

BILLIE ROWE'S NOTEBOOK

THE INAUGURAL PLUS-MINUS

WASHINGTON, DC — The Inauguration of Plains, GA's Jimmy Carter as the 39th President of the United States was a physical and emotional attacking event with the equal amount of confusion and illusion. It brought a warmth of southern hospitality to this bone chilled city which may take four years to wipe the pleased smiles off its face. On the plus side, the entire happening seemed to have generated a new sense of black and white togetherness, north and south, as an awakened meaning of the American Dream permeated. A peripatitic President was the cog around which all the wheels were rotating. In this atmosphere of more pomp than glory, he seemed like a person of noble purpose with an urgency to get on with the job of rebuilding the kind of America envisioned by the founding sect. His pledge to war against poverty and injustice came through like the agenda of a human-being who in the long had come to recognize the passion for freedom in the breast of us all. The immortal Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once remarked: "The South seems bent on beating the North to freedom." Now the hope is that with Jimmy Carter of Ga in the "resident of the President," the entire country will be driven up freedom's road.

THE MINUS—The tug-of-war for political power and Presidential favor took on many forms during this once every 4-yr's gala. Never in history has an Inaugural Committee attempted to bite into such a big hunk of the American heritage. That's probably where the foul-up began and the headaches started. The purpose of this kind of show is to generate favorable p/r for an in-coming chief exec. Well, it was not so in the case of Mr. Carter, who though his ears were probably shielded, got more flack than favorable jawboning because of the group of inexperience folks holding the reins. There were very little black involvement in the planning which was performed by a staff of 25 lilly whites. In fact, as far as could be ascertained, there were only two blacks on a total staff of 40-50 directors, Chet Carter, dir. of protocol, was one. The feeling is that here was no commitment to intergrating the staff structure of the event, after all it was an extravaganza designed for white Americans.

The desire of those running this end of the show to de'politicalize so highly a political and sensitive situation by resorting to computers just didn't work. The move stirred up a hornet's nest among ethnic groups who felt that they were systematically excluded from the Inaugural planning anyway. Then there were those affluent, white and black, democrats quatered in various sections of the nation who also did not receive

invitations. All the names were thrown into the computer, but whoever forgot to program it with the necessary political sensitivity to make sure the right invitations was dispatched to the desired person. The other foul up was that somebody forgot that computers do not address envelopes, a job that is usually done by volunteers who march to a different drum, the kind that none of the poor naive committee members possessed.

The set of criteria, according to one staffer, used for mailing invitations which entitled one to buy tickets to the Inaugural parties were: first, The Carter family, relatives and friends. Then the major contributors, then Democratic Senators and Congress persons in that order. Each Senator was entitled to 16 and the Congress people 8. Now since there are only 17 black congress persons, that meant an alful lot of left outs. The Democratic Governors and Mayors came next. Bottoming off the list were the campaign participants who were favored through a list developed by a state-coordinator who could name up to fifty who should receive invites. In Ill. it was alleged that the state-coordinator did not include some key black leaders from Chgo. In Washington blacks were reported so peaved they held their own Inaugural bash as they were not invited to participate and many, who should have, did not receive invitations. Not all, this came from some very reliable sources, One thing for sure, the bash that the disgruntalled Washingtonians threw was something else, and will be write into in Part II next type-around.

In case your stuff got left in the computer, there were two catagories, one which entitled the recipient to spend \$25 for tickets to invitational-only gala events, which included the swearing-in, inaugural parade, the 5-inaugural balls, and the Vice President's receptions, of which there were two or three. The other was just a general souvenir type in the spirit of what was termed a "People's Inaugural," but didn't entitle one to anything except the parcel of free ethnic things which were set-up all over town which ran thru the entire week. If you were hotel-housed, you had to pay for 4-days, stay or not, for the bill had to be paid in advance. Next write around look for some names of folks you might know who were there, and who like this scribe enjoyed being that close to history despite the wear and tear on the nerves to say nothing about the dent it made in the budget. Behind it all President Carter just should kick back a little April loot to us. . . . STAY LOOSE.

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