

## Opinion/Commentary/Letters

# Carter planning aids smooth transition

WASHINGTON — We are embarking on a happy period in the life of Jimmy Carter, and the nation will be the better for it. No one can tell much about what his presidency will be like, but his pre-presidency ought to be terrific.

This is not just guesswork. Everything we have seen about the President-elect points in the direction of this transition period being a good and fruitful time for him and the nation.

First, and most obvious, Carter is at his best when he has won. He may be sore about the "deferential" way television treated his rival during the campaign, and he may have gripes with others who didn't do all they



David S. Broder

could have to speed him on his way to the White House. But his desire to get even is doubtless curbed by the fact that none of their shortcomings — or his own acknowledged campaign mistakes — deprived him of the prize he so ardently wished to win.

When Carter feels on top of things, he can relax. And when he relaxes, he is at his best — as he was in his first press conference, in Plains, since the election.

The second reason to think this period will be good for him is that a good deal of work has been done already to assure its success. No one but Carter can judge the quality of the briefing books prepared by Jack Watson's transition team; but the project involved some very good people, and, in its scope, it surpasses anything ever previously attempted.

To the extent that a successful transition involves the cooperation of the departing administration, the auguries are also very good. President Ford and his top aides, Richard Cheney and John Marsh, are plainly dedicated to smoothing Carter's takeover, and that attitude should quickly communicate itself to the departments and agencies.

The third reason that this ought to be a good period for Carter is that the

most important decisions he has to make are about people, and he does that very well.

As has been remarked here before, the best recommendation for Carter's candidacy in the early days of the race was the quality of the people he had recruited to his cause in communities across this country. Men and women, young and old, renowned and unknown, they were the kind of people you'd like to have on your side if you were trying to do anything in that community — build a new school, pass a bond issue, or beat a bribe-taking sheriff.

To a remarkable degree, they were people who had been spotted and recruited by Carter himself, as he traveled the country on behalf of Democratic candidates in the 1974 mid-term election. He had an eye for talent, and the ability to enlist good people in what seemed like a long-shot enterprise.

Now that he is President-elect, he has a great talent pool in which to fish. He need not confine himself to the big names of the past, for in the past eight years, Democrats have developed whole new reserves of skills on congressional staffs, in state capitols and city halls, in the law firms and the "think tanks" and the movements organized around vari-

ous local and national issues.

Given the talent pool and Carter's knack of talent-spotting, it will be surprising — and very disappointing — if Carter's Cabinet, agency and White House staff appointments do not draw applause and praise in the coming weeks.

Not only are the products of the talent-hunt likely to be impressive, but Carter will look good in the process. He has already indicated that he will follow the procedures of his vice-presidential choice in picking his principal administration associates.

And that process of orderly interviewing, discussion and testing of reactions should be reassuring to the country about the new President's way of doing business.

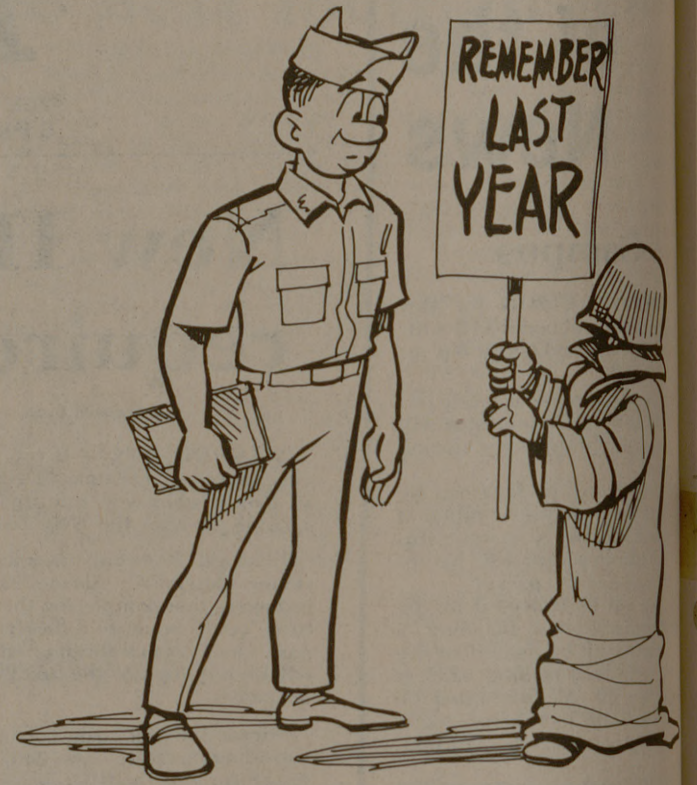
In fact, the country will be helped if Carter's prestige and public support is enhanced in the two months before he takes office. Despite his efforts to put the best face on it, the voters' verdict was thin and tentative. It will be helpful if there is a stronger display of public confidence in Carter before he takes on the tough job of being President.

For make no mistake about it. Governing will be harder than getting ready to govern.

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Slouch

by Jim Earle



... and after Saturday, Arkansas won't forget this year.

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