
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-

though the job is supposedly an apolitical appointment. The firing raised eyebrows particularly because Robbins' commission in the public health service was revoked. National Institutes of Health director Donald Fredrickson offered to take Robbins on board the agency, but Schweiker turned down the proposal. Robbins is still looking for a job.

Schweiker wrote back to the chairman of the subcommittee on oversight and investigation, John Dingell (D-Mich.), citing line and verse that he said gave him the authority to dismiss Robbins. The commissioned corps personnel manual states in subchapter CC43.7, section C-1, that reserve officers serve a 3-year probationary period. During that time, the officer may be dismissed "without cause." Robbins was hired in late 1980 as a reserve officer.

A subcommittee staff aide says that the rule appears clear-cut but adds that the panel will research Schweiker's decision a bit more before it decides to drop the matter.

—**Marjorie Sun**

Afghan Casualties: Ancient Artworks

While diplomats ponder a political solution to the war in Afghanistan, experts in ancient Afghan art have had their own worries. Afghan and American archeologists fear that many works from the principal museums have been damaged or plundered. Rumors of destruction and theft have stirred the archeology community so much that the State Department queried the U.S. embassy in Kabul. One expert says, however, that some rumors are propaganda.

Officials there replied that some pieces from the Kabul Museum were destroyed when the collection, including delicate glass and ivory from the first and second century, had to be packed up and moved out so the museum could be used as an army mess hall. They were unable to determine if a museum in Herat, which has an exhibit of brilliantly tiled 15th-century monuments, was damaged. Archeologists were also concerned that two giant monuments of Buddha in Bamiyan Valley were damaged during



Afghanistan: Tourist Organization

Giant Buddha in Bamiyan Valley

Pictured in undated photo

heavy fighting there, but the State Department says that at least one of them was intact a year ago.

No one has been able to examine the museums or monuments firsthand because travel in Afghanistan is very restricted. The former director of the Afghan Institute of Archaeology, Schaibai Mustamandy, says that before he fled Afghanistan, "Lots of objects were destroyed. I don't know what has happened to the rest of them." He escaped from his country a week before the invasion and now lives in Falls Church, Virginia.

Nancy Dupree, co-author of the official guidebook to the Kabul Museum, says that nothing is missing from that museum based on reports she's received from friends still there. The rumors of destruction are drummed up to discredit the new regime and the Soviets, she says.

William Trousdale, curator and director of anthropology at the National Museum of Natural History of the Smithsonian, says objects he excavated and kept at the Institute in Kabul are now gone. He says that one of the most precious pieces of the Kabul museum—a second-century glass vessel with an etching of Pharos of Alexandria—was broken during the museum move. —**Marjorie Sun**

Congressional Confusion over "Conception"

Senator Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) defines "conception" as the fertilization of the egg by the sperm. Representative Henry Hyde (R-Ill.) defines it as the implantation of the embryo, which takes place roughly 5 days after fertilization. This may not seem like a big issue. But it could be because of an identical bill that these legislators are sponsoring in Congress.

The bill, which is an attempt to make an end run around the 1973 Supreme Court decision that struck down state laws prohibiting abortion, states: "The Congress finds that present-day scientific evidence indicates significant likelihood that actual human life exists from conception." The measure, if enacted and if deemed constitutional—the latter *if* is apparently the bigger of the two—would permit the states to enact laws that prohibit abortion. It would also make it harder to challenge those laws by prohibiting federal district and appeals courts from hearing the cases.

The problem with defining conception as fertilization, à la Helms, is that it might mean that intrauterine devices and the "morning-after pill," which probably act by preventing implantation, could end up banned in states that enact antiabortion laws based on the bill.

Hyde, at least, is against that. He has been quoted in *Newsweek* as saying, "a bill outlawing the Pill and IUD will not pass, period. And I for one don't intend to try." A spokeswoman for the representative says that she does not know whether he is aware that he and Helms define conception differently. Hearings on the bill are to be held on 23 and 24 April, and any differences may be ironed out at that time. "The wording of the bill may have to be altered," she concluded.

As for the scientific meaning of the word conception, three medical dictionaries unequivocally define it as fertilization. But a fourth, the 23rd edition of *Stedman's Medical Dictionary*, calls it implantation just as unequivocally. If Congress wants to avoid misunderstandings as it attempts to legislate when human life begins, it will have to use a more specific word—but not conception. —**Jean L. Marx**