
Koop as Surgeon General: To Be or Not to Be?

The House last week refused to approve an amendment which would have waived the age limit of the surgeon general. It thus blocks, for the moment, Senate confirmation of the Administration's candidate for the post, C. Everett Koop. The House action followed a subcommittee hearing at which representatives from several health groups criticized Koop's lack of experience in public health and his crusade against abortion.

At the hearing, chairman of the subcommittee on health and the environment Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) and witnesses cited speeches and articles written by Koop that led Waxman to conclude: "Dr. Koop scares me. He is a man of tremendous intolerance."

In one speech, Koop, chief surgeon at Philadelphia's Children's Hospital, charged that Planned Parenthood had "converted adolescent innocence into sexually active teenagers." In an article in *Christianity Today*, he called amniocentesis a "search and destroy mission." Koop said in another article that Christians who support abortion illustrate their "superficial theology, lack of morality and . . . depravity."

Margaret Bridwell, a physician representing the Women and Health Roundtable, said, "We do not find these views consistent with balanced government policy."

Koop, who declined to appear before the subcommittee, won high praises for his surgical skills but even the American Public Health Association, which has never protested a candidate for surgeon general in its 100-year history, found Koop unsuitable for the job. The opposition seems to be growing. After the House voted down the amendment, the *New York Times* ran an editorial headlined, "Dr. Unqualified," to protest Koop's candidacy.

The Reagan Administration apparently figured that the House would make little or no fuss over the amendment. The measure would abolish the surgeon general's mandatory retirement age of 64. Koop is 65. The amendment, sponsored by Senator Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) and tacked onto a noncontroversial banking bill, had already sailed through the Senate.

Since the House vetoed the amendment, the provision now goes to House-Senate conference. Waxman, who is one of the conferees, vows that the amendment will remain in conference until Koop testifies on Capitol Hill. To date, Koop, who has already been appointed deputy assistant secretary of health, has refused to comment.—**Marjorie Sun**

Public's Fear of Watt Is Environmentalists' Gain

The environmental news in the first 3 months of the Reagan Administration has been uniformly bad: 1500 jobs are to be eliminated from the Environmental Protection Agency; the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) has been virtually abolished; there is no presidential science advis-



**James
Watt**

er, and talk of deregulation is everywhere. The greatest source of aggravation so far has been the behavior of Interior Secretary James Watt, who in the view of environmentalists has radically transformed his job from that of chief custodian of public lands to chief advocate of industrial and natural resources development. "An environmentalist's nightmare come to life" is the way Representative Phillip Burton (D-Calif.) recently characterized the new Administration.

The good news is that business is booming as never before for environmental groups. Membership is climbing and money has been pouring in. Calls to eight environment, conservation, and wildlife groups revealed that contributions across the board are up about 20 percent over last year—and Watt appears to be the greatest single stimulus for the generosity. "There's no question that we're finding a very dramatic response," says Dennis Shaffer of the Sierra Club. Member-

ship growth there has quadrupled to a 10 percent annual rate and this year's fund appeal is running 50 percent higher than projected, to an expected total of about \$200,000.

At the Natural Resources Defense Council, contributions are up around 20 percent from last year, and the same is true at the National Wildlife Federation where memberships are up an average of 16 percent. The number of large donors is up too: that is, people who ordinarily give about \$20 are weighing in with checks for \$50 or \$60.

The 45,000-member Wilderness Society, now headed by former Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson, has so far raked in a record-breaking \$125,000 during its latest fund drive, almost triple the return it had expected.

The political climate has been fortuitous for the 430,000-member Audubon Society, too. For 2 years, former CEO Chairman Russell Peterson has broadened the group's scope widely and hired a half-dozen environmental big guns, including Rupert Cutler, former research director at the Department of Agriculture.

Although increased public concern has been felt by these groups ever since the election, the general feeling is that things are going worse than anyone had anticipated, and Watt is getting most of the credit. Watt is known to number the venerable Audubon Society among the "environmental extremists" he does not care to deal with, but Peterson counters "if there's anybody who has demonstrated by his actions and words being an extremist, it's Watt." Peterson opposed Watt's confirmation, but "I had no idea he was going to be as bad as he has been."—**Constance Holden**

CC43.7, Sec. C-1 Is Answer, Schweiker Says

The chairman of a House oversight panel wants to know why Secretary of Health and Human Services Richard Schweiker fired director of the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health Anthony Robbins.

Robbins was dismissed about a month ago, a political casualty with the change of administrations, al-