhelmingly positive coverage that characterized his early attention had vanished. He was now one of the three candidates and less the media darling.

An example of this was the coverage of the “Christian Nation” story. On 25 March, the *Detroit News* broke this story. Anderson was questioned about it in news conferences that included national reporters in the days that followed. Even though the Wisconsin primary was a week away, and Anderson was the center of attention in that contest, the story never drew any national attention. A few days after the initial report, it was learned that Anderson had reintroduced the bill on two other occasions, negating his initial explanation that it had been the mistake of an inexperienced freshman legislator. Still, the story drew no national attention. But once the independent campaign began in earnest, the story got a second wind. On 27 April, the

Washington Post gave it national circulation for the first time. The next day, the *New York Times* followed with a long article about it and the way some of Anderson's positions on issues had changed over his career. Within a week, the *CBS Evening News* was giving national television coverage to the story of Anderson's conversion from orthodox conservative to moderate. Bob McNamara did a long story that touched on issues such as conflicts with Anderson in his House district that led to the Don Lyon challenge, the "Christian Nation" story, his inability to handle criticism, and his abandonment of support for nuclear power after the Three Mile Island incident. The "Christian Nation" story was one that followed Anderson for several weeks. He would be asked about it several times each day, and his answers rarely satisfied skeptical reporters. While he was quick to disavow the bill, he failed to explain why he had introduced it in the first place. "I can't really ascribe motives to that," he told one questioner in North Carolina in early May.⁶¹ It was clear in the first few weeks of the independent campaign that the approach that members of the media were taking towards the candidate had changed.

Anderson's campaign team had concern about the next series of polls taken after his announcement. His advisors were concerned that the surveys taken directly after his candidacy declaration might show his support to have been temporarily overblown, similar to what had occurred in the primary season after his New England triumphs. Then, they feared, with the fanfare of the announcement having died down, the media would interpret a drop in support as a sign of the campaign losing momentum. There seemed to be some sense to this concern: Anderson's announcement was an exciting new development, and some voter sympathies might have temporarily swayed toward him as an underdog. Thus, when an ABC News/Harris poll was to be released in mid-May, his team of advisors was prepared for a slight drop in support. The results, however, surprised them. The survey showed that Anderson's support had actually risen

slightly to 23 percent, with Reagan leading the race at 39 percent and Carter second with 33 percent based on interviews with voters over the final five days of April. A Yankelovich/*Time* magazine poll conducted two weeks later also found Anderson with 23 percent support nationally. This poll found Anderson doing well among independents (in first place with 35 percent), voters in the Northeast (in second place with 30 percent), and voters in the West (in second place with 30 percent). It also showed him doing poorly in the South and Midwest, and among blue-collar workers, older voters, and minorities. Of greatest concern was that 59 percent of those polled still were unconvinced that Anderson was a serious candidate.⁶²

Other polling information was met with great interest among the Anderson inner-circle. In one mid-May Gallup survey, the highly favorable ratings for Carter (23 percent) and Reagan (20 percent) were the lowest that organization had ever recorded for major party nominees. In another survey, less than 35 percent of Carter's and Reagan's own supporters felt "strongly" about either of them. A second part of the national ABC News/Harris survey, however, drew the greatest interest. In it, the pollster asked how voters would cast their ballots if on Election Day the recent surveys had showed Anderson to have a "reasonable chance" for victory. In that poll, Anderson closed the gap, winning 29 percent, compared to Reagan's 35 percent and Carter's 31 percent. This survey showed Anderson performing particularly well in the East (38 percent) and large northern states (36 percent). These polls drew a lot of attention. More pollsters and members of the press began taking the Anderson campaign more seriously. In his examination of his data, Lou Harris wrote, "Anderson now possesses the potential for being the first independent to win the White House in American history."⁶³ The normally cautious *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* supported Harris' conclusion in the middle of May. It stated, "Anderson's campaign has the potential to be the most successful presidential candidacy ever mounted

outside the two-party system.” At the time, John Sears wrote a newspaper article that speculated upon how Anderson could win an Electoral College victory and noted that “there is no sign that either Carter or Reagan has any plan for approaching the millions of voters who presently don’t want either of them.”⁶⁴

Although the rise in support in the polls and the serious nature of the media coverage appeared to be excellent news, some of the aides in the campaign later came to see this as a turning point in Anderson’s presidential race. As with many underdogs before and after 1980, a feeling began to grow that as his status in the race changed, Anderson was no longer the same candidate. Some of those close to him began to see him act differently from his quirky, underdog days. From the start of his campaign in 1978, it had been a given that he would never win the presidency. This was something that Anderson stated plainly to those close to him. William Bradford, who managed the campaign for four months in 1979 and who had known Anderson for nearly thirty years, remembered: “John was running as a Republican to make a statement. It was never to win anything. Up until the time he decided to be an independent, it was clear that he wasn’t going to win. He knew it and said it repeatedly.”⁶⁵

But some aides felt the combination of running as a general-election candidate and the support of almost one-quarter of the electorate in the polls was beginning to affect Anderson. At one time, his low numbers in the polls had given him a liberating freedom to say whatever he wanted. As an underdog, he was risking nothing and he shot from the hip. As Robert Sann, his media consultant during the GOP phase, noted, “Since he expected to lose, he was willing to let it all hang out.” But once the independent campaign had started and it became clear that the candidacy was a serious one, some aides began to see that liberating freedom disappear. In May, when former press secretary Mark Bisnow brought his concerns about this to Anderson directly,

the candidate told him, “We can’t go back to the *Doonesbury* days. Things are different now. We’re in the big time.” Many insiders felt it too. “It was fatal to him when he began to run as if he could win,” direct-mail specialist Tom Mathews states. “The notion occurred to him that he might get elected. And instead of keeping his identity as a rebel . . . the message changed to conventional politics.” Another aide remembered, “When he started to conceive of the idea that he might actually be a viable presidential candidate, he tightened up.” One insider said that when “he began to take himself seriously and instead of just being himself and continuing to kind of go on and see if he could ride this wave, in very, very subtle ways, the campaign changed.”⁶⁶

* * * * *

The first few weeks of Anderson’s independent campaign saw a few impressive developments. The political community knew that he was preoccupied with instituting a new management team and overcoming the structural obstacles to a non-major-party candidacy, and that this new phase of the campaign would require some weeks for retooling. Anderson seemed to be doing well on public matters (such as media attention, fund-raising, and ballot access). But some danger signs were emerging beneath the surface that did not bode well for his long-term success. Although it was clear that the public side of his campaign took precedence, these developments behind the scenes had potentially harmful consequences.

One important problem was the strategic decision by the new management team to move the independent phase along slowly at first in order to increase gradually to a climax in November. His managers thought that it would be best initially to concentrate their resources on individual political battles, rather than on the public campaign to win over the voters. This suited Anderson, who was careful to point out that he was “exploring” an independent candidacy until he became convinced that the political obstacles could be overcome. The campaign strategy that

materialized in the immediate post-announcement period was straightforward: it aimed to have the candidate travel around the country to open ballot drives, to raise money, and purposefully not to make major national news while doing so. The plan was for Anderson to lay low and first deal with the myriad of political problems that came with an independent candidacy. Then, once those obstacles were conquered, his team would refocus on the public side of a campaign. On the heels of Ted Kennedy's nomination campaign, which many observers believed had started before he was organized and had his campaign themes developed, the decision was made for Anderson to proceed cautiously.

“There was a conscious effort not to make news until we finished the ballot access,” Southern states regional coordinator John Wade recalled. The concept was to “rein him in a bit” from the Republican period, press aide Vicky Golden Markell remembered. “Let’s bring him back a little bit into the middle of the road and get him on the ballot . . . and we’ll be better,” was how she summarized the strategy.⁶⁷ This manifested itself in a number of ways on the campaign trail. Anderson did not meet with the national press corps as a group from the day of his initial independent announcement until early July.⁶⁸ The number of new major speeches that he delivered was reduced to one or two per week in the months of May and June.⁶⁹ The Anderson team turned down opportunities that most observers would have viewed as excellent chances to spread his message. For example, his managers declined an invitation from Barbara Walters for a seven-minute interview on ABC’s *World News Tonight* soon after his announcement. They also turned down requests for interviews with several leading newspapers. Their concern was to avoid over-saturating audiences with Anderson at this moment. “He had far more people wanting interviews and wanting to put him on TV shows and stuff like that than he had time to do,” press secretary Mike Rosenbaum remembered. “Demand was much greater than supply at that

point.”⁷⁰ Moreover, in his appearances on the road, Anderson’s message to the voters seemed to be built around the constraints and biases in the electoral system against him, rather than the “Anderson difference” or the new ideas that had brought him to this level of success.

This strategy was communicated to political opinion makers across the country by Anderson’s inner circle of advisors. Media consultant David Garth told the *Village Voice* in June, “We have low-keyed the campaign for the purpose of using him to get those ballot access states.” Later, he stated in the *New York Times*, “We’re trying to build this thing very slowly.” Campaign manager Michael MacLeod reiterated this plan. He admitted that they would “pay a price in visibility” at first, but it was “the only way to be a credible alternative in the fall.” The strategy was also outlined in an interview the pair did for a front-page article in the *Wall Street Journal* in July. But while one could argue in favor of such a theory, in practice it was a major error and achieved the result that Anderson needed most to avoid. Instead of concentrating his resources on solving his political problems, he created more confusion about himself and his candidacy. The public soon saw a different John Anderson: one who was more conventional, less bold, and changed from his primary campaign. The campaign team became so preoccupied with the fear of overexposing Anderson and peaking too early that the basic strategic necessities of the independent candidacy were lost. This strategy flew in the face of what every poll was saying—that voters wanted more information about Anderson before they would support him and that his own current support was soft. Opinion surveys showed that he needed to prove to the skeptical public how serious his independent campaign was. Instead, he was kept under wraps and there was a huge drop in attention. In May, the amount of coverage given him by the *CBS Evening News* dropped in half from what it had been in April (a month that he had been off the road for over two weeks). John Stacks of *Time* magazine noted that he “spent the summer

making as few waves as possible on issues and policies . . . but by taking a deliberately low-key approach, Anderson vanished from the front pages.”⁷¹ Without a party behind him or equitable financial resources, free media was his only method of mass communication during this period.

Some members of the Anderson team defend this strategy. In the “hectic” first weeks of the campaign, aide Michael Jones states, they simply were “not ready” to compete. There had been a large turnover in staff and changes in the structure of the campaign. Time was needed to prepare. “I think,” Jones states, “it’s appropriate to not be out in public until the strategies and actual building blocks for moving forward are in place. I think during that period, part of the thought process was to really look at what are the building blocks and materials you have to work with to go forward.” Furthermore, his team could not look to any other campaigns with similarities to Anderson’s as an example. It was a concept that challenged everyone in the campaign, even Garth. “There is no blueprint for this one,” he explained to a reporter in May.⁷²

Many observers felt this strategy was ill advised for other reasons. First, Anderson’s managers knew that although only 50 percent of the country was able to formulate an opinion of him by the time of his announcement, 22 percent of the electorate was supporting him. It seemed that if he could increase national awareness of his candidacy, his positions on the issues, and get his message out, he would have an excellent chance to increase that support. Therefore, it was of critical importance for Anderson to press forward. The tactic being used by the campaign, however, did not achieve this goal. Second, influential members of the Anderson team had failed to grasp the concept that an untraditional candidate like Anderson, in this volatile presidential-election year, was not likely to be elected in a strictly traditional fashion. They did not seem to understand that he could not run in the same manner as the Republican or Democratic nominee. He was different in so many basic ways, and his candidacy was so untraditional, that his path to

victory was certain not to be the standard one. “The underpinning of his candidacy,” wrote two influential political columnists “was the belief among his supporters that he was truly different—more honest, more independent, more candid, [and] less fettered by convention than Reagan or Carter.” Yet, during a day of appearances in Idaho in May in front of a large group of prominent reporters, Anderson did not even mention the cornerstone of his campaign, his 50/50 plan, in any of his speeches. It came up when he was questioned about it, but its absence from Anderson’s prepared remarks was interpreted to say a lot.⁷³ While he had not changed his position on any issue, this new approach made him seem like a different candidate from the one of the GOP phase. The adoption of this “act like the big boys” strategy obscured this key tenet of his success.

This strategy of consciously building up the campaign in the months leading to the election might have been a good formula for a major-party nominee, but it was not for Anderson. While a Democratic or Republican candidate could survive a period of passivity late in the spring knowing that the focus would eventually return to him in the fall, the same was not true of Anderson. In his case, in the months leading up to Labor Day, he could be written out of the 1980 election script. Summer posed a major dilemma for the Anderson team. Without money, institutional backing, or a network-televised convention, his level of public support in the presummer months was the only thing keeping him in the news and as a viable candidate. Anderson and the circumstances of this campaign were unique and he needed to give the electorate a clearly defined reason to support him.

Another problem that Anderson faced in the early months of his independent candidacy was that the ballot issue came to dominate the entire effort in the ten weeks that followed his announcement. “There was an obsession with that over other things,” press secretary Mike Rosenbaum recalled. Several important decisions were reached as a result. The most important

of these was the unanimous belief among his major advisors that Anderson had to make every effort to qualify for each ballot in the country. “We were afraid that if we didn’t make it on all of the ballots, we wouldn’t look like a credible candidate,” campaign manager Michael MacLeod remembered. “The feeling was that anything less would be a real blow to our legitimacy.” While publicly they kept expectations to a lower total, within the campaign getting on all fifty-one ballots was a critical hurdle to cross. Although they would be at the mercy of judges in many states to qualify, aide Clifford Brown remembered, “It was always felt that it could be done.”⁷⁴

While in many states an independent campaign would make little or no effort during the fall, it was believed that Anderson’s appearance on the ballot in every jurisdiction (just like the major party nominees) would help prove his importance as a candidate. “The premise was to portray him as a fully credible candidate,” one aide later said, “and a fully credible candidate for the presidency of the United States should be on the ballot in every state.”

Furthermore, it was theorized that by qualifying for each ballot one at a time as his petitions were certified, it would create a sense of momentum. Thus, meeting the onerous procedure in early states (such as Oklahoma and West Virginia), even if he had no intention of competing there in the fall, was expected to help him later in the summer as he tried to qualify in states like New York and Pennsylvania, which were electorally important to him. Yet, history did not support his team’s assumption. George Wallace had missed qualification for one ballot in 1968 without it adversely affecting his campaign. Theodore Roosevelt, Henry Wallace, and Robert LaFollette also did not qualify for every ballot. But Anderson’s team was insistent about trying to appear everywhere. It was a strategy that the candidate agreed with. Anderson recalled, “I got swept along on the tide of enthusiasm for the general concept that we were going to be a national candidate in every sense of the word. To do that, you had to be on the ballot.”⁷⁵

It was a strategic decision that was also made in spite of advice from Anderson's legal counsel. Anderson's lawyers believed that they could do well for the candidate in court, but they did not feel that the legal victories and petition work necessary to reach the fifty-one ballot goal was attainable. "I thought it was a really, really long shot," Anderson lawyer George Frampton recalled. "The idea that we'd get him on every ballot was not impossible, but it just seemed like a real long shot. To have five or six or seven state laws declared unconstitutional in sixty days—that wasn't something you want to promise a client you could do."⁷⁶

This decision affected how Anderson was scheduled during this period. For most of the ten weeks that followed his announcement, he traveled the country opening ballot drives in states and courting the local press. While his team was shunning national coverage, it aggressively pursued local newspaper and television coverage to get volunteer petitioners for his ballot drives. "It was considered much more important to get him on local television than the national," Rosenbaum states. It also affected the content in his campaign appearances. "The emphasis in speeches prepared for Anderson would be on topics of interest mainly in the local areas which he was visiting," aide Mark Bisnow noted. This attention would serve as "a lightning rod" (as one aide put it) to get supporters to work on the petition drives, as well as to get others to sign petitions. The feeling on the part of the Anderson inner circle was that if they were going to commit to pursuing a fifty-state ballot strategy, part of that had to involve the candidate being in those key states with difficult qualification procedures to conduct rallies. "The local people put on a lot of pressure" to get Anderson to come to their states, Brown recalled. "Given the Pennsylvania debacle, which had sunk deeply into the psyche of the whole campaign," most of those requests were granted.⁷⁷ Thus, Anderson spent time in states like Idaho, Oklahoma, Texas, West Virginia, and North Carolina in the early weeks of the independent campaign.

The lack of attention to matters of policy was a change that reporters noticed in the first several weeks of the independent campaign. One *Christian Science Monitor* editorial in mid-May was typical. “What is bothersome at the moment is that the Anderson campaign has had to become so preoccupied with the political mechanics of placing the candidate on the November ballot that issues get lost,” it said.⁷⁸

When the new campaign was in its planning stages, Anderson had spoken about running an issues-driven type of campaign. He initially did not want to run a traditional, road-show type of campaign. But his aides were against this, and soon Anderson came to believe that such a campaign might not work within the context of a non-major-party candidacy. Although he wanted to run this race his way and follow his vision of how candidates ought to seek public office, that vision was soon tempered with some political realities. An independent campaign was itself unusual, but not running the traditional way made it appear even more extreme. There were also some practical factors. Such an unusual campaign, he came to believe, might not win the coverage necessary to keep it alive. Anderson defended the change in his thinking:

You had to get out on the road. You had to try to have a daily press conference. You had to try to show that you had the manifestations and trappings of a nationwide political campaign. And you couldn't do that hunkered down like Henry Thoreau in a cabin in the woods. . . . You had to get down off the lofty platform of idealism that I had mounted maybe when I suggested that we were going to make it simply a campaign of ideas. You still had to communicate those ideas and the format is to get on television, the format is to have press conferences, or to break into newsprint.⁷⁹

Once the independent campaign began in earnest, Anderson's appearances had all the hallmarks of a traditional candidate seeking the presidency. Unlike many previous non-major-party

candidacies, Anderson ran with the manners, deportment, and style of a major-party candidate.

These appearances in support of his petitioning had both positive and negative ramifications for Anderson's effort. His travel had the desired effect with respect to promoting the local ballot-access drives. Appearances by the candidate were frequently well attended, helped energize the efforts being made in a state as well as attracting media attention there, and were an effective means of getting the necessary signatures and volunteers for his petitions. The trips, however, devoured precious campaign dollars in a period when he was hoping to save resources. It also fueled concern that Anderson, already facing a campaign where it was unlikely that he would reach financial parity with his major-party rivals, might be spreading his resources too thinly. In addition, the appearances provided those covering him with evidence of his recent move towards a more neutral agenda. Aide Mark Bisnow noted that the new campaign team "did not want Anderson staking out new positions or addressing, more than necessary, unpopular topics." Others on the campaign staff saw the same thing. "There was a conscious decision," aide Robert Walker remembered, "to be more cautious and not push some of the hot button issues out there." It was during these appearances that the number of reporters on the trail with Anderson began to drop and the coverage of the campaign began to sour. "I think we were hurt by failing to talk more energetically and forthrightly about the issues in the period of May and June when we were still engaged in the ballot access drives," Walker recalled.⁸⁰

This was a strategy that came directly from those running the campaign. Traveling press secretary Mike Rosenbaum had clear marching orders from the campaign headquarters. He recalled: "Keep him out of trouble so he doesn't endanger any support he might have. . . They didn't want [Anderson] to delineate himself so clearly on some subject that it could alienate potential signers of petitions. I don't think they retreated, as I recall, from any of his previous

positions, but I don't think they were looking to stake out different political positions on new issues. Rather, it was just sort of to run principle-wise on what he had been saying up until then. And focus on the mechanics of getting on the ballot.”⁸¹

Another problem that developed was the new philosophical focus of Anderson's campaign speeches. All too often on the campaign trail he would devote the majority of his time to two issues. One was his political situation and the inequities of running a campaign outside the traditional system. The other was listing a litany of faults he found in the major-party nominees. The aforementioned appearance in Idaho was typical: he spoke very little in his speech about issues but a great deal about how poorly both Carter and Reagan would do if either won in November. While the records of his opponents merited criticism, building a campaign around the poor quality of his major-party rivals was not the way an independent candidate was going to be elected. For Anderson to win, he had to prove that he was the best candidate and give voters a reason to vote for him. If the campaign became strictly a referendum on the Carter presidency, Anderson stood little chance of winning. But his efforts to make the case to voters that he was the best of the three candidates was ineffective. “The core of the Anderson candidacy right now is that he is neither Jimmy Carter nor Ronald Reagan,” concluded one popular syndicated column, written after seeing Anderson on a campaign swing in May.⁸²

Polls showed the Anderson independent candidacy failing to take advantage of the unprecedented degree of dissatisfaction with the major-party nominees and becoming the least of three prospective evils. One asked voters which candidate they were “personally interested in or excited about.” Only 11 percent of those polled named Reagan, while only 9 percent cited Carter and 6 percent cited Anderson. Another pollster's results to this question were 12 percent Reagan, 10 percent Anderson, and 6 percent Carter. Allegiances for his rivals were weak, and Anderson

had to make believers of soft supporters and grab a hold of undecided voters. The Gallup poll showed that of those who were supporting Anderson, 57 percent described their choice as being more against the two major-party candidates than it was for him. Pollsters continued to show Anderson running weakly among several voter groups: blacks (17 percent), farmers (12 percent), elderly (16 percent), and non-high school graduates (14 percent).⁸³ Yet his campaign never seemed to address this issue in this crucial period. Anderson's campaign was slowly evolving into a protest candidacy, or one that represented the limited "none-of-the-above" sentiment.

It was becoming clear that Anderson and his strategists had learned little from the mistakes Carter had made in the first five months of 1980. The print and electronic media had once viewed Carter as being above politics in this campaign. When the crises in Iran and Afghanistan arose late in 1979, opinion makers took a respectful attitude toward a president grappling with major foreign policy dilemmas. The White House team, keenly aware of how this had become an opportunity for Carter to prove himself, did all that it could to enhance the "president-in-crisis" image. His political aides, concerned about the Kennedy challenge, saw how the crises had fundamentally changed the political climate in the country and used them as an opportunity to withdraw from ordinary campaigning that would have put him on the same level as his competition. But slowly over the next several months, the media learned that Carter was playing politics much more than his advisors had led the public to believe. "If I debate," one insider later revealed him to have said in a political-strategy meeting in December about whether to attend a scheduled candidate forum, "I'll go out to Iowa a president and come back a candidate." It was then reported in early February that he had been making twenty to forty calls a night to supporters in Iowa, New Hampshire, and Maine. Carter even found time to phone Democrats who were sick or had ailing family members to offer his personal prayers. Despite his

vow to forego political appearances until the hostage crisis was resolved, Carter squeezed in a televised appearance on *Meet the Press* in January—timed to air one day before the voters in Iowa went to the precinct caucuses. It became well known that Carter (learning a lesson from something that Ford had failed to do effectively against Reagan in the spring of 1976) was accelerating pork barrel projects in states with early electoral contests. In his televised press conferences, he would regularly launch into attacks on Kennedy, calling his criticisms inaccurate and adding that his statements about the hostage situation had “not helped our country.”⁸⁴

Later, after Carter had been beaten in the New York and Connecticut primaries, he faced an important showdown in Wisconsin. A potential loss would have the hallmarks of Carter’s slide at the end of the 1976 primaries. Moreover, the Carter team had front-loaded much of its spending, hoping for a quick kill of Kennedy, and it now had some financial problems. Days before the Wisconsin primary, the administration announced it was eliminating planned cuts in dairy price supports. Then, on the morning of the voting, Carter called a 7:15 a.m. press conference that was aired live on all of the networks prior to the polls opening. In it, he hailed that a “positive step” had been reached in the hostage crisis and implied that the hostages’ release was imminent. The good news helped Carter at the polls that day, as the large bloc of undecided voters cast ballots for him (by 48 percent to 28 percent over Kennedy, according to one poll), and he won a big victory. But in the weeks that followed, the crisis appeared no closer to resolution. When all of these episodes were documented together, and it was noted that this was the first early-morning press conference of his presidency, Carter was interpreted as playing politics much more than he wanted voters to know. Reporters wrote articles about this episode and other instances of political manipulation in the White House. “That 7 a.m. thing crossed the line,” one aide admitted. Pat Caddell later called it “a terrible mistake.”⁸⁵

When the White House team saw the need to make a few political appearances before the final round of primaries, Carter announced that the Iranian situation had become “more manageable” and set aside his presidential duties to campaign in Ohio. Yet, he still refused to debate Kennedy before the final round of primaries. Prominent political journalists recognized these trends. More and more over the course of the spring, it was reported that Carter’s “above-the-battle” posture had been replaced by outright manipulation of his office and the media. The coverage of Carter became more and more negative. If there had been any doubt prior to this, it was clear now that Carter had become just another politician. It undermined what were his greatest strengths: that although his record in office was lackluster, the public believed that he was a good and moral man who was honest. In many ways, it was those same qualities that voters saw in Anderson that had given him his popularity. Carter’s example was an important one for the Anderson team: the more Anderson was judged to have changed and the less forthright he appeared to be, the more negatively he would be portrayed.

In respect to management, the Anderson independent campaign also had a cautious start. The difficult task of competing as an independent was further complicated by the necessity of running an organization at the same time the management team was trying to build one. None of the departments in the campaign made the transition from Republican to independent without some major staff turnover. In many instances in the local state campaigns, there was no continuity in staffing from one phase to the other. Tom Wartowski, whose role in the campaign changed from being Anderson’s personal aide and driver on the road in the GOP phase to becoming director of the Illinois ballot access drive in the independent phase, remembered, “My sense was that we were virtually starting over.”⁸⁶

This also caused some problems. While the strategic circumstances of the race suggested

that this was a moment to be aggressively pushing the campaign and its agenda forward so that it would be included as part of a three-way race in the fall, the new Anderson team was not yet ready to do so. “The people who were calling the shots,” aide Kirk Walder remembered, “were just feeling their way through.” George Lehner, Anderson’s traveling speechwriter, was new to the campaign and observed “lots of creative chaos in May and June trying to put the whole campaign together.” One unlikely paradox was typical of the cautious atmosphere in the campaign. On one hand, the Anderson team was very aggressive on the issue of ballot inclusion, pouring all of its resources into assuring that their candidate would qualify in every possible state. “We felt we had to do everything in our power to stand head-to-head, up against the two major-party candidates, in every state, in every forum,” campaign manager Michael MacLeod remembered of this time. Yet on the matter of how aggressive Anderson would be on the stump as he traveled the country in full view of the national media, the team adopted a much more docile, less offensive approach. The strategy was to avoid making news during this part of the campaign. The mixed message said a lot about problems beneath the surface in the independent campaign. “We were breaking new ground,” states Walder, an assistant to MacLeod in the independent phase. “It was a total uncertainty about what you do.” Anderson’s new traveling press secretary, Mike Rosenbaum, had a similar first impression. “I thought the campaign was kind of searching for itself,” he remembered.⁸⁷

While Anderson’s advisors seemed off the mark in some of their strategic decisions, this was a time when many of those workers who were hired to join the independent campaign were getting started in their positions and learning about the candidate. The massive staff overhaul and buildup was a step backwards initially, but it was expected that the new team’s experience and professionalism would pay dividends down the road. However, once the campaign team had

settled in, another setback occurred. During the stifling summer in Washington DC, the air conditioning unit failed in the building that housed Anderson's headquarters near Union Station. While the campaign team tried to move forward, a heat wave hit the city, and work slowed considerably. "It was literally 120 degrees in there," Clifford Brown remembered. Although promises were made that the unit would be fixed, the problem and the unseasonable weather dragged on for days. Three members of the staff collapsed from the heat and had to be hospitalized.⁸⁸ Eventually, with the unit still not repaired, a move was made to new building, overlooking the water in Georgetown. Between delays in waiting for the repair, the search for new offices, the packing and moving, the creation of a floor plan for the new space, and the relocation across the city, valuable time was lost. It was another unfortunate development, beyond the control of the candidate or his staff.

Another problem was the almost inevitable clash between those who had been brought into the campaign to add professionalism for the independent phase with those who had remained on the staff from the Republican period. It was a development repeated from many past campaigns that surprised few observers. The newcomers viewed the campaign that they found as mistake-prone, unsophisticated, and inexperienced. They wanted to distance the independent candidacy from the old *Doonesbury* image. To them, the GOP campaign had lost every primary and lacked a winner's image. The new independent team wanted a fresh start with no negative baggage. The holdovers viewed the newcomers as arrogant, egotistical, and disrespectful of the job they had done turning Anderson from an unknown into a national political figure. An atmosphere in which their significant accomplishments were dismissed upset them. "A lot of these guys came on board, had no clue what we had done, had nothing to do with how we had gotten to that point," one holdover states. "And then they walked in and told us *we* didn't know

what we were doing.” Other holdovers saw it less confrontationally. “There was the attitude ‘You people have done O.K. given what you had to work with, but now we’re really going to shape this thing up,’” he remembered.

The first few weeks of the new campaign was difficult for many of those that remained from the Republican phase. “The early period was kind of a reign of terror,” stated one holdover. As a new campaign team and structure were created, decisions were made to demote (or, in a few instances, dismiss) some of those who remained from the Republican phase. “There was a big effort to start muscling people aside,” another aide remembered. It caused some resentment to build up. “They treated a lot of the old staff like crap,” one staffer noted. Garth’s gruff manner initially made him a target for dislike. “He fit the stereotype of the brash, New York know-it-all, and he just ran roughshod over everything,” one staffer who left in the spring stated. Garth’s deputy Zev Furst got a similar reaction. Another issue that caused bad feelings was the new team’s free-spending manner. “The old people had survived on a shoestring for so long,” an aide remembered. “We were writing on the backs of envelopes to save a few pennies, making due with nothing. Then, all of a sudden, the new group comes in making higher salaries, demanding offices, and desks, and computers. And getting them.”

Few of those who remained in the campaign from the GOP phase expected it to stay the same, but as the changes came, old staffers bristled at them. Once the campaign had been small and intimate, and aides felt that they were involved in determining its direction. Now the campaign was much larger, and the decision-making process had a layer of management that frequently shut them out. Moreover, since many of these aides had joined the Anderson team when he was an unknown, they felt more ownership of this campaign than most political enterprises. As the new campaign began to evolve, they often took things personally. Paul

Sieracki, who became a regional coordinator for ten (mostly Midwestern) states, remembered: “Especially in the Republican campaign, the lack of professionalism was made up for by the fervor of the people who were involved. When Garth came on . . . some people resented it. Some people saw others being shunted to the side. People looked at Mike MacLeod and thought he’d sort of been relegated. Mike was a perfect gentleman about it, but I think people felt for him.”⁸⁹

When the new group began to experience similar problems that their predecessors had, the rivalry and dislike began to build. “There was a perception that people were slighted,” states aide Bart Doyle, who opted for a position in the field away from the drama of the headquarters. For others, like press aide Vicky Golden Markell, who had been in the campaign since August 1979, this atmosphere was a reason to quit. “I felt like I birthed this baby. You’ve killed yourself working and given up all sorts of things,” she explained. “And then there was this new echelon, a new tier being brought in that did not have any credentials for knowing more than I did about what we were doing.”⁹⁰

Once the process of establishing roles and creating a basic campaign structure was completed, these feelings began to subside. The newcomers felt it less necessary to flex their muscles, and the Republican-phase staffers began to feel less slighted. The rumors that the new leadership group would come in and “slash and burn” the old regime, as one aide described it, had proved unfounded. Campaign manager Michael MacLeod proved adept at getting those in the campaign to work together. Still, some tensions did remain beneath the surface.

Another strategic concern was that the new campaign had yet to prove that it would be fertile ground for anything new that could catch the public’s imagination. If Anderson hoped to run as the candidate of ideas, he would have to move beyond the limited agenda of his campaign’s nomination phase. In the new campaign’s first two months, however, he did very

little in this regard. In fact, the majority of his time was spent avoiding new issues. Opinion makers and editorialists were sensitive to whether Anderson, with his success in the polls, might not stake out courageous positions in the same way he had once done. One *New York Times* editorial was typical: “Our present question concerns not the legitimacy of Mr. Anderson’s candidacy, nor its effect on the other candidates, but whether he will keep on expressing his convictions. It is easy to sound Lincoln-esque when the polls read ‘*’ . . . the test of Mr. Anderson’s candidacy and his independence will be whether he keeps on talking about sacrifices as he gropes for thirty [percent], forty [percent], or more.”⁹¹

Inside the campaign’s hierarchy, aides had been wrestling with this concept long before the *New York Times* commented about it. The campaign team knew that voters looked at Anderson differently now that he was running outside the two-party system than they had when he was an iconoclastic Republican. There was a danger to being bold when he did not have the GOP label to fall back on. It created an odd dilemma. Anderson had to be a daring, edgy candidate, yet at the same time, reassure voters who needed confidence in his ability work within the existing political framework. Aide Clifford Brown states: “We always had this tension. We had to do something to justify the campaign. And yet, it couldn’t be so much different that you lose your credibility and your style. You become too much of a risk for the voter to take. After all, you’re asking the voter to do something very, very different just by voting for Anderson. And so, we couldn’t look so different that we lost a sense of being for real.”⁹²

In the initial weeks of the independent campaign, the new ideas did not emerge. Anderson’s remarks continued to touch upon themes such as national cooperation and avoiding quick-fix solutions, but few found anything fresh. In the independent phase’s first month, he introduced what was interpreted to be only one new idea. It was a plan to reduce unemployment

among teenagers by offering them jobs at 85 percent of the minimum wage during their training period.⁹³ It did not make much impact and was a stand that he had favored for several years.

Beyond the area of new-issues development, those closely watching the independent campaign observed several examples in which the candidate was perceived to be playing it safe. It was known that Anderson had a strong opposition to excessive state severance taxes on oil, natural gas, and coal. He felt that it was not in the national interest to allow the production states to apply a hefty tax in the transfer of their resources within the United States. He felt that these kinds of taxes divided the nation, created higher prices around the country, and decreased incentive for further domestic production. On 1 May, he made a speech about this topic in an address before 1,000 Michigan business executives at the Detroit Economic Club.⁹⁴ But later in the month when he made appearances in states that the curb on severance taxes would affect adversely, mention of his opposition to them disappeared from his remarks.

In late May, Anderson addressed members of the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars in Texas. It was part of Memorial Day observances at a cemetery near Dallas. While many anticipated this speech to be an opportunity for him to display “the Anderson difference,” his remarks proved quite ordinary and included promises of more aid to military veterans. His speech also focused on the neglect of Vietnam veterans, promising them more than “just symbolic gestures.” As he made promises like most candidates seeking higher office that day, he said little that would distinguish his candidacy from the others in the race. The speech met with an “unenthusiastic” reaction, one reporter noted.⁹⁵

Early in June, a similar episode occurred when Anderson spoke at a meeting of the U.S. Conference of Mayors in Seattle. In the speech, he renewed his call for a youth wage differential and proposed a new \$8 billion federal aid program to help rebuild cities and fund mass-transit

projects. In emphasizing the need to help urban America, he told the mayors, “Simply stated, you need more money.”⁹⁶ To those who had become accustomed to his message of harsh medicine and sacrifice, he sounded like most politicians did when they run for office.

As reporters began to assess the new independent campaign, other incidents provided evidence for the belief that the campaign was changing. On 7 May, Anderson had given an address in New York to the Conference for the Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations. He had a strong pro-Israel record in the House and had received a great deal of popular and financial support from the American Jewish community during his campaign. In one national poll of this voter group conducted by Lou Harris in April, Anderson was leading with 56 percent of the vote, compared to Carter (23 percent) and Reagan (19 percent). Each of his opponents had problems among these voters. Reagan was a supporter of Israel, but his social conservatism and his ties to the fundamentalist Christian Moral Majority scared many Jewish voters. Since Carter had angered leaders in the Jewish community frequently during his term, this voter group had doubts about him as well. Thus, these voters would be a focal point in a successful Anderson campaign scenario, particularly in states that had a high population of Jews, such as New York, New Jersey, California, and Pennsylvania. In a meeting with an assemblage of power brokers who represented thirty-four of the most influential Jewish organizations in America, Anderson gave an effusive, over-the-top speech in support of Israel and its causes. He stated:

I believe in Israel, her people, her achievements, their importance to the United States in moral and strategic terms, and, even I am not ashamed to say in these secular times, in religious terms. . . Unlike the incumbent administration, I would not fear to label Israel as a friend and ally. I would not fear to work with her openly and explicitly. . . We should take advantage of Israel’s strategic and technical experience in the area, her intelligence

information, and her facilities for use in an emergency. We should take pride in her support and dependability . . . [and] as president, I would not deal with the P.L.O. unless it repudiated terrorism, explicitly recognized Israel's right to exist, and accepted U.N. resolution 242, and even then I would proceed with caution.”⁹⁷

While the speech was intended to show Anderson's concern for the Israeli cause and differentiate himself from his rivals on this issue, it was not what the media had come to expect from him. “His was the single most pro-Israel speech of the 1980 campaign . . . [it] was, in effect, an attempt to pander to Jewish leaders,” *Time* magazine's John Stacks later wrote. Like others, Stacks began to see a different Anderson from what he had come to expect from the primaries. “The fact was that Anderson, the candidate who would be different, who would be above politics, was going to grub votes like any other candidate,” he wrote.⁹⁸

Those inside and outside of the campaign noticed these developments. “There was a bit of loss of innocence, as far as people were concerned. There wasn't that pure mission that a lot of people had perceived it to be,” remembered press aide Bill O'Donnell, who worked closely with reporters covering the campaign. “The purity was not gone, but it was discolored.”⁹⁹

Part of this came as a consequence of Anderson's decision to upgrade his political team. During the Republican primaries, his aides had done very little work to pursue constituency strategies or to target interest groups. For the most part, the strategy had been for Anderson to present himself as being different from his Republican opposition and to hope to win support from GOP voters who liked his style and his positions, as well as those who might be willing to cross over into the Republican column. Topics for his speeches in the GOP phase were often picked based on what his aides felt might best keep the attention of that particular audience or what Anderson felt like talking about. In many ways, it was not a strategy at all. The independent

campaign, however, was different. His advisors now had a much more strategic, planned approach. Garth was accustomed to building support for his candidates by carefully targeting blocs of voters and interest groups. For Anderson, the American-Jewish community was one of his main targets. They were significant in number, often influential in their communities, had resources to help him fund his campaign, and had no affection for either of the major-party candidates. “The political team,” director of policy planning Alton Frye later said, “had a strong inclination to put John into an iron-clad posture on the pro-Israeli side. . . They were calculating that that’s where the advantage was in the campaign.”¹⁰⁰ But this was not what the media had come to expect from Anderson. Once they began to feel that he had started playing politics, the reporting community began to look at him differently. It was clear that the print and electronic media would not have taken an independent campaign seriously if it had not been upgraded in professionalism from earlier in the year; yet when they began to see the basic manifestations of the professional leadership they demanded, the media balked.

These subtle differences in the Anderson campaign were noticed by both the Reagan and Carter campaigns. Part of their strategies against Anderson became to portray him as a much different man from what the voters had been told earlier in the year by the media. In June, Pat Caddell wrote a strategy memorandum that included a large section on Anderson. One part started: “I am convinced that Anderson is vulnerable even more on his character than on his record. He is trying to suggest that he is more righteous, more holy, than other politicians—that he is not a politician. Yet I suspect he is highly vulnerable on the charge of opportunism—of pandering. The Mideast is only one example.”¹⁰¹

The road show was another problem for Anderson. While no one expected him to be on the same level as his major-party rivals in organization at this early juncture in the campaign, his

team had to demonstrate a level of basic competency. The media knew that the lower levels of Anderson's campaign staff were filled with volunteers and inexperienced workers who would grow into their jobs. Yet the team often found it difficult to meet even these low expectations. Throughout the late spring, some of Anderson's appearances made him look like a rank amateur compared to his competition. Consider, for example, one typical evening in June for each of the candidates. Nearly two months into the independent campaign, this particular night gave proof of the inferiority of the Anderson organization. On that evening, Carter and the White House press corps were in Rome meeting with Italian government leaders; Reagan was in New York at a banquet for 1,500 people, each of whom had paid \$200 to see him speak; and Anderson was in a living room in Philadelphia at a fund-raiser which attracted forty-six people and raised \$6,000.¹⁰² In the world of presidential politics, this was not the kind of comparison that gave credence to Anderson's claim that he should be considered an equal contender for the nation's top office.

Some departments in the campaign could not function at a high level once the announcement took place. One was the research division. As the campaign moved into a new phase, the function of this division changed dramatically. In the GOP period, the research division consisted of a part-time director, a full-time assistant, and a few volunteers. Its output in the early months of 1980 included an occasional position paper (which came often through the congressional staff), some speeches, and a little political and opposition research. It also had a more-than-adequate response function, where newspapers and magazine writers could get background information on the candidate and his positions. Those who traveled with Anderson did nearly all of the daily speech preparation, as his remarks were often general and covered his basic positions as determined by what the interests of the audience would be. For example, to student groups, Anderson might speak of his positions on nuclear power, civil rights,

reinstitution of the peacetime draft, and gun control, as well as his positions on topics important to all Americans such as the economy, the energy crisis, and the Carter presidency. If he were speaking to a group that contained mostly women, his speech would touch on his positions on the ERA, abortion, as well as other issues he felt would be relevant to them.

But once the campaign turned independent, this approach changed. Since the campaign would be facing a new level of scrutiny, it was no longer considered acceptable to handle matters so casually. Thus, the research division changed in form and function. In time, it had three directors and close to three dozen members. Speeches would no longer be pieced together on the road—they would be crafted in the headquarters, thought through carefully, researched, and fact-checked. Anderson's limited agenda of the GOP campaign was expanded—with more emphasis given to foreign policy, labor issues, and the environment. More efforts were made to create position papers and do political research. It was a transition that took several weeks, as staffers had to be hired and responsibilities delineated. The months of May and June proved not particularly productive. Not only was the department failing to keep up with the expectations of new ideas and creative pronouncements, but the material it produced often fell flat. It created skepticism among reporters about the way Anderson's approach to the campaign had changed.

The tone and amount of coverage that Anderson received in the late spring was mixed. The candidate and his team were focused on ballot issues and organizational matters. Winning coverage was not emphasized during this period, and the amount of attention declined. The coverage that Anderson did receive was often negative. In one *NBC Nightly News* piece, Bob Jamieson took an unkindly look at his record. "The more you know about John B. Anderson, the more confused you become about just what he is," it began. It went on to compare how the "liberal smart set" had fallen in love with him but might be less inclined to support him in the

fall once it learned of the details of his record. “Is John Anderson, as he argues, a changed politician, or has the politician changed because of opportunity?” Jamieson asked.¹⁰³ While this coverage was not what the campaign wanted at that moment, there did seem to be a greater issue. The campaign team (particularly Garth) had succeeded in convincing the network news producers, newspaper editors, and columnists of the bigger matter—that this was a three-way race. Although the coverage that Anderson was receiving was not equal to that of his major-party rivals, it was indicative of a serious candidate for the presidency. Anderson’s coverage by the end of May was within the context of being one of three candidates, rather than neither of two, or of having two real candidates and a spoiler. It had been a huge hurdle to cross.

* * * * *

The campaign team had initially envisioned that it would need a period of four to six weeks after the April announcement to gauge whether a new independent candidacy could meet with a standard of success sufficient to continue in the race. Anderson called this his political threshold. But predictably, the results by the beginning of June continued to be mixed: the independent campaign remained caught between a series of public successes and behind-the-scenes problems. Although it had passed the initial public tests of raising the money to run a competitive campaign and meeting the ballot access requirements, the strategic and substantive failures that continued made these something of a hollow victory. By the beginning of June, Anderson had been unable to put either the political concerns or their early organizational problems behind him. As a result, this period late in the spring took on a greater importance than had previously been anticipated.

Organizationally, the Anderson campaign continued to experience problems on the road with the candidate. Many criticisms about the Anderson campaign during this period grew

directly out of specific incidents on the campaign trail. One memorable event was a breakfast meeting with local labor leaders in Pittsburgh in mid-June. The Anderson team had championed this appearance as the beginning of a larger effort to reach out to blue-collar voters and into more traditional Democratic constituencies. His advisors arranged a lavish meal in an elegantly decorated conference room. When the time for the breakfast began, however, none of the twenty leaders Anderson was expected to meet with arrived. A television crew recorded the lonely vigil, as only three people eventually showed up: a low-level teamster official and two employees of a government job placement agency. Each was acting as a substitute for leaders who did not attend.¹⁰⁴ The large group of print and electronic reporters present was left to guess whether Anderson had been intentionally snubbed or had simply been a victim of incompetent staff work. Later, the answer came to light: the local campaign office, for reasons that were unclear, had assigned some teenage volunteers to make the contact with these leaders. “They had young girls calling up these steel men and asking them to attend,” one of Anderson’s advisors incredulously told one reporter. “No wonder it was botched.”¹⁰⁵ To the candidate’s embarrassment, this was the second mistake of that morning. Earlier that day, Anderson and reporters covering him had arisen near dawn to take part in a popular campaign ritual: greeting steel workers on their way to work. Upon arriving at the plant gate, however, they found only a handful of workers beginning their shift at that chosen time. The media was soon wondering which was worse: the campaign advisor’s inability to find a place in Pittsburgh to greet laborers, or the reluctance of those whom Anderson did meet to be greeted by him.

That night the scenes from Pittsburgh were broadcast into living rooms across the country. Reporter Ann Compton described Anderson on ABC as “embarrassed and growing more angry by the moment.” She elaborated on the poor turnout at the plant gate and the snub

from labor leaders: “This is not just a case of weak advance work embarrassing Anderson; it was a chronic problem for an independent campaign. No experienced political organization is there to set up the contacts Anderson needs with such important voting blocs as labor.” In assessing Anderson’s position in the race, she was even and realistic in her conclusions: “The opinion polls may show Anderson running almost even with President Carter, but his campaign here in key industrial states shows the harsh reality. An independent candidacy does indeed mean no help at all from any political establishment.”¹⁰⁶

The team’s problems and the television coverage of them were not limited to this one episode. Another time in June, CBS News reported how one hundred people had gone to a luncheon to hear Anderson speak, but he was in the wrong city. In the same month, on a trip to San Francisco, campaign officials arranged for a dance revue to entertain an audience of four hundred at a fund-raiser. The performance, however, was totally inappropriate for a political appearance by a presidential candidate. In it, the troupe performed an odd group of dances, many suggesting either sexual gestures or violence, to a stunned crowd of well-dressed, middle-aged San Franciscans. When Anderson took the podium shortly afterwards, he stumbled through an explanation and apology to his supporters, each of whom had paid \$125 to hear him speak. The next evening the scene was replayed on ABC’s *World News Tonight*. Compton said, “Last night John Anderson and his staff got an embarrassing lesson in campaign advance work. At a high priced fund-raiser, the local organizers served up a San Francisco stage show that had the guests and the candidate blushing.” She went on to talk about the problems Anderson was having without a party or money, and with ballots, court challenges, and strategy.¹⁰⁷

Almost nine weeks into its independent phase, reporters were soon writing about how the campaign team had been unable to capture the outpouring of interest in Anderson throughout the

nation. Network television reporters described other problems he was having on the road in detail: giving long and uninspired speeches, repeating the limited agenda of his GOP phase, and expressing doubts about the philosophical direction of the campaign. One long network news examination of the campaign noted how the polls were showing that “a lot of people haven’t heard his message.” It continued, “Two months after Anderson began his independent campaign, almost half the voters say they still know little about him.” Another story looked at how he had invested in a larger and more experienced team to improve its organizational effectiveness. It concluded, “Some observers believe the campaign organization, often in disarray, isn’t ready to share the load.”¹⁰⁸

The justifications that was frequently used to explain the poor organizational performance was the preoccupation with the ballot qualification process. In that respect, few could argue that by June the Anderson team was getting the job done organizationally and preventing crises before they arose. The organizational aspects of Anderson’s fifty-one different ballot drives were huge hurdles for him to cross. When he had announced his intention to run as an independent, he lost most of the campaign leadership that had been in place to manage his Republican state nomination campaigns. Almost overnight, Michael MacLeod, Ed Coyle and their deputies had to choose people to be the local coordinators for his petition drives. In the DC headquarters, specific planning, budgeting, and crisis management plans had to be made to oversee these operations. Those who remained from the GOP phase remembered how earlier in the year it had been learned that Anderson was on the verge of failing to qualify for the Pennsylvania primary ballot in time to prevent it, but could not. While this had caused minimal embarrassment for him in February, his team knew that if he were to try and fail for any state ballot in his independent campaign, it would be national news. Just a few failures in states where

Anderson was expected to compete with his major-party rivals could have ended his campaign.

There were many chances for a misstep in this area, but organizationally the Anderson team dealt effectively with every problem before it became a major one. The ballot process in Maryland was a good example. It was one of the states where the petition deadline of 3 March had passed prior to Anderson's announcement. In order to qualify for the ballot, the independent team first had to collect in excess of the 55,000 required signatures and then win the legal case against the early filing deadline. The signature gathering process met with considerable resistance in the state. There were problems with harassment of petitioners, confusion over the missed deadline, and resistance from state officials in this heavily Democratic state. In addition, some political espionage appeared to be taking place. False quotations about the petition drive appeared in the media, an interloper started an altercation during an organizational meeting (the story was then leaked to local reporters), and the campaign headquarters was burglarized under unusual circumstances. After the last event, CBS News speculated that the robbers may have been there to steal Anderson's petitions, but found only photocopies. Bart Doyle was brought into the state in June with less than a month remaining before the petitions were due. Doyle had experience in petition drives from his work prior to this campaign and was used as a crisis manager in this instance. He helped organize rallies in Maryland and an appearance by Anderson, dealt with the police officials who did not want to grant permits for rallies, and made intricate plans to file the signatures. Rules required that Anderson deliver the petitions to each of the twenty-four county seats on the same day, and it was a complicated process to plan from the Baltimore headquarters. Fearing that something might go wrong, Doyle decided to file a day early.¹⁰⁹ On 8 July, petitions with over 88,000 signatures were delivered to election officials across the state. Decisive action and good leadership from within the campaign organization had

averted a crisis before one ever developed. Similar problems occurred in the petition drive in South Carolina, but were taken care of before news of them reached the public or the media.

One of the most successful aspects of the effort had been the campaign team's ability to develop successful petitioners, many almost overnight. While few had any petitioning experience when they began this work, "after two weeks of indoctrination, they became experts," Mark Youngholm noted.¹¹⁰ The Anderson team developed close to three dozen expert petitioners, who would move from state to state in small groups helping to add professionalism and expertise to the local efforts. They would give direction on when and how to petition, and what kinds of appeals worked best with voters on the street. As they weaved their way through fifty-one different sets of rules concerning the number of signatures needed and how, where, and who could collect them, as well as a checkerboard of deadlines across the country, they put together an impressive record.

It was sometimes done against every imaginable obstacle. Already facing a huge task in a short period of time, they encountered weather as a factor. Across the eastern half of the country, the summer of 1980 was particularly hot. In Oklahoma, volunteers faced seventeen consecutive days of temperatures over one hundred degrees. Petitioners faced similar obstacles in states such as Louisiana and Missouri. "It made it really difficult to collect signatures because there was no one out and around," aide John Engber remembered. In Missouri, the state coordinator used more than 3,000 volunteers to seek out would-be petition signers to complete the task.¹¹¹

There were other obstacles. In Alaska, a small crew had to contend with Anderson's sponsorship of the unpopular Alaska Lands Act, an anathema to most citizens of that state. While petitioning could be demoralizing work, in Alaska it proved potentially harmful physically. "I wasn't sure whether I was going to get on the ballot or hung," petitioner Joe McAteer told a

colleague. “To mention Anderson’s name, nine times out of ten, you were considered to be swearing at somebody.” Nonetheless, Anderson filed the largest number of signatures ever collected for a presidential candidate. To do so, nearly 100 volunteers gathered petitions in some unlikely places, including some north of the arctic circle that had to be flown in.¹¹² Yet in the end, as the team overcame each qualification hurdle including Alaska, they put together an outstanding string of victories on the ballot trail.

In many ways, these traveling-ballot experts were responsible for some of the campaign’s most impressive early successes. In state after state, they would arrive with two or three weeks to go before a deadline and get the job done. These petitioners had what one person called “a gunslinger’s mentality:” go in, kick some tail, and then move on. “It was brutal work,” recalled Midwest regional coordinator Paul Sieracki, who had ten “vagabonds” working for him in his region doing petitioning. “It was not pretty work, but it was vital to the campaign. Their reward for qualifying in one state was to move on to another,” he recalled.¹¹³

Nowhere was this clearer than in the team’s effort to qualify in West Virginia. The rules for qualification in that state were particularly difficult. Anderson needed 7,508 signatures, with some significant stipulations. First, only registered West Virginia voters could be used for petitioning. In order to do so, they had to appear before the local board of elections and get credentials. Workers assigned from the national headquarters could assist and help organize, but a certified in-state petitioner had to be present. Second, those who signed petitions for Anderson disqualified themselves from participating in the upcoming state primary election. In this strongly partisan Democratic state, primary elections were frequently tantamount to general election victory. While many voters were sympathetic to Anderson and his right to be on the ballot, often they did not want to give up their primary ballot. It was a crime to sign petitions for

a non-major-party candidate and then to vote in the partisan primary. Third, and most important, all signatures needed to be collected by magisterial district, an archaic political subdivision within the state that few knew about.

“West Virginia was a particularly hard state,” regional coordinator John Wade remembered. The campaign team assigned several of its top petitioners to supervise work there. At first, qualification seemed achievable. “I remember two of us sat in a hotel room in West Virginia the first night, reading to each other the provisions of the ballot access law,” aide Mark Youngholm states. “It seemed doable to a couple of people who had organized things before, until you go to find these magisterial districts and they essentially don’t exist. . . There’s no maps of them. There are no lists of what is included in a magisterial district and what is not.”¹¹⁴

As the clock ticked toward the deadline, election officials were unable to outline what constituted a magisterial district, even in the vaguest detail. This designation had not been used in decades, and no one was even remotely familiar with it. This left the ballot team stymied. The campaign’s lawyers joined in a lawsuit against the provision that had already been filed by some minor parties attempting to qualify, but there was no way to tell if that suit would be successful before the petitions were due. Eventually, maps of the magisterial districts in one part of the city of Charleston were located. The campaign team then got petitioners with credentials from approximately eight different magisterial districts together in one location, so that when someone who was willing to sign was located, they could be brought to the right petitioner after it was determined which magisterial district they lived in. Each petition signer had to be advised that they were giving up their right to vote in the upcoming primary by signing for Anderson. The local team created specific literature for this to ease the process.

While some progress was made in the Charleston area, the total that was due was a long

way off. Anderson appeared in the state three times to help create interest, but gains were slow. So Youngholm and his crew devised an alternate strategy. They theorized that independent voters might be the best targets for their petitions, because they would have less interest in the upcoming partisan primary. Although West Virginia had only a fraction of registered independents, without the magisterial district maps outside of the Charleston, they had to go after them. The campaign team purchased a voter list of independents and went through the painstaking process of gathering individual phone numbers for each independent voter in the state. The plan was to telephone each of them individually, ask if they would sign, and then make an appointment for the correct petitioner to go to their home.

By now, the West Virginia ballot effort had aroused national media attention. Articles appeared in newspapers across the country about it. The mood among petitioners was glum. They felt that not only would they fail, but they would also do so under the glare of national attention. Aides talked about how Anderson's best chance to qualify was to collect evidence about what was happening and file a new lawsuit against the laws as an unconstitutional denial of access to ballots. "We were in a situation of literally finding needles in a haystack," Youngholm remembered. "This was the first time I had actually encountered a situation that I felt that even though we had forty days to get the job done, we had a likelihood of failure."¹¹⁵

The big break came when the lawsuit was won on 22 May in the West Virginia Supreme Court. The magisterial district rule was eliminated, and any petitioner with credentials became a legitimate collector. This changed everything for the signature team, which still had ten days remaining to petition. First, they were able to gather several thousand signatures in the college communities in and around Morgantown. Next, singer James Taylor did a benefit concert in Charleston, which was attended by several thousand people and enabled the ballot team to get

surplus signatures. On 2 June, 11,246 signatures were submitted on Anderson petitions. Later that month, his spot on the ballot became official.

It was a Herculean effort, against all the odds. “We had people who just gave up their lives to do it,” Youngholm remembered.¹¹⁶ Once it was completed, the ballot access workers dispersed to half a dozen states across the country to deal with other deadlines.

What would happen in a state after qualification was another problem that the campaign faced during this period. All of the attention was given to submitting petitions and moving on to the next deadline state, but the campaign lost sight of capturing the energy and interest in states when the procedure was completed. Often, when a state organization had fulfilled petition requirements, the national office would leave it to its own devices for weeks or months. Part of the reason for this was the limited amount of attention that the regional coordinators could devote to a state given their already crowded agenda. But another major factor was a lack of a thoughtful plan to follow. It would not be until mid-August that attention would return to many of these early qualification states. “Because there was no adequate campaign plan which allowed states to move logically from ballot access to fundraising / organizing . . . we were not able to fully capitalize on our volunteer strength by expanding the national organization and its activities as we should have,” Northeast coordinator David Kyle wrote in a memorandum at the end of the campaign. The lack of “guidance to the field led to attrition in volunteer ranks and an extremely rocky relationship with some states,” he added.¹¹⁷

Another explanation for the poor organizational performance was Anderson and his team’s preoccupation with planning a major event for the early summer. The campaign leadership was concerned from the start of this campaign about what would happen to Anderson when the major parties were having their nationally televised, publicly-funded political

conventions. These events had a huge audience and had a big effect on the voters. Without this kind of celebratory event, third-party candidates in previous campaigns had started to fade out of the electoral picture. Anderson and his team began to formulate a plan shortly after their independent announcement that sought to give him a heightened presence in the campaign during this period. They considered putting on a convention of his own at first, but feared that such an event would inevitably pale in comparison to the major parties.¹¹⁸ Each of the major parties was provided with over \$4 million in taxpayer money to stage their elaborate nominating ritual, although the nominee in each case had already been decided. Through the spring, his team considered alternatives. By early June, a decision was tentatively made to have Anderson make a foreign policy campaign trip to Europe during the period between the two major-party conventions. His team thought that by appearing with important world leaders, Anderson could maintain his visibility as a candidate and establish himself as a potential president who could negotiate with American allies.¹¹⁹ The tour would demonstrate that he was a serious national candidate and elevate his status in the race beyond that of a member of the House of Representatives. It seemed like a good plan in light of his limited options and such a trip was likely to receive substantial media coverage.

Despite the problems that Anderson was experiencing internally, his campaign did receive an unexpected boost during this time as a result of some mean-spirited politicking by Carter and his allies at the Democratic National Committee. As Anderson's position in the polls remained high, the White House team was becoming considerably irritated with him. The hope of Anderson was to push Carter into third place (thus making him the so-called spoiler in the election), but Carter saw Anderson as nothing more than a roadblock to his own reelection. Political scientist Gerald Pomper observed that "concern about Anderson dominated are warped

many of Carter's strategic decisions."¹²⁰ There was no doubt that it affected him greatly during the six-and-a-half month independent campaign.

The widespread belief at the time was that Anderson's appeal to moderate, disaffected, and independent voters would cut into Carter's potential electorate much more than Reagan's. Since Carter had such little margin for error in this election, Anderson became a target for him. Some political commentators doubted this concept. To them, a more convincing case could have been made that Anderson would be more damaging to Reagan. In 1976, Ford had carried twelve states that Anderson was running well in: California, Colorado, Oregon, Washington, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut, and New Jersey. Since Carter had lost each of these states in 1976, and he had experienced such problems in office, Reagan was expecting to win them in 1980 as well as others. The addition of Anderson to the race had the potential to fracture the coalition that had come close to victory in 1976 and give some of those states to Carter in 1980.

A second argument was made against the "Anderson hurts Carter more" theory. It noted that Republicans had traditionally depended on the suburban vote in industrial states to offset big Democratic margins in large cities. In 1976, for example, this was very much the case in the Ford-Carter race: Pat Caddell noted that in the suburbs the Carter ticket "had our clocks cleaned in '76," particularly in places like outside Chicago.¹²¹ Since Anderson had demonstrated such popularity among suburbanites, his support there might fracture this Republican ally and hurt that ticket more than the Democrats. Nevertheless, these arguments were not accepted in the White House, and Anderson became a major preoccupation of the Carter reelection team throughout the late spring.

After Anderson decided to enter the race, the White House initially had ignored him,

hoping his popularity was more an outgrowth of the novelty of his campaign than of its popular appeal. When he did not suffer any drop in support in the weeks that followed his announcement, Carter and his team began to turn their attacks on him. Their first step was to belittle his campaign and undermine the credibility of his candidacy. First, Democratic National Committee chairman John White called his effort “a fool’s errand,” claiming that Anderson’s candidacy “will take people out of the political process.” Then in late May, White House aides let it be known that it was unlikely that Carter would agree to debate any minority party candidate in the fall, because such campaigns had no real chance of victory. They claimed that by letting Anderson appear, they would also have to let the candidates of other minor parties like the Libertarians and Citizens debate. “It is not our intention to be involved in a debate with third- or fourth- or fifth-party candidates,” press secretary Jody Powell told reporters on 27 May. He added that Anderson’s chances of being elected were a “fantasy.” By contrast, when word of this statement reached reporters traveling with Reagan later that day, the Republican nominee stated he saw no reason why Anderson ought to be excluded from the debates in the fall.¹²²

The reaction to Powell’s statement was powerful and many commentators attacked his comment. In the *Washington Post*, Mark Shields wrote an angry column that said the statement was “patently fatuous” and “oatmeal logic.” Columnist Tom Wicker wrote in the *New York Times* that it was fear of Anderson’s strength—not objection to his weakness—that was Carter’s real motivation. “The only fantasy in sight,” Wicker wrote, “is Mr. Carter’s apparent belief that he can get away with refusing to debate Mr. Anderson.” Columnist James Reston wrote that the decision “could hurt Mr. Carter by drawing attention to the contrast between the President’s moralistic lectures and his hard-ball political tactics.”¹²³ Commentators knew that this was pure politics and had nothing to do with the integrity of the debates or Anderson’s non-party status.

After these efforts failed to have their desired effect, the Carter team took a more offensive approach. Under direction from the White House, the Democratic National Committee appropriated \$225,000 of funds to recruit lawyers to travel the country and challenge Anderson's petitions to keep him off as many ballots as possible, stating that their purpose was to "protect the integrity of the direct primary system." Next, White said on 10 June that the Reagan campaign and GOP officials were helping Anderson to qualify for ballots across the country to hurt Carter's chances of reelection.¹²⁴ Later, the DNC distributed a fifteen-page anonymously authored packet entitled "The Real John Anderson," which examined his voting record and sought to discredit him. The packet portrayed Anderson as a party regular who was trying to cover up a conservative, anti-labor, anti-consumer voting record. It drew heavily on votes Anderson had cast in Congress in the early 1960s.

These efforts backfired terribly on the DNC. The Carter team grossly misjudged the public reaction to its efforts against Anderson. The packet, which accused Anderson of flip-flopping on issues, failed to note that many of the changes had occurred over the course of his twenty-year career and had been widely acknowledged. Reporters saw the booklet as an election-year attack masquerading under the guise of legitimate research. In a long article, the *Wall Street Journal* called the work "sloppily done." Under pressure, a few weeks later the DNC admitted responsibility for the packet and its violation of federal campaign laws. But it was the funds that were set aside by the DNC to prevent Anderson from appearing on ballots that drew the strongest criticism. Throughout the country, the action was viewed harshly in the media, as well as by elected officials of all ideological and partisan stripes. It produced a firestorm of negative comments from within the Democratic Party. Richard Conlon, director of the House Democratic Study Group, called it "immoral" and "one of the stupider moves of all time." Senator Henry

(“Scoop”) Jackson of Washington called the action “foolish and counter-productive.” Senator David Pryor of Arkansas said he was “outraged and embarrassed” by the decision. Senator Thomas Eagleton of Missouri wrote an angry letter to White. “My God,” he wrote, “isn’t it the essence of a free republic that a person has a right to seek office?” Eagleton called it “bonehead politics” and warned, “It’s going to turn people off.” Other prominent members of the political community came out on record in support of Anderson’s right to be on the ballot. Among them were Senators Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin, Alan Cranston of California, Robert Byrd of West Virginia, and John Culver of Iowa.¹²⁵

Members of the media were equally outraged. Newspapers editorialized that these efforts, while cloaked in high-minded rhetoric about maintaining the integrity of the ballot qualification process, were truly acts done solely for self-interest. The DNC then proceeded to dig itself into a deeper hole by lying: it denied reports of how much it had budgeted and claimed that it had nothing to do with a ballot challenge against Anderson by Mary Grennon, a housewife from Needham, Massachusetts. Anderson’s attorneys (by subpoenaing telephone records) then established the link between the DNC and the Boston elections lawyer who represented Grennon. They were soon caught in the lie. When Grennon lost her challenge to Anderson’s petitions in Massachusetts, Democratic operatives urged her to take it to a higher court, which they would fund. “The Carter people were slithering around,” she told the *New York Times*. “They showed very bad taste.” As stories like this reached the voters, it was clear that the hardball tactics against Anderson had backfired. While the public seemed indifferent about political maneuverings to put a candidate on a ballot, it reacted much differently when it perceived a candidate mobilizing money and lawyers to force another candidate off a ballot.¹²⁶

The result for Anderson was a bonanza of publicity and sympathy for his campaign, and a

public relations nightmare for Carter and the DNC. Anderson called it “another indication of the effort to deprive the American people of a choice” in November. David Garth told *Newsweek* that these actions played “right into our hands.” Anderson’s team of advisors moved quickly to make the most of this opportunity, and Garth proved that his reputation as a tough campaign manager was well earned. He organized a “fair play” committee to publicly condemn the actions of the DNC. The campaign released a letter signed by twenty-four prominent Republicans and Democrats that demanded that neither major-party chairman take part in any organized effort designed to block Anderson’s access to the state ballots. Among the signers of that letter were such heavyweights as Reps. Jim Leach of Iowa, Pete McCloskey of California, Patricia Schroeder of Colorado, Paul Simon of Illinois, former North Carolina Governor Terry Sanford, Philadelphia District Attorney Ed Rendell, as well as Senators Adlai Stevenson III of Illinois and George McGovern of South Dakota. The encouragement that Anderson received from Democrats throughout the country underscored the underground support these elected officials had for his independent candidacy. Carter was an uninspiring nominee, and Anderson was capable of bringing moderates and disenchanted Democratic voters to the polls. Many of these elected officials wanted Anderson on the ballot knowing it would increase turnout for lower-level races in November.¹²⁷

When Carter came under attack, he tried to distance himself from the DNC debacle. Nevertheless, he still had Anderson’s defeat very much on his mind. A quick kill of the independent candidate was a high priority for his campaign so that he could direct his efforts toward Reagan in the fall. By June, his advisors were drawing up a battle plan specifically for him to use against Anderson. This grew out of a memorandum Carter received from pollster Pat Caddell, in which Caddell outlined for him how Anderson’s addition to the race changed the

electoral contest. “President Carter faces an extremely difficult reelection,” he began. “A two-front assault is of great concern.” Later in the memorandum, he stated: “Strategically, Anderson is hurting us now. While in popular vote he draws fairly equally from both Reagan and the President, the electoral vote story . . . is quite different.” He outlined how in a two-way race Carter was at that moment leading Reagan in electoral votes, 245 to 104, with 189 too close to call. A three-way race, however, yielded a drastically different picture: Reagan was found to have 277 electoral votes to 118 for Carter, with 143 too close to call. If anything, this report convinced Carter just how serious the Anderson candidacy was becoming and how important it was for him to deal with the threat quickly. The strategy against Anderson became to paint a picture of him as someone who was not who he claimed to be. Carter’s advisors felt that the popular support for Anderson had grown out of perceptions created by the media, not by his true record. They believed that as his stances on the issues became better known, his supporters (particularly those inclined to vote for Democrats) would become less likely to vote for him. Anderson was also winning support from voter blocs who were normally dependable Democrats. “Anderson cuts deeply at the moment into our liberal, young, upper class, suburban support,” Caddell wrote. Other Carter aides were concerned about Anderson taking away votes from the black community. “There is a very strong possibility that John Anderson will capture more black votes than any candidate in recent times,” Carter staffers wrote in a June memo. “Unless and until we succeed in convincing black voters that Anderson is not worthy of their support, he will probably get more black votes than Reagan.”¹²⁸ As a result, Carter began to draw the distinction between what he said was the true Anderson and the virtuous candidate that many believed him to be. His statements were sharp but often relied on out-of-date facts and disavowed principles.

These attacks achieved little of their desired effect and seemed to arouse sympathy for Anderson.¹²⁹

Soon, Carter and his team also reevaluated this tactic. In the weeks that followed, discussions of Anderson all but disappeared from his remarks.¹³⁰ Later, Carter softened his statement about debating in the fall, opening the possibility of appearing with Anderson. While he did rule out a three-way forum, he said that he might debate Anderson separately or with the other “theoretical” candidates, presumably Libertarian Party nominee Ed Clark, Citizens Party candidate Barry Commoner, and possibly others. The fact that the polls showed that 53 percent of Americans disagreed with Carter’s refusal to debate may have also been a factor. In June, Carter campaign chairman Robert Strauss was on national television trying to soften the harshness of the petition challenging story. On the *Today* show, he made it sound as though the Republicans in power would rubber-stamp Anderson’s petitions, whether they met each state’s criteria or not. “Obviously, in these states we feel that the law could be violated, or at least some bizarre interpretation of the law to place Congressman Anderson on the ballot, our regular lawyers for the committee will take a look at it.” Also in June, at a breakfast meeting with reporters, Strauss was questioned about the backlash of sympathy for Anderson his actions were causing. “I don’t know what to do about the Anderson factor,” he conceded to them.¹³¹

Nevertheless, this series of events resulted in a major step forward for Anderson: to many voters, he was no longer an insurgent, sour-grapes loser of the GOP primaries. He had become an embodiment of whether fair play would reign in the national political arena.

The political situation in the White House continued to be dire as the primary schedule was approaching its end. It had been a very rough period for Carter. In Washington, the Democratic-controlled Congress was publicly distancing itself from the unpopular president.

Late in the spring he had suffered two crushing defeats on Capitol Hill at the hands of members of his own party: a rejection of his proposal to establish an Energy Mobilization Board and a peremptory override of his veto of a bill against his new oil import tax. A House or Senate had not inflicted this on a president of its own party in nearly thirty years. These setbacks were bolstered by a campaign led by the *Des Moines Register* for Carter to step down from the ticket in favor of Vice President Walter Mondale. Carter's approval rating in the opinion polls was among the lowest ever recorded, rivaling those of Harry Truman and Richard Nixon during his impeachment proceedings. In a speech late in May, Ted Kennedy said that if Carter became the Democratic nominee, he would come in third behind Anderson and Reagan. Pollster Pat Caddell remembered of this period, "Our general situation had reverted to a state worse than we had seen at even our low point in 1979."¹³²

At the end of May, it was decided to have Carter make his first "political" trip of the year. Carter was close to reaching the threshold of delegates necessary to guarantee first-ballot victory at the convention, and his aides wanted him to nail it down and get Kennedy out of the race. Another reason for the trip was to get him back to campaigning. Aides knew that he faced a tough race in the fall and feared that he might emerge from the Rose Garden rusty in campaigning skills. Lastly, it was a chance for Carter to test his message for the fall.¹³³

For some time prior to Carter's appearance in Columbus, Ohio, on 29 May, aides had been discussing themes that they could use during the fall campaign. They knew they could not eradicate the public dissatisfaction with Carter's term in office, but they did hope to soften it. His aides wanted to develop a forward-looking, positive message based on his record that would counter what these opponents were saying. On stage in Columbus, the theme of Carter's remarks became "We're turning the tide." He used the phrase over and over again to describe progress in

the energy crisis, inflation, interest rates, foreign policy, and military strength. Inside the White House, the intention was to put forward a positive case for reelection. But the reaction to this message was a total failure. After the speech, Carter dropped nine points in Ohio in less than a week. “The ‘turn the tide’ theme was attacked, derided, and lampooned by commentators, cartoonists, and politicians alike,” Pat Caddell wrote in a private memorandum. “The approach was not *credible*.”¹³⁴ From this moment, it became clear that Carter would no longer attempt to take the high road and try to run for reelection on his record. Insiders knew that there was little rationale to base his campaign on beyond that he was not his opponent.

As summer approached and Anderson showed no signs of becoming an also-ran in the race, the Democrats adopted a new tactic against him. The new strategy was to portray the Anderson candidacy as inherently dangerous to the political system. One attack stated that supporting Anderson would fracture the liberal-to-moderate constituency in the nation and inadvertently elect Reagan, possibly with as little as 35 percent of the popular vote. Anyone elected with such a small plurality, it noted, would not have the support necessary to govern effectively. Another suggested that a three-way race would not produce a candidate with a majority of electoral votes and throw the election into the House of Representatives. Since most voters were unfamiliar with the relevant constitutional interpretations and congressional procedures, it was easy to describe a third candidacy as dangerous to the health and stability of the government. Opponents of Anderson spoke of this often in the late spring and helped get members of the media more interested in telling this story. While the possibility of such a scenario did exist, with the election six months away, and these concerns were premature. Anderson labeled it a “tactic of fear” to undermine his campaign.¹³⁵

While the Democrats were changing tactics and evaluating different methods to get

reporters and voters to remove Anderson from the electoral equation, they still were determined to do everything within their power to damage his ballot access efforts. Although little was said about the money budgeted to challenge his petitions after it had produced such controversy, the Democrats never rescinded the decision. Behind the scenes it was decided to continue the challenges but not give the effort any attention. After having weathered the initial storm, the strategy went on as planned. Nearly three weeks after the story broke, spokesman Robert Neumann admitted in a low-profile interview that the challenges were ongoing. “We don’t know how much it’s going to cost, but we’ll probably spend what it takes” to keep Anderson off the ballot where possible, he told the *National Law Journal*.¹³⁶

In spite of the mixed results that the Anderson team had experienced, spirits were high in June. Aides knew that they had some deficiencies to address. One was whether he could continue to expand his audience. Too often in the initial two months of the National Unity campaign, Anderson had been speaking to the same people—disaffected Democrats, left-wing intellectuals, students, and white suburban voters. One week in June was typical: in a seven-day period, he spoke before twelve audiences; of them, nine were composed almost entirely of college-age, white liberals. He needed to bring more blacks, blue-collar workers, and labor voters into his coalition. Another issue was starting to address some of the matters that were to be important issues in the fall—development of a coherent electoral strategy, choosing a running mate, and winning a position in the fall debates. The most important goal for the summer, however, was continuing to gain ground in the polls. Each percent in the polls that Anderson drew away from his major-party rivals allowed his independent candidacy to close the gap, make strides in establishing himself as a legitimate force in the 1980 campaign, and reaffirm his credibility as a serious contender for victory. “The polls will have a lot to do with Anderson’s success,” *Los*

Angeles Times pollster I.A. Lewis stated in assessing the independent campaign ahead. Many saw the litmus test to be 30 percent. “The thirty-point threshold is considered crucial,” Richard Cattani wrote in a front-page article in the *Christian Science Monitor* in May. “Crossing it would help convince voters that casting their ballots for the Illinois Congressman would not be wasted, thus shoring up his support.” Campaign aides agreed. “At least then you’re in the ballpark; mathematically you’ve got a race,” Garth told *Newsweek* about the 30 percent barrier.¹³⁷ The campaign team knew, however, that climbing those final few points in the polls and maintaining that support over the summer would be no easy task.

This sense of excitement was clear among Anderson’s aides in the Washington DC headquarters. Bill Galston, at the time a professor at the University of Texas, joined the campaign in late May and became his chief speechwriter. Since he entered the campaign at this time, he was less caught up in the excitement of it. But the atmosphere struck him. “There was a feeling that between Carter’s lack of presidentiality and what was seen as Reagan’s extremism,” Galston recalled, “that we might very well be in the process of reconfiguring American politics.” Aide Alton Frye, also new to the campaign, had similar thoughts. “There was not the illogic of most third-party candidacies that some people might expect to see. The negative potential was so high that if we [could] get him into second place, we might have a chance to produce a plurality,” he recalled thinking at the time.¹³⁸

Even high-ranking members of the Republican Party, initially thrilled by Anderson’s appeal to traditionally Democratic voter groups and by the Carter campaign’s missteps, were becoming nervous and rethinking their position. Reagan’s supporters felt that their package of lower taxes, less government, and conservative values was sufficiently appealing to beat Carter. But, Anderson’s strength was upsetting what had been seen as a straightforward equation for

victory. The attitude of leaders in the Reagan campaign began to change.¹³⁹ They worried that Carter might be better at winning moderate supporters from Anderson than Reagan would be. Reagan strategists began to doubt the accepted belief that Anderson would attract more supporters from Carter than from Reagan. At a Los Angeles strategy meeting, top advisors in the Reagan campaign debated whether they also ought to mount lawsuits to keep Anderson off the ballot in a few crucial states where he might hurt Reagan. But in the period that followed the meeting, they saw how this kind of effort was backfiring on the Democrats, so they dropped the plan. Inside the Reagan campaign, Anderson continued to be a topic of concern. A memorandum was produced that detailed which House seats the Republicans would need to win to control a majority of the delegations in the event Anderson won enough states to deny Reagan an Electoral College majority. The topic of Anderson began to appear more and more frequently in Reagan's speeches during this period. On one occasion, he attacked Anderson, asserting that he was on an "ego trip" and warning that his candidacy could be unhealthy to the system.¹⁴⁰

Republican Party chairman Bill Brock had other worries. It was clear from the level of support Anderson was receiving and the demographics of those who were backing him that his presence in the race would increase turnout. Brock began to worry that those voters that Anderson would draw to the polls would be more likely to vote for Democrats down the ticket and make it more difficult for the Republican Party to win House, Senate, and Governor races. He began taking a more active role in the attacks. He called Anderson "dangerous and self-serving" on one occasion. Another time he told reporters, "Anderson's candidacy is an assault on both parties [and] an assault on the political system."¹⁴¹

Other members of the political establishment joined in the criticism of Anderson. The Americans for Democratic Action, a left-wing watchdog group who once considered him to be

one of the nation's premier GOP congressmen, released an examination of his voting record in which it criticized him for his positions on labor, defense spending, and domestic services. A traditional supporter of Democratic candidates, the ADA noted that Anderson did not deserve the liberal label that some were trying to give him. Reacting to the criticisms, he stated to reporters, "I plead guilty to some very conservative fiscal views."¹⁴² For a candidate trying to maintain his image as a moderate, the criticisms from both the left and the right were oddly helpful.

Political writers continued to report on Anderson's daily progress. By late May and early June, he was raising in excess of \$400,000 per week in contributions. By 1 July, Anderson had raised over \$3 million from over 78,000 contributors since his independent announcement. In addition to direct mail and fund-raising events around the country, there was also an aggressive print advertising effort. In major newspapers, full-page ads appeared that would note the candidate's progress in the polls and ballot placement, reprint quotations about him from prominent journalists, and solicit donations. Two months after he began his new campaign, Anderson was still the darling of some influential members of the media. Syndicated columnist Joseph Kraft wrote a widely discussed article that concluded that Anderson was "the best qualified of the candidates in the field." Kraft observed that he had "the keenest intelligence and the richest powers of articulation" of the candidates. "Most important, he is the only candidate with a sense of how to make the system work," he wrote. Author Laurence Shoup noted in another article, "[Anderson] is not likely to win, but in a race with such doddering bumbler as Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, it is best to not rule anything out."¹⁴³

Those covering Anderson felt the shift. "There was a feeling that this was a campaign with momentum," David Wood of the *Washington Star* recalled of this period. "Although the ultimate prize still seemed unlikely, there was a real feeling that this was something of substance.

This campaign was doing something. This wasn't total fantasy." Other journalists felt the same thing. "The polls . . . created a sense that this is something to be taken very seriously," columnist David Broder remembered about this period in June. Jon Margolis of the *Chicago Tribune* wrote an article that speculated how the pollsters were underestimating Anderson's support because they did not regard some of his voters as certain to go to the polls in November.¹⁴⁴

Time magazine pollster Daniel Yankelovich did a large national survey in early June about the upcoming election. It was a national poll measuring support for the three candidates as well as attitudes of the voters about each of them. The results were so astonishing that he contacted the Anderson campaign to share them. He knew that Anderson was not yet employing pollsters, but he wanted to tell Anderson's team about his findings. He began the meeting by telling Anderson aides that he was "cautiously optimistic" about the independent's chances. His nationwide surveys suggested that one of two things would happen to Anderson: either he would win the election in November or he would end up as a non-factor. Yankelovich's examination of the data found that there was tremendous interest and potential support for Anderson among voters. He had several noteworthy areas of strength, and he was leading the race among several important swing-voter groups. Yankelovich also found that many disaffected party loyalists were unhappy with their party's nominee. More than in Reagan and Carter, the public saw something special in Anderson and his underdog presidential campaign. But Yankelovich also found that much of those feelings were based on vague notions and personal sympathies. The support for Anderson was neither firm nor committed. His surveys showed that there was tremendous doubt among voters that Anderson could transform his campaign from being one of an underdog into one of a recognized and legitimate contender. He also found that the support was based on image more than on an unstinting belief in the candidate and his programs. Anderson had a lot to prove

to voters who were inclined to support him, but who doubted he could vault the vast political hurdles. In addition, Yankelovich found that a true core of supporters would stay with Anderson through Election Day, regardless of the developments in the race. “Either John Anderson is going to make history and win the election,” he told three representatives from the campaign in a meeting one evening in New York, “or he is going to finish poorly, with about seven percent of the vote,” he concluded with shocking prescience.¹⁴⁵

Years later, domestic policy advisor Robert Walker recalled the conversation: “Yankelovich said that ‘Anderson’s positives are off the chart. Anderson has struck a chord with a large portion of the American electorate. Even people who disagree with him violently on some of the issues—like the gas tax—respect the man’s courage. They like that. They’re hungry for that. They like this man.’”¹⁴⁶

Then, Yankelovich gave Anderson’s aides some advice. Walker recalled: “Anderson, if he is going to win this race, is going to have to pass either Reagan, Carter, or both sometime in the next six weeks before the convention. . . You’ve got to move ahead. You cannot sit back and let this race play itself out. You can’t save your stuff for the fall. You’ve got to go now, because unless you move ahead, Anderson will always be regarded as a wasted vote. Then, he will start to drop like a stone. You won’t lose that seven percent, but you could lose everyone else.”¹⁴⁷

Yankelovich expanded on these thoughts in a long article that he wrote with Larry Kaagan. They began by explaining the public opinion climate in the United States at the time. “We have certainly had other periods in our history when national anxiety was high, and periods when the political process disappointed the expectations of the voting public. But the present combination of the two elements is unprecedented and makes for an enormously unstable political environment,” they wrote. Yankelovich and Kaagan wondered whether the message of

the major party nominees would address the issues that most concerned voters. “Both the Reagan and Carter candidacies seemed to have made political judgments that the American people are not yet ready to face the hard realities of our current economic turmoil,” they noted. “This bequeaths to John Anderson the tricky political ground of realism, strewn with politically disastrous mines—or with the potential to be elected president in November,” they wrote. “Whether people want to hear these truths [about the economy] or not,” was a crucial question to be answered in the coming months.¹⁴⁸

Yankelovich and Kaagan examined Anderson’s potential strengths as a candidate. “What recognition Anderson has already achieved has been on the basis of his forthright ‘realism,’ and the burden is on him to present bold and effective answers to the nation’s economic problems,” they began. Like other observers, the writers had seen some changes emerging in the Anderson campaign and wrote pointedly about them:

If part of Anderson’s initial appeal is that he is neither Carter or Reagan, any indication that he is as unrealistic and as ‘symbolic’ as they are on critical economic issues, being inconsistent or evasive, promising ends to which there are no credible means, being patently political when long-range thinking is clearly called for, will cost him dearly. The troubled American public is searching for a president to speak the truth and inspire confidence that a prescribed, if difficult, cure will work. An unexpected contender for the job must by necessity have his act—and his program—together enough to inspire an unusual amount of confidence in an unusually unsettled and skeptical populace.¹⁴⁹

At the end of the article they wrote: “In 1980 voters know that their electoral decision does make a difference in a dangerous time for the U.S., and a majority of them are miserable about the choices offered them by the two major parties. It is in this context that the Anderson

candidacy must be judged.” In assessing Anderson’s chances in the race, the authors did not make any predictions. They did, however, repeat the two scenarios that they had outlined for members of the campaign team: “A far more likely outcome is that his candidacy will either fade to insignificance by November, or that he will do a great deal better than twenty percent and emerge as a co-equal third contender in the election, perhaps winning the presidency outright,”¹⁵⁰

Yankelovich was not the only pollster finding this reaction among voters to the Anderson campaign. In a front-page article in the *Christian Science Monitor*, political analyst Alan Baron’s examination of his surveys in late June found Anderson to be winning in five states: New York, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Wisconsin. This represented seventy-seven electoral votes. Democratic pollster Michael Barone found similar results, except that he also found Anderson leading in two additional states, Michigan and Oregon. This totaled 104 potential electoral votes. An examination of congressional races by the Democratic Study Group was also similar. In polls of sixty House districts, the study found Anderson winning in eight of them and ahead of Carter in twenty-nine of them. Among the states where polls had Anderson winning in House districts were New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Michigan, Wisconsin, and California. In one hundred other districts where Democratic House members were asked to estimate support in their district, Anderson was said to be winning in twelve of them and either ahead or tied with Carter in thirty-four.¹⁵¹

Pollsters began making headlines with their statements about Anderson. Robert Teeter called Anderson “a tinderbox” and cautioned that the volatile mood of the voters could explode “if someone should drop a match on him.” More importantly, to the shock of the nation, a series of national polls showed the unthinkable when they were released in mid-June. Had the voters gone to the polling booths that day, the data revealed a strong possibility that Anderson would

win. The front-page headline of the *Washington Post* screamed this news on 18 June: “Anderson Could Win, Pollsters Agree.” The article began, “Within the fraternity of professional public opinion pollsters, Rep. John B. Anderson’s independent presidential campaign is regarded today as a serious challenge that could result in Anderson’s election to the White House next November.” It quoted four of the nation’s most respected unaffiliated pollsters: Yankelovich, Louis Harris, Mervin Field, and George Gallup. “Any of the three” major candidates, Harris said, “could win it.” “There is no question that Anderson is up there,” Field noted.¹⁵²

A Gallup poll taken from 13 June through 16 June had Anderson at his highest level of support to date, 26 percent.¹⁵³ It was hard to believe how far he had come in the seven months since his campaign had hit rock bottom late in the fall of 1979. Anderson may have been without the benefit of a political party, ideological cause, regional base, or public money for his campaign, but at this moment he was the political story of 1980.

In the end, this would prove to be John Anderson’s zenith.