

GREETING



President Jimmy Carter, speaking of human rights and morality in government, has restored much of the faith and trust in government missing in past years.

President Carter lends moral direction to nation's high office

By Munir Umrani

On January 20, 1977 at midday, James Earl Carter III, a deeply religious farmer from Plains, Ga. became the 39th President of the United States.

At exactly 12:03 p.m. Chief Justice Warren Burger of the United States Supreme Court asked Mr. Carter: "Are you ready to take the oath of office?"

Moments later, Mr. Carter told the United States and the world: "This

inauguration ceremony marks a new beginning, a new dedication within our government, and a new spirit among us all.

"A president may sense and proclaim that spirit, but only a people can provide it."

Mr. Carter, apparently referring to Watergate, asked the American people to "Let our recent mistakes bring a resurgent commitment to the basic principles of our nation; for we know that if we despise our own government, we have no future.

"We recall in special times when we have stood briefly but magnificently united, in those times no prize was beyond our grasp.

"Our government must at the same time be both competent and compassionate."

Who is the man who spoke such compassionate words one year ago this month? Where did he come from and where is he going?

Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, what is his performance record and what can the American people expect from a southern-born Baptist who seemingly came out of nowhere talking about morality in government, strengthening the family, taking people off welfare and human rights?

To answer the first question, Mr. Carter is a 53-year-old former governor who announced his candidacy for the presidency of the United States on Dec. 12, 1974.

However, this announcement had been preceded by two years of tense preparation, much of it orchestrated by Hamilton Jordan, Mr. Carter's chief aide.

Immediately following the Democratic Convention, Mr. Jordan (pronounced Jurden) sat down and mapped out a systematic approach that Mr. Carter was to take in his unprecedented trek to the presidency.

NEED DEFINED

Mr. Carter's advisers warned him that it would take "more than hand-shaking and the projection of 'I understand the problems of the average man' to be successful."

He had to offer moral leadership, especially since the re-election of former President Richard Nixon failed to quench what Mr. Jordan dubbed the nation's "thirst for strong moral leadership."

Mr. Jordan predicted that the thirst would "grow in four more years of the Nixon Administration," and grow it did. It culminated with Mr. Nixon's forced resignation and the installment of then Vice-President Gerald R. Ford as the 38th Chief Executive.

Although Mr. Carter had made the cover of a national magazine and was quoted in the *New York Times* and other prestigious media organizations, he still had an image problem. He was just a symbol of the "New South." He was barely known outside Georgia.

Yet, there was no doubt in Mr. Carter's or his adviser's minds that he could win. In August 1974, Mr. Jordan told Mr. Carter in a memo: "Most men who seek this country's highest office are so consumed by their ambition that they will do anything to be elected.

"You have to attempt to separate yourself from this stereotype of the ambitious candidate who lacks commitment to anything, and establish yourself as a man of integrity."

This, Mr. Carter did as evidenced by his overwhelming acceptance by the American people. Bilalians (or Afro-Americans) seemingly supported Mr. Carter with the same enthusiasm with which they had supported the late President John F. Kennedy.

One year later, the relationship between Bilalians and the Carter Administration continues to be cordial although there has been some dissatisfaction expressed by Bilalian leaders such as Vernon Jordan, head of the National Urban League.

In essence, Mr. Jordan said Mr. Carter had not exemplified strong commitment to solving problems affecting Bilalians—problems such as unemployment, housing and welfare. This charge was leveled in July during the Urban League's national convention.

Mr. Carter responded to the charge on July 25 when he told the convention: "I have been in office now six months, have no apologies to make..."

A man noted for his straightforward approach, Mr. Carter said, "Sometimes an immediate transformation can't be accomplished when problems have been there for years or terms of Presidents, or even generations."

To illustrate this point, he used a "favorite story" of Attorney-General Griffin Bell "about a man who was arrested for getting drunk and setting a bed on fire.

"When he got before the judge, he said, 'Judge, I plead guilty to being drunk, but the bed was on fire when I got in it.' Well, to some degree, the bed was on fire when I got in it."

SIGNIFICANT COMMITMENT

Bilalian leaders, including Chief Imam Wallace D. Muhammad, have met with Mr. Carter on issues affecting society. Mr. Carter has promised continued dialogue and reaffirmed his commitment to seeking solutions to problems that directly affect Bilalians.

Dozens of domestic and international issues also came under the Carter Administration's microscope.

Among them were human rights, arms control, crime, the cities, foreign aid, foreign policy, inflation, minority business, religion, the Panama Canal, undocumented workers and the nation's youth, to name a few.

The issue of human rights is a
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