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## Out of Watergate into the fire?

WASHINGTON — (NEA) — Henry David Thoreau once said that he would run for his life if he saw someone approaching him with the intent of doing him good. This is the way many in the nation and the world must begin to feel about the advent of Jerry Ford and his tedious vows to restore harmony to the troubled globe.

The other day, as example, the unelected President told a World Energy Conference that his administration would do all it could to solve the international fuel crisis, then added what was widely read as a hint this might include war. Naturally avoiding specifics, Ford warned oil-producing Arabs to lower the price of their exports because: "Throughout history, nations have gone to war over natural advantages such as water or food" or — hint — perhaps oil.

The comment was straight out of the 1950s Cold War bluster. Back then they called it saber rattling. In recent years, such talk by great nations has been somewhat more subtle.

Small wonder this caution. The Middle East is a risky enough area without the interjection of additional elements of worry. Not that the prospect of Western military intervention there is all that remote — the Pentagon has contingency plans for a war in the Arab oilfields and the Arabs have contingency plans to destroy the fields in such an event — but up to now, the possibility has at least been left unsaid publicly by responsible leaders.

Besides this, there has been an even greater reality restraining tough talk among world powers. That is the sophistication and magnitude of the weapons that would be used if talk turned to action and then push to shove. A

Western grab for Arab oil would carry with it the heavy possibility of superpower confrontation, again shades of the 1950s, and anyone who has lately looked at the list of

nuclear weapons that would thereby be shot, must realize this is not time to yak loosely about visions of war.

That nuclear list, to be sure, beggars belief. According to Washington's Center for Defense Information, the United States owns 7,940 strategic nuclear weapons and the Soviet Union at least 2,600. This averages out to about 36 U.S. nuclear bombs for each Soviet city of 100,000 population or more, and 11 Russian bombs for each American city of comparable density. If Western armies landed in Saudi Arabia tomorrow, in other words, a dozen nuclear bombs could, at least statistically land on Amarillo, Tex., tomorrow.

And in case you've not been paying attention, the bombs these days are very literally beyond human comprehension. The atomic warhead that killed 68,000 people and wounded 76,000 more at Hiroshima had the force of a piddling .013 megatons. The smallest U.S. weapon of the present is three times that and some are 16,000 times as mighty.

To put it even more bluntly, the Center for Defense Information reports that a lone U.S. Titan missile can deliver five times the force of all bombs dropped during World War II. One B-52 bomber carrying four 24 megaton bombs can deliver the explosive power of 7,385 Hiroshimas. And the total U.S. stockpile of 4,807 megatons has the force equivalency of 615,385 Hiroshimas, or the statistical capability of killing 38 billion of the world's 3.7 billion human beings.

That Jerry Ford is a wonder. In six weeks as president he has energetically instituted enough harmony to get us all thinking again about the end of mankind. One hesitates to contemplate — one in fact runs under the bed when such subjects surface — just what decision for harmony this infant President will announce next.