

VIEWPOINT

THE BATTALION
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

THURSDAY
JULY 13, 1978

A birthday to remember

Jerry was 17. He and a friend were on a camping vacation in the Arizona high desert.

Police said a drunk driver, barreling down the wrong side of the freeway, slammed head-on into Jerry's car at 90 miles an hour.

Jerry and his friend were not killed instantly. But at the funeral the coffins were closed. The morticians said it would be better that way.

Clinton was also 17. He was bright and handsome, one of those people who had everything going for him.

The drunk driver who smashed into Clinton didn't kill him. But Clinton's damaged brain struggled for two years to relearn basic skills such as holding a spoon and speaking coherently.

Four other high school friends were killed by a

drunk driver on a canyon curve at night.

Another friend's new bride was disabled for a year by a drunk driver who ran a red light.

Seven friends in all. Seven people who shared their dreams in intimate conversations over cups of coffee after late-night movies. Not casual acquaintances, but seven friends, and all killed or injured by drunk drivers before the age of 21.

That in itself is horrifying.

But more horrifying are the statements by State Comptroller Bob Bullock, who was arrested Tuesday morning for driving while intoxicated.

Bullock, who had been celebrating his 49th birthday Monday night, did not seem too concerned about his arrest.

Calling it the finest birthday he had ever had,

Bullock said he was disappointed that not everyone had enjoyed it as much as he had.

Released 30 minutes after he was booked on a \$500 recognizance bond, Bullock added that he would go to trial if his attorney decides it's worth the "time and effort."

Bullock's insolent and ignorant attitude toward his DWI arrest, and the attitudes of others like him, killed and maimed those seven friends.

Texans should not have to suffer such irresponsibility in anyone, but least of all in a state official.

Bob Bullock may have laughed off his arrest for drunken driving. Let's hope he doesn't laugh one of us into the grave.

F.K.

Carter's ship sinking fast

By DAVID S. BRODER

WASHINGTON—President Carter is going to Europe this week under almost the worst circumstances imaginable. Not since Richard Nixon made his pre-resignation visits to Moscow and the Middle East has an American chief executive conferred with his counterparts at a moment when there were more reasons for skepticism about his own capacity for leadership.

The Soviet Union has dramatized its disdain for Carter's vaunted "human rights" policy by staging showcase trials of two prominent dissidents and by tightening the screws on American correspondents in Moscow.

AT HOME, the sendoff to the economic summit was the concession by Carter's own top economic advisers that inflation in this country will be worse and economic growth slower than they had expected.

As if that were not enough, Carter must face his fellow heads of government without the national energy plan that all of them regard as the single most important evidence that this nation has the will and the skill to address the fundamental problems facing the international economy.

If there is a single silver lining to this dark cloud of doubt, it is that there appear to be few people inside the Carter administration who are kidding themselves about the seriousness of the situation.

In the past week, one could hear grimly realistic appraisals of the problems in U.S.-Soviet relations, in the economy and the energy picture, from the men who advise the President in each of these areas. What is not clear, however, is whether these men—or the President they serve—understand the extent to which the present problems have been nurtured by Carter's tendency to moralize rather than manage his way through the morass of conflicting interests and powers in the world.

TO UNDERSTAND WHAT is happening now, it is helpful to look back slightly more than a year to the time in 1977 when the characteristic approaches of the Carter

administration were being defined.

What one sees time and again is the President confusing the expression of good intentions with the devising of a sensible strategy for achieving his goals. His naive ete of concept was matched by the naive ete of risk-measurement. Carter was as reluctant to give weight to serious opposition as he was to hold his own idealism up to skeptical self-examination.

At the press conference of March 24, 1977, for example, he discussed both U.S.-Soviet relations and inflation in terms that are almost ludicrous when read in the light of subsequent events.

On the eve of Secretary of State Vance's first visit to Moscow, Carter said the agenda would include actual reductions in nuclear arms, mutual force reductions in the NATO area, and eliminations of all nuclear tests.

"We are going to express our concern about the future of Africa and ask the

Soviet Union to join with us in removing from that troubled continent outside interferences which might contribute to warfare in the countries involved," the President said. "And we will start laying the groundwork for cooperation with the Soviet Union at the Geneva Conference which we hope will take place concerning the Middle East."

"These matters are extremely complex," he conceded. "We don't know whether or not we will be successful at all, but we go in good faith with high hopes. The Soviets have been very cooperative up to this point, and we are pleased with their attitude."

There is not a hint in the press conference of any suspicion that the Soviets would, within a week, coldly reject Carter's agenda and send Vance home from Moscow empty-handed. Much less was Carter thinking that his grandiose plans for Africa, the Middle East and Europe might



be exploded.

YET THE WARNING SIGNS were there. At this same news conference, reporters noted that Leonid Brezhnev had reacted angrily to Carter's heavily publicized human rights campaign and had said that normal relations would be "unthinkable" if it continued.

No problem, said the President. The Brezhnev speech, he said, was "very constructive," and if the Soviet president mistakenly thought the human rights campaign was an "intrusion into the internal affairs of the Soviet Union," he, Jimmy Carter, would be happy to assure him that "I don't agree with his assessment."

What about inflation? Another questioner asked, noting that even then, 15 months ago, the two basic price indexes were in the double-digit range.

No problem, said the President. "I intend to cut down the expenditure of government programs well enough to bring about a balanced budget by 1981. I am deeply committed to this goal. And I believe that we will have unveiled, for the nation to assess, a comprehensive package against inflation within the next two weeks."

THERE WAS, of course, no such package, and the goal of a balanced budget has now been officially postponed at least until 1982.

A month after this press conference, Carter was back on the airwaves with an energy plan he proclaimed "the moral equivalent of war."

The failure of his government to gain congressional approval of that plan resulted, like other failures, from both the substantive short-comings of Carter's proposals and his massive underestimation of the opposition. Now the energy failure, along with inflation fears and the deteriorating international climate, spread gloom over his trip to Europe.

One can only hope that the lesson has not been lost.

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