

First Annual Harry Middleton Lecture
by President Jimmy Carter
March 6, 1995

Under President Carter's leadership the United States did not hesitate to review and to speak out. If we did not bring about change everywhere, we did attract attention. Because of President Carter, this nation and indeed the world will never again be able to turn a blind eye on tyranny and political oppression anywhere.

President Carter in his time did not wage war; he waged peace. He waged it with perseverance, and with persuasion, and with success. When the guns

anyone asked me what I wanted to do, my first choice was to go to the Naval Academy; my second choice was to be a college professor. Thanks to Ronald Reagan, I got my second choice four years earlier than I had anticipated.

(Laughter)

But I have indeed enjoyed working with young people at Emory, and I still relish that vibrant aspect of my life, when I have to confront them in the classroom and in the lecture hall.

I enjoyed listening to Tom's introduction. I didn't know what to expect; quite often a former president gets credit for things that surprise him. For example, when I first began running for president, some people thought that a man from the Deep South, even if he couldn't get elected, at least would know a lot of funven en eeo tNavaughter)

everyone must laugh.”

(Laughter)

One of the great advantages in having been president is that I was invited to make the inaugural lecture in this series, which has been endowed by Lady Bird Johnson to honor Harry Middleton. But another reason I came here is to pay tribute to Lady Bird Johnson. Of all our first ladies, none has made such a tremendous impact on the beauty of our country as has she. (Applause)

The beauty of her character and her strong yet gentle will have made a notable contribution. When I ride through the countryside in any of the 50 states, I do not find it very difficult to see the direct results of Lady Bird's beautification program. All of us are indebted to you, Lady Bird, for what you have done for our national landscape.

Another purpose of mine this afternoon is to express my admiration for and appreciation of a remarkable president, whose sound judgment and political courage permitted him to forge a proper marriage between the admirable conservatism of the South and the West with a progressive program that fought poverty, hunger, deprivation, and racial discrimination.

I will never forget a certain moment in my life, in March 1965, almost precisely 30 years ago. I was in the Georgia state Senate, sitting in a room with a group of Georgia senators, watching President Johnson make a speech to a joint session of the Congress. Remember? He said, “Really, it is all of us who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice.” He paused for several beats, and then added, “And we shall overcome.” I will never forget the emotion of that moment, when I saw tears shed by Georgia legislators who had lived their lives in a society of which we had not always been proud.

That speech transformed our country, and it also, in a very direct way, transformed my life. Had it not been for the Voting Rights Bill and the Civil Rights Bill that were the legacy of President Johnson, I, a man from the Deep South, could never have been a serious contender for the presidency.

Tonight, I have been asked to speak briefly about international mediation, and afterward I will be glad to take your questions.

International mediation always has been an important subject, but it has never been more important than since the end of the Cold War. It seems an anomaly, yet the collapse of the Soviet Union and the failure of Yugoslavia

have liberated, in a negative way, centuries of pent-up animosity concerning ethnic and religious differences, and political differences, and struggles for land, and contests for political control. And this is not the only reason for the increase in international violence. With the rapid increase in the world's population, and the deterioration in environmental quality, wars have broken out as simple people have struggled for the basic necessities of life, especially for food and for fuel with which to cook it.

Scandinavian countries similar efforts are under way.

In recent years, we have come to realize the unique contribution that nongovernmental or private unofficial diplomats might make to the alleviation of suffering by ending wars. At The Carter Center, for instance, we are completely free to go into countries like Nigeria, or Liberia, or Sudan, just to name a few in Africa, and to work not only with the ruling government, but also in the bush with the revolutionaries who are fighting against the ruling government. This is potentially a wonderful contribution, but it is not always realized.

Remember that the agreement that was worked out two years ago between

anything that we have ever done there. It is very interesting to see how intensely many people oppose a good-faith effort at peacekeeping. It is not easy even for me — a total nonpolitical, let me assure you, at least at this time in my life — even to mention some other nations, like Libya, or Iraq, or Cuba. The names of those countries don't resonate well in the minds and hearts of the American people. Even to propose ways to deal with the tension that presently exist between us and them is not an easy thing to do. We find it difficult even to mention a settlement between the baseball players and the owners.

(Laughter)

Most of the work at The Carter Center is devoted to health and humanitarian causes, and conflict resolution or international mediation only comprises about 10 percent of our total efforts. But we will continue to pursue this as a major interest.

We live in strange times, when for many people perhaps the most important issue is cyberspace, while for most other people in the world the most pressing concern is firewood. At this moment, there are more wars on earth than at any other time in history. The search for ways to understand the causes of these conflicts and to resolve them, and for efficient and effective ways to prevent new ones, is a very important part of my life.

I recently wrote a book called "Talking Peace," which describes the complex causes of conflict and also some of the mediation techniques that I use — not only direct negotiations, not only distant negotiations, not only mediation, not only arbitration, but the importance of holding democratic elections. I wrote the book for college students and senior high school students. I hope it contributes to understanding the process of conflict resolution. Mediation is both a science and an art that will become even more important in years ahead. It is a challenge that confronts us all, and I hope it is one that you will not forget.

Audience: I wonder if recent maneuvers by a Republican-controlled Congress to usurp a bit of the president's foreign-policy power tie into what your organization does; that is, an entity outside the executive branch of government which seems eager to take some of the president's initiative in foreign policy away from him.

Carter: I'll repeat the question and maybe modify it to suit myself a little bit better.

(Laughter)

The question was, does the recent effort by the Congress to usurp some of the president's power in foreign policy in some way parallel what we are doing at The Carter Center, and should it be seen in a similar light?

Let me point out first of all that an effort by the Congress to take foreign policy away from the president is nothing new.

(Laughter)

It was certainly there when President Lyndon Johnson was in office, it was present when I was there, and probably all the way back to the early months of this republic's existence.

I, having been president, am very aware of the sensitivities of the White House and of the State Department. But I am not always willing to defer to them. When we at The Carter Center have an intense feeling about a particular case, as we did in the case of North Korea, when I was convinced that a war was imminent. And let me be clear, when we later got to North Korea, we found that the North Koreans had been planning to go to war. If their country had been branded an outlaw nation, and their worshiped leader as an international criminal, they were prepared to go to war. When we became convinced of this I went directly to President Clinton and asked for permission to go to North Korea. It was only after he gave me permission, and after I had received intense briefings by the CIA, the State Department, and the White House, that we went to Seoul first and then to Pyongyang. We stopped in Seoul to meet with South Korean President Kim Young Sam and his foreign minister to make sure that what we did in North Korea was compatible with the South Korean position.

The State Department did not agree with this trip and was very critical of our going. I had to make a difficult choice, and we went nonetheless. If we waited until we got unanimity in Washington on this or any other subject I probably would never leave my hometown of Plains again.

(Laughter)

Afterward there were long negotiations between our government and Kim Il Sung's successors about consummating the details of what we had agreed to. After Kim's death, which was unexpected, his son sent me word that he would honor all the commitments that his father made to me. And they have done so.

In the case of Haiti, again we did not have the support of the State

what you do in conflict resolution?

Carter: They affect what we do and what the United States government does intensely, intimately, and consistently. When I go to any president's private quarters, in Ethiopia or in Bosnia or wherever in the world, they always have the TV set in the office turned to CNN. That is what they watch; that is how they know what is going on.

When we had a problem in Mogadishu in communicating with General Aidid, CNN questioned me about what our policy should be. I responded on the air, knowing that Aidid was listening, because he traveled around Mogadishu with his own private TV antenna. He stayed at a different house every night because we were trying to find him and capture him or kill him, but he would only stay in a house that had a TV set. And the first thing he did when he got in the house was to put his TV antenna on the roof and focus it on a satellite, hook it up to the TV, and sit there and watch CNN. We knew he was watching it; his people had told me that.

The Bosnian Serb delegates gave me commitments on six things that they would do, but I didn't want a private agreement given only to me. I relayed it, in their presence, to President Clinton on the telephone, and they heard me. I told Dr. Radovan Karadzic that he would have to repeat his agreement to a global audience. Then I got in touch with Tom Johnson of CNN, who had Judy Woodruff call Karadzic in Pale, in the mountains of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Judy gave him a 30-minute grilling everybody in the world could watch. Karadzic made the same commitments to CNN that he had made to me and President Clinton. It is much more important that he gave them to CNN, by the way, than to me.

That is the kind of thing that CNN can do. CNN is objective, fair, and inquisitive. They have earned a great deal of trust around the world. In this world of cyberspace and almost instant communication, this is very important. My wife and I were in Kazakhstan a couple of years ago, in Alma-Ata, which is about 2,000 miles, mostly east, from Moscow. The president of Kazakhstan told me that when the coup leaders took over Moscow and claimed that they had overthrown Gorbachev, Gorbachev was in a villa on vacation that weekend. The coup leaders called Kazakhstan's president and said, "We have now taken over authority. We want your pledge of allegiance to us, because we are the government." The president of Kazakhstan replied, "That is not true, because I have just seen on CNN that Gorbachev is alive and well, and he has not deferred to your agreement." CNN certainly has had a beneficial impact, with its instant and accurate reporting on matters that concern us all.

Audience: Regarding our case at home, it seems that guns and violence pose an insurmountable barrier to peace in America. Today's New York Times reports that states are striving to pass concealed weapons laws, and Texas Governor Bush has already promised he will sign one here. What can we do to thwart the flourishing of guns in this nation, and do you have any other comments or suggestions on this topic?

Carter: I think one of the greatest threats to America's societal structure is the unlimited sale and possession of weapons.

Carter: No, I really believe that would be a cowardly thing for a great nation to do. The world is eager — not unanimously, but overwhelmingly — to see the United States take a strong and consistent role of leadership in promoting peace, preventing wars, alleviating suffering, opening up avenues of trade and commerce and understanding and communication, and visitation between global neighbors. For us to become isolationist and write off the rest of the world would be a travesty on the greatness of this country, and a craven act. I believe we are not that selfish. Yet when we get involved in bringing peace to a troubled country, or in helping people overcome environmental degradation, or in correcting a horrible human rights abuse, that is not only compatible with the highest ideals of Americans, it is also directly beneficial to us. So I don't believe that the effort toward isolationism by some — even the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee — is going to be successful. I predict that President Clinton will see that adequate control of foreign policy is maintained by the White House, which our founding fathers expected us to do.

Remember that presidential authority is very limited. In domestic affairs it is about a 50-50 deal between the president and the Congress. In economic affairs the president has a much smaller role than 50 percent, because there is also the Congress, and the Federal Reserve Board, and the enormous free enterprise system, plus global markets and supplies, all making economic policy. But in foreign policy the president is still basically in charge. It would

my opinion — and sometimes I give it in an unsolicited way.

(Laughter)

There are three basic premises on which The Carter Center is founded. First, we don't duplicate what anyone else is doing. If the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund or the United Nations or the U.S. government is doing something, we don't do it. We only fill vacuums.

Secondly, we are totally nonpartisan. Usually when we have any sort of controversial issue to consider, we bring in a prominent Republican to join as my equal co-chairperson to deal with that sensitive subject.

We don't undertake programs merely for their academic interest, although I know this is a very important role for a university. Unless there is the prospect of a direct-action component, we don't take it on. Those are the three basic principles that guide us. That is the policy of The Carter Center.

Incidentally, we also are committed to the eradication of disease and to immunizing children. All the children in the world are immunized under the direction of the Task Force for Child Survival and Development, located at The Carter Center. Within that task force are the World Health Organization, UNI4 (C) (.) 0.2 ()]TJ(ce) 0.3 d0.4 (ta)n-8n..3 () 06.4 (t) 4.8 (y) baeienrfO

