

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.

VLEPP is an outgrowth of a 300-GeV electron-positron linear collider by the same name that was first proposed for construction at Novosibirsk in 1978. The 1-TeV collider, however, now will be built at Protvino alongside UNK. This will give Soviet physicists the option of building a third high energy physics machine—an electron-proton collider that uses electrons from VLEPP and protons from UNK. The luminosity of this machine would be greater than that obtained with the HERA machine at the Deutsches Elektronen Synchrotron (DESY) laboratory in West Germany, the only existing electron-proton collider in the world.

Design and construction of VLEPP is expected to be preceded by the testing of a 10-meter module built at Novosibirsk by

the Nuclear Physics Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. Each segment of VLEPP is estimated to be about 5 kilometers long, assuming that accelerating gradients of 100 GeV per kilometer can be obtained.

Soviet physicists say the electron-positron collision area will be located in the middle of the collider—not at the end the machine as is done at the Stanford Linear Collider. The latter approach requires accelerating electrons and positrons in parallel and then looping them around in converging arches to a collision area. This method, while reducing construction costs and land requirements, is not deemed practical for electron-positron colliders operating in the 1-TeV range. ■ **MARK CRAWFORD**

Uncertainties Over University of Chile

A change of rectors at the University of Chile in Santiago has brought at least a truce in a confrontation between the government of General Augusto Pinochet and critics in the university community. Regular operation of the university resumed on 2 November with the return of striking students, faculty, and staff. And at the end of last week, members of the university's faculty association, which had been seriously at odds with the previous rector, emerged from a meeting with the new rector to declare that he had their full confidence. However, major issues that produced the tensions remain unresolved.

The 11-week strike and a shutdown of Chile's largest university and leading research institution occurred after several years of gradual liberalization during which observers say there had been an improvement in the human rights environment and an increase in self-government for the university.

An impasse in the university was broken on 30 October when the government appointed a new rector, Juan de Dios Vial Larraín, after evidently engineering the resignation of the incumbent, José Luis Federici. Federici's rectorship had been controversial from the time he was appointed earlier this year by the government rather than elected according to university rules; there were also objections that his academic credentials did not measure up. Federici, an economist, had served as a cabinet minister in the Pinochet government. In stints as head of the national railroad and national coal companies he presided over drastic reductions in staff. As rector of the university, Federici was expected to carry out a "restructuring" of the university that critics

charged had political as well as financial objectives.

Vial was also appointed by the government, but has a solid academic reputation and is not closely identified with the regime. He was dean of the philosophy school at the Catholic University in Santiago at the time of his appointment as rector of the University of Chile.

A still unanswered question is how Vial will deal with the eight deans and 150 faculty members fired and 200 students ordered dismissed by Federici. Those affected returned to the university when classes resumed, but no formal statement on their status has been issued. The new rector was quoted in the Chilean press as saying he would proceed on a case-by-case basis. New uncertainty was injected when the national governing council suspended for a full year the rules that enabled university bodies to impede Federici's actions.

Christian Orrego, a Chilean scientist who has been working in U.S. universities for several years, interprets the comments of colleagues in Chile in recent telephone conversations as indicating "a peculiar situation. The university community understands that the new rector has even more power than his predecessor, but they have returned to the university as an expression of good will, on the understanding—or hope—that he will make reasonable use of his office." Orrego is a researcher in the biochemistry department at the University of California, Berkeley, and is a member of the AAAS Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility.

The University of Chile is the country's dominant university. Since Pinochet took power in a military coup in 1973, the government has perceived the university as a

center of political opposition and taken a harsher line than with other institutions with measures to assert control. The government espouses free-market economic policies and government officials have criticized the University of Chile for inefficiency and lax administration.

University faculty protested reductions in university funding, claiming that the effects included a drop of 30% in purchasing power of faculty salaries since 1981. These issues prompted a faculty decision in early July not to conduct undergraduate classes. The strike action was followed by Federici's firing of 35 faculty in late July—he said that the cuts in faculty would permit raises in university salaries—and his shutdown of the university in September.

Chilean science has been set back during two decades of turbulence in the country's political life. Investment in research has lagged and numbers of Chilean scientists left to work in Europe or North America for political or professional reasons. In recent years, government officials have increasingly expressed concern, noting the Chile's relative isolation from international scientific activities. Pinochet himself alluded to the importance of science and technology in a New Year's message in 1986.

In recent years, international scientific contacts have increased. Some Chilean scientists have returned to resume their careers in Chile or to work there part of the time. In the last year, in response to overtures from Chilean scientists, several U.S. scientific organizations have discussed possibilities for increased scientific contacts and collaborative research, mainly through work with nongovernmental institutions. Last spring, a group of American scientists visited Chile under the auspices of the AAAS, the National Academy of Sciences, and American Academy of Arts and Sciences to assess the potential for joint research in various disciplines.

American scientists active in these initiatives have regarded Chile as in a period of transition and cooperation in science as a means of encouraging liberalization. How such initiatives will be affected by events at the University of Chile is uncertain. The replacement of Federici is generally regarded as a positive development by those who favor restoration of the university's traditional autonomy, but while questions about the new rector's intentions and authority linger, a wait-and-see attitude prevails. As one academic in Santiago is reported to have commented on the faculty association's declaration of confidence in the new rector, "the question is whether he has the full confidence of the government." ■

JOHN WALSH