

OUR MAN, JIMMY  
*(Originally published May 1976)*

Our smiling, peanut man from fifty miles or so down the road continues to campaign successfully and pile up an impressive number of primary contest victories. When Jimmy Carter first announced he would run for the presidency, most of us, like the bewildered audience that laughed when the man sat down to play the piano, found it hard to believe. Later on, when we realized he was in earnest, we decided that he could be merely testing his theoretic national appeal and, at most, laying the groundwork for a more serious attempt in 1980.

We remembered the pattern from before, when he emerged unexpectedly and out of nowhere as a strong contender in the Georgia Democratic election race of 1966 won by Lester Maddox. On the basis of that showing, Carter was able in 1970 to win the gubernatorial office without too much difficulty. In fact, most of the citizens in this normally conservative and tentatively Republican area got on the bandwagon and helped to vote him in.

He was a charming and believable campaigner, and he made the usual campaign promises tailored to local needs. Columbus was convinced that putting someone from the area into the Governor's chair would help the local economy and solve the problem of making that long-awaited four-lane highway to Atlanta become a reality. We are still waiting.

The medical community, too, which was almost solidly behind him, became disenchanted within a short time. Some of his strongest supporters (and one or two old personal friends) dropped by the wayside when he disrupted the Georgia State Health Department and made it a sub-agency of the monster new bureaucracy to which he gave the high-sounding name of Department of Human Resources.

Our own disenchantment became more acute when the Department of Human Resources began sending out those reams of paper directives couched in the blithering of sociologic doubletalk. It is hard to forget or forgive phrases like "providing a continuum," "paraprofessional generalist human service workers", "umbrella arrangement to afford full spectrum visibility," "innovative organic systems approach," "flexible in-depth programming," and "parameters for expanding the outreach."

Jimmy Carter may never tell lies, but sometimes he stretches his truths a bit thin. Looking back on his four-year term as Governor, it is hard to remember anything really positive about it. A few of his negative accomplishments, like not riding a bicycle

backward in parades, nor peddling T-shirts in Underground Atlanta, were at best, only comforting.

So even if our Jimmy gets the nomination, we don't plan to vote for him. In health, education and welfare, he still dreams those liberal dreams. We also suspect he is one of those dedicated reorganizers with plans for all of us and that he will streamline government only by expanding bureaucracy and the national debt. We're not sure what he is, or what he stands for. We just feel uncomfortable about anyone who hopes to provide continuums and who enjoys outreaching for parameters.

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