

Fresh Troops for President's AIDS Panel

A seasoned public health official from Oregon and a physician who cares for drug addicts in New York City were named to the President's AIDS commission on 10 November, filling the seats abandoned by the tumultuous panel's two chairmen, who resigned last month citing internal bickering within the commission's ranks.

The two fresh recruits are Kristine M. Gebbie, the chief health officer in Oregon, and Beny J. Primm, president of the Urban Resource Institute, a non-profit umbrella organization that operates clinics for intravenous drug abusers in Harlem and Brooklyn.

Both appointments are being praised by public health workers and AIDS activists, many of whom have attacked the commission for its lack of expertise on AIDS and for the extreme views espoused by some of its 13 members.

Primm received his medical degree from the University of Geneva in 1959. He has worked with intravenous drug addicts in New York City since 1963, when he first became interested in the problem while serving as an anesthesiologist at a city hospital. In 1969, Primm opened the first of his six clinics, which provide methadone, counseling, and health care to 2,000 of the city's estimated 250,000 addicts. Colleagues call Primm a man of "technical competence" and "political courage." Primm was an early voice warning the black community that AIDS was not a disease limited to middle-class white homosexual men.

Gebbie, a nurse who has directed the Oregon state health department for the past 9 years, is a former president of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials,

and presently chairs an AIDS task force for the same group. Gebbie says she took the position because she thought someone on the President's AIDS commission should have "pragmatic experience dealing with AIDS."

Gebbie has not hesitated to criticize the Reagan Administration when she disagrees with its proposals. She opposes, for example, mandatory testing and has fired shots at Secretary of Education William Bennett for his insistence that AIDS education must stress sexual abstinence above all else, excluding other needed information about prevention, such as the use of condoms. "I have not been sitting in the corner on these issues," says Gebbie. "Somebody in the White House, I'm sure, must know this." ■

WILLIAM BOOTH



Seasoned and outspoken. "I have not been sitting in the corner on [AIDS] issues," says Kristine Gebbie.

Europe Votes to Expand Space Program

With Britain sitting on the sidelines, the Council of the European Space Agency (ESA) voted on 10 November to proceed with an ambitious plan to develop among other things a small spaceplane, a new large capacity rocket, and a research lab to be attached to the U.S. space station. This decision, taken by ESA's top policy-makers meeting in The Hague, will give European nations direct access to manned space programs in the 1990s. The ESA Council voted to contribute about \$670 million to support the first 3 years of "predevelopment" work on projects related to the space station, \$530 million to plan a spaceplane, and \$3.5 billion for the large Ariane 5 rocket. Three of the 13 member states—France, Italy, and West Germany—promised to provide 80% of the new funds.

Britain abstained from the proposal to build a spaceplane called Hermes, a small shuttle-like vehicle conceived by France. The total project will cost an estimated \$4.4 billion, more than Britain thinks is worth spending on manned space travel. Britain also declined to invest in Ariane 5 which would transport Hermes. The decision was not final. Britain might back the project later if it is satisfied that the rocket will be competitive with other launchers. Participation by ESA members is voluntary but those who abstain from a project do not receive R&D contracts.

For the moment, Britain also is withholding support for R&D work on Columbus, a \$3.7-billion package that includes a research module to be joined to the U.S. space station, a separate "man-tended" research

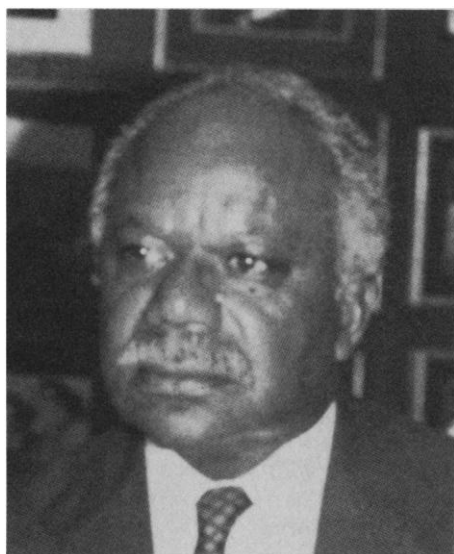
station, and a polar-orbiting platform.

According to ESA's Washington representative, Ian Pryke, the 3-year start-up program for Columbus is "95% subscribed, which allows us to proceed as of 1 January." ESA and the U.S. government are engaged in slow-moving negotiations on the terms for the joint management of the space station, which is scheduled to go aloft in the mid-1990s. Britain is awaiting the results of these negotiations before making up its mind on Columbus.

Reports that the talks are deadlocked over questions of management authority and U.S. military presence are exaggerated, Pryke says. It is correct that the Europeans want more autonomy and a clear promise that weapons will not be tested on the station. So far, the talks have not produced a satisfactory result. But, says Pryke, "the important thing is that we're still talking."

Meanwhile, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has delayed issuing \$6.5-billion worth of contracts for development of the space station. The awards, originally to have been made in mid-November, are now scheduled for release at the end of the month, after NASA has adjusted to the budget cuts imposed by the new deficit-reduction law. Andrew Stofan, NASA's assistant administrator for the space station, has been quoted as saying he would rather cancel the project than scale back any further. White House officials and Congress continue to haggle over the details of the 1988 budget cuts, which must be completed by 20 November. ■

ELIOT MARSHALL



Beny Primm. A man of "technical competence" and "political courage."