

El Salvador medic speaks

By Bill Homans

Of the Emerald

Student apathy about Central America may dissolve if the U.S. becomes militarily involved there, says an American physician who spent a year working in rebel controlled areas of El Salvador.

Dr. Charles Clements, a former Air Force pilot, talked about his experiences in El Salvador at a press conference in Eugene Tuesday. Clements, the author of "Witness to War," also spoke in Room 150 Geology Tuesday night.

"As I watched the conflict in El Salvador, I saw another tragedy like Vietnam in the making," Clements said. "Having become a Quaker, I felt that the best way to bear witness to this was to treat the victims of the war."

Clements said his dissatisfaction with U.S. military policy stems from his experience in Vietnam. Clements flew State Department operatives into Cambodia in an attempt to depose Prince Norodom Sihanouk — supposedly a U.S. ally.

When Clements refused to fly further missions, he was committed to a psychiatric hospital and later received a medical discharge.

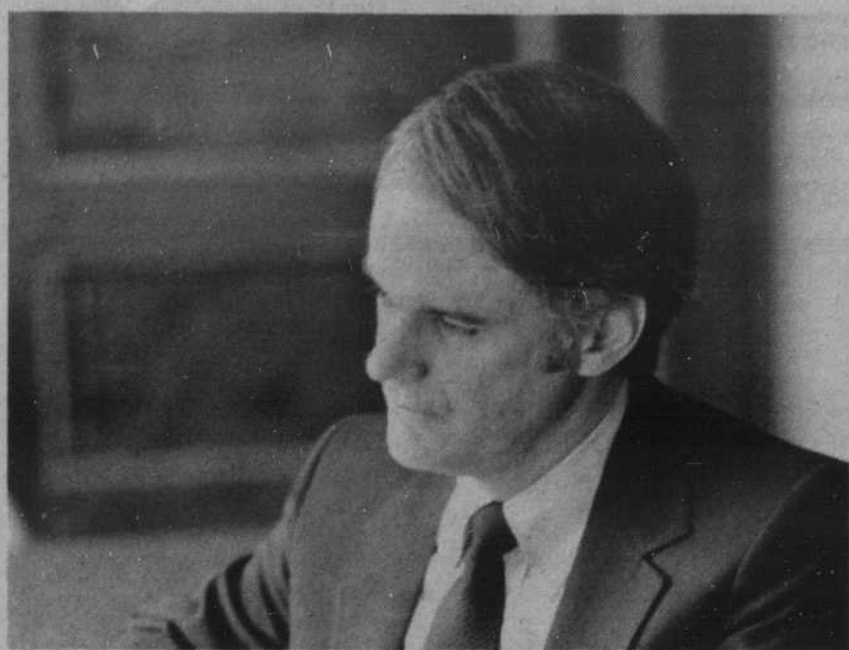
After his discharge, Clements studied medicine. While treating Salvadoran refugees in California, he decided to go to El Salvador.

Clements said the private, volunteer organizations involved in the medical effort would not permit him to treat people in government-held areas because of the danger from death squads.

Consequently, he went to Mexico City, obtained status as a medical neutral party and went behind rebel lines.

Clements said he often treated torture victims — people covered with cigarette burns — as well as victims of napalm and white phosphorus. The Salvadoran military customarily uses white phosphorus "to mark fixed targets" — often people's homes, Clements said.

Clements added that he saw no evidence of Cuban or Nicaraguan infiltration or arms



Charles Clements

Photo by Ross Martin

among the rebel troops.

Paramilitary civil defense units and out-of-uniform regular military personnel are responsible for death squad killings, Clements said. He added that their operations are coordinated with the Salvadoran military intelligence units.

U.S. military advisors direct Salvadoran military strategy and teach the same tactics to the Salvadoran military that failed in Vietnam, he said. U.S. foreign policy is enhancing the possibility of an all-Communist Central America, Clements added.

"The cutting off of World Bank funds, economic blockades, and the like, are liable to antagonize Central Americans further, and they may indeed turn to Marxism," he said. Clements also criticized the Kissinger Commission recommendations for Central America.

"Economic development in the context of a militaristic solution is irrelevant, as it was in Vietnam," he said. "The Kissinger plan is only an endorsement of current U.S. policies."

The American people need to understand more about the Third World in order to formulate an effective foreign policy.

"If we can not formulate a foreign policy which distinguishes between

legitimate human aspirations and the interests of military dictatorships, we must expect more of the Third World to turn to Communism," he said.

After returning to the United States last year, Clements helped found the Salvadoran Medical Relief Fund. In the last year he has addressed thousands of Americans on campuses, in churches, and at special events.

Clements said he is surprised by the lack of student interest in Central America. He warns that in the event of direct military intervention by the United States, which he considers inevitable, the draft will be reinstated — without student deferments.

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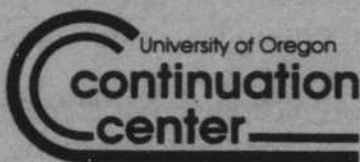
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It is our goal to "match" volunteers with vocational and study interests. An example would be a pre-law student and a practicing attorney. The business person hosts the student selected during lunchtime the week of Homecoming - October 22nd through the 26th.

It will be the responsibility of the Homecoming Committee to "match" and contact two volunteers to be paired. The business person will then phone the student to arrange the date and location of the lunch meeting. It will also be the responsibility of the business party to pay for the lunch!

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