

Flexibility required to meet goals—speaker

By Alice Hrnicek

Much progress has been made internationally in the area of human rights, "but we still have a long way to go," reported a staff assistant of the Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs in the State Department.

Eileen Heaphy addressed the issue in an open forum Monday. The event was jointly sponsored by the United National Association of Lincoln, the UNL Political Science Department and the UNL Convocations Committee.

The categories of human rights that the bureau works with include the rights of integrity of the person, the right to fulfill one's basic economic and social needs and the right to enjoy civil and political freedom, Heaphy said.

"Flexible diplomacy is required, in order to achieve these goals," she said. "We practice a vigorous diplomacy using all available resources."

Several of the methods used are quiet diplomacy, in which U.S. leaders join in bilateral discussions with the foreign governments, and symbolic affirmations, in which the U.S. examines its relations with other nations in terms of human rights.

Assistance linked to policy

"We attempt to channel increased economic assistance to countries with good or improving human rights policies," Heaphy noted. "Aid is reduced to countries that are gross violators of human rights." The Human Rights Committee has opposed loans to 30 countries because of this policy, she added.

The export and import banks and OPEC have also been required by law to take human rights into consideration when bargaining with other countries. The sales of arms and police equipment have also been reviewed, she said.

The "processes and decisions are extremely complex and difficult to make but we have to make them. The question of intervention is a false charge. If you have military assistance you're already involved. We have to make a decision whether we like it or not," she said.

Heaphy added that the purpose of the human rights policy is to reduce suffering in the world. "It is in our self-interest. Our position in the world strengthens by a human rights policy."

Respect from foreigners has come at a grass roots level, she said. Support has been in the form of letters from them.

Support balanced

"This grass roots support has to be balanced against losses by governments," she said. "Obviously, we are not

popular with Somoza in Nicaragua, but we are aiming for long term support."

An increased awareness in the concern for human rights and case by case progress in countries are seen as concrete achievements of the past two years, Heaphy said.

Two major acts presented by the United Nations which have not yet been ratified by the United States are the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Over 50 countries have ratified these covenants.

Other international legislation up for vote are the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and American Convention on Human Rights (sponsored by the Organization of American States).

International court

A multi-lateral convention of human rights put forth in 1969 and signed by 15 nations will go into effect soon, Heaphy said. The act calls for the first international human rights courts which would try cases in each country. The United States has not ratified this agreement.

Progress has also been made in Communist nations, Heaphy noted. The Helsinki Act, signed earlier this year, serves as a "legislative vehicle with which to discuss human rights with communist countries. Now human rights is a viable topic to discuss in Communist nations," she said.

Heaphy pointed out that the situation in Iran is a "very crucial problem at this moment. Some think our human rights policy is causing problems for the shah.

"Our relations with the shah are very close," she said. "We haven't cut off aid. Some could say we're inconsistent by doing that.

She said although human rights are important now, that does not mean they will always be paramount. There are other considerations, she added.

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