

Obama's First Days in Office

by Janet Jagan

While Barack Obama's address at his inauguration as President of the USA was a remarkable speech, one that will go down in US history as an important document, I found of even greater interest his rather brief comments on television of decisions made on his first day in office.

He said in his inaugural address: "What is required of us is a new era of responsibility." Twenty-four hours later he announced to the American people that he had signed three orders. These included (1) the closing down of the notorious Guantanamo Bay prison in Cuba and 2) the end of rendition of prisoners to overseas detention centres where torture took place; the end of the use of torture of detainees and 3) the first step in dealing with the corrupt practices inherent in Washington's lobbying system.

Not all that much

has been revealed by the media on the lobbying system which is I believe, unique to the USA. But it is the foremost method of government corruption that exists in the USA and in different forms in other countries. The Washington lobbies concern almost all spheres of life and lobbyists,

lobby. Bribes are used to influence Congressmen and persons in strategic positions to do their bidding. President Obama has now taken the first step to curb the activities of the Washington lobby. As a beginning, if I understood his announcement, Obama has issued an order preventing

In other moves during his first week in office, President Obama has taken a first step in the direction of legalizing abortion, one of the sharp controversies of the recent election campaign. He has reversed the ban on funding for groups abroad that provide abortion services. He has also lifted the ban on stem cell research, a positive move for scientists.

who generally work for big corporations like the tobacco industry, medical manufacturers and all those who have an axe to grind, a bill to promote or kill, etc. The lobbies hire politicians who have served in the government to use their contacts to further whatever are the aims of the particular

any official or legislator who has lost his/her job with the change of government and the Congressional elections, from gaining work as a lobbyist. There are other aspects of this order which have not yet been clarified by the media, but whatever, it is one of the most significant aspects of his

"first day" decisions.

He has also frozen salaries above a certain mark for White House officials, cutting down on the exorbitant salaries some have received in the previous administration.

President Obama is fulfilling his election promise on Guantanamo prison and



Janet Jagan

periods short of death by drowning. He has given the order that Guantanamo prison will be closed within a year and in the meantime, there must be "humane" treatment of prisoners according to the Geneva Convention.

In other moves during his first week in office, President Obama has taken a first step in the direction of legalizing abortion, one of the sharp controversies of the recent election campaign. He has reversed the ban on funding for groups abroad that provide abortion services. He has also lifted the ban on stem cell research, a positive move for

scientists.

President Obama has, during his first days in office, taken steps to promote his \$825 Billion economic recovery plan. His aim is to bring Republicans and Democrats together to support the recovery plan and to this end his is holding bi partisan meetings.

These early decisions, backed by Presidential orders, are somewhat unique, as most newly elected presidents have spent their early days in office getting acquainted with their responsibilities and the choice of advisers and other White House officials. But then, again, he a unique and enlightened President.

On the home front, President Obama has taken early steps to fulfill some of his election promises. However, many are concerned over his administration's foreign policy, hoping that decisive changes can be made on some of the more controversial issues facing a world seeking peace.