

Another Muzzle for AIDS Education?

In the midst of the current debate over next year's budget, Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) and Representative William Dannemeyer (R-CA) stood up on the floor of Congress to attack a comic book that chronicles the adventures of Ed the Jock and Julio the Pump Boy.

The conservative congressmen found the cartoons pornographic. Said Helms: "I believe if the American people saw these books, they would be on the verge of revolt." After Representative Robert Dornan (R-CA) got a peek at the comic books, he called them "hard-core, pornographic, lustful, [and] ugly." Like many of his colleagues, Dornan seemed to be under the impression that the taxpayers' hard-earned money was being spent on such things.

No one denies that the comics are extremely graphic. But they were not funded by the federal government. Instead, they were part of a series of AIDS education materials produced with private funds by the Gay Men's Health Crisis of New York City and intended for the clients of gay bars and bathhouses, according to Lori Behrman, a spokesperson for the group.

Such distinctions did not seem to matter. The congressmen were steamed that the very same organization that produced the naughty doodles received \$674,679 for AIDS education research from the federal Centers for Disease Control.

So onto the health and human services appropriations bill Helms and Dannemeyer tagged an amendment that stipulates that "none of the funds made available under this Act to the Centers for Disease Control shall be used to provide AIDS education, information, or prevention materials and activities that promote or encourage, directly or indirectly, homosexual sexual activities." The amendment goes on to read that any materials funded by the government "shall emphasize abstinence from sexual activity outside a sexually monogamous marriage (including abstinence from homosexual sexual activities)."

The amendment is being discussed behind closed doors this week by a Senate-House conference committee. Congressional staffers whose bosses oppose the amendment say they are working to dilute the amendment's language, or at the very least, load it up with qualifiers and caveats. Ideally, they say they would like to see the amendment die a quick and quiet death.

But with such overwhelming support, this does not seem likely. In the Senate, the amendment passed 94-2. Only Senators Lowell Weicker (R-CT) and Daniel Moyni-

han (D-NY) voted against it. Said Weicker: "The only tool we have at hand that is effective is education. What we are being asked to approve on the Senate floor is censorship of knowledge."

What effect the amendment would have on AIDS education is not yet clear. Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) called the Helms amendment "toothless." But in the House, which approved the Helms amendment 368-47, Representative Howard Wolpe (D-MI) warned that the amendment "may well have the effect of intimidating health care officials into restricting the distribution of lifesaving information."

Wolpe and others have wondered aloud whether a strict interpretation of the Helms amendment might preclude such activities as the distribution of the Surgeon General's report on AIDS, since the 36-page brochure deals candidly with condom use and homosexuality, and even contains a drawing of cells of the rectal lining. Could this be construed as "encouraging" homosexuality?

Public health officials and providers of AIDS education contacted by *Science* are worried that the amendment, if it remains basically intact through the Senate-House conference committee and becomes law, will make it more difficult to get information into the hands of high-risk individuals such as homosexuals and drug abusers.

"What happens to those people who can't be monogamous, who won't abstain from sex, who can't get off drugs? If the amendment stays as written we might not be able to give these people any information about alternative ways to reduce their risk," says Kevin O'Reilly, who runs a \$4.2-million AIDS prevention research program for the Centers for Disease Control. O'Reilly says his public health colleagues are concerned that the amendment will curtail federally funded AIDS education.

"It is demoralizing for the people working in the field. It undermines all the cooperative efforts people have been setting up over the last few years. . . . It's terrible public health policy and it's terrible science," says Don Des Jarlais of the New York State Division of Substance Abuse Services in New York City and a recipient of one of CDC's AIDS education grants.

Says Ann McFarren, executive director of the AIDS Action Council in Washington, D.C.: "The amendment precludes discussion of safer sex practices with federal funds. It's like saying we're going to contain polio without the vaccine because we're not going to contain the AIDS epidemic without good education." ■ **WILLIAM BOOTH**

Soviet Physicists Map Collider Strategy

Soviet scientists attending a meeting of the International Committee for Future Accelerators have provided additional details about their government's plans for expanding particle physics research. The new push in high energy physics also anticipates expanded collaboration with foreign physicists on Soviet experiments as well as those being conducted in the West.

Nikolai E. Tyurin, a theorist at the Institute for High Energy Physics, says the Soviet Union "is ready to receive experts to take part in" new collider projects being constructed at the high energy physics center at Protvino. He adds that Soviet scientists would like to participate in R&D related to the United States' proposed Superconducting Super Collider (SSC) and the Large Hadron Collider that the European Laboratory for Particle Physics (CERN) may build.

Soviet physicists attending the accelerator meeting held at Brookhaven National Laboratory in October also confirmed reports that the 3-trillion-electron-volt (TeV) synchrotron known as "UNK" will commence fixed target experiments in 1993. Two years later the 6-TeV proton-proton collider (*Science*, 2 October, p. 16) is slated to start operation.

In addition, Tyurin says construction of a new 1-TeV electron-positron linear collider is scheduled to begin in 1990 with experiments possibly getting under way in 1996. The machine is called VLEPP (which stands for colliding linear electron-positron beams)—not the Very Long Linear Collider as reported previously. The energy of the collisions may be increased to 2 TeV at a later date, according to Soviet officials.



Soviet theorist Nikolai E. Tyurin says foreign physicists will be invited to conduct research at new Soviet accelerators.