

tion, like the AAMC, has a homogeneous membership and might serve as a model for it. The land grant colleges association, however, has long experience and a smooth policy-making apparatus and is accustomed to reacting to early warnings from its Washington outpost and to making its views known in Congress and the agencies in ways which are effective.

The AAMC is a political fledgling but it would appear to be operating—as representing teachers of the healers—in a friendly climate in the Capital. The recommendations in the report are just that—recommendations; now the association will have to decide what it wants to do and be and then move on to the much more difficult task of transforming itself.—JOHN WALSH

Population Politics: New Bill Introduced by Gruening Brings Birth Control Issues to Congress

In the last few years the subject of population planning has had something of the character of an amphibious beast able to tolerate periodic surfacing but basically more content to be left submerged. It was only 1959 when Eisenhower pronounced the subject of birth control “*emphatically . . . not a proper political or governmental activity*”—a position largely, though quietly, reversed by Kennedy, who made known the government’s willingness to assist population-planning efforts in underdeveloped countries. But while the Kennedy and Johnson years have witnessed a tremendous expansion of public debate on the subject of birth control, and a disappearance of the kind of acrimony that formerly made debate impossible, the change has been more in the atmosphere than in the institutional arrangements by which the government might promote a hard assault on the basic problem of skyrocketing domestic and world population.

Two government agencies, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) and the State Department, have experienced modest expansions in various programs relating to population, in the domestic and foreign arenas, respectively. Additional agencies have also become involved; the Office of Economic Opportunity, for example, better known as the poverty program, is permitted under certain conditions to give aid to local communities working on birth control programs. But, in the main, agency pro-

grams have been timid, and undertaken as unobtrusively as possible, in part because of lingering doubts among politically sensitive administrators that President Johnson really meant his promise, in the State of the Union message, to “*seek new ways to use our knowledge to help deal with the explosion in world population and the growing scarcity in world resources.*” Except for occasional departures, such as the debate on the foreign aid bill in 1963, when Congress explicitly allowed funds “*to be used to conduct research into problems of population growth*” in underdeveloped countries, most politicians also have remained studiously aloof. So, despite an upsurge of public interest and a series of clarion calls from private groups active in population affairs and from such prestigious bodies as the National Academy of Sciences, there has been little movement toward developing a positive governmental policy that would underpin more intensive agency efforts either in the U.S. or abroad.

Now Senator Ernest Gruening (D-Alaska) has decided that the time has come for the government to lay aside its remaining squeamishness and let the issue surface permanently. Gruening, whose interest in birth control dates back to an early association with Margaret Sanger, has introduced a bill, which he refers to as the “*birth control information bill*” (S. 1676), calling for the creation of an Office for Population Problems in both the State Department and HEW, each headed by a new Assistant Secretary, to oversee a substantial expansion of government activities in the population field.

In keeping with the priorities conventionally assigned the population problem, the Gruening bill appears to give more emphasis to world population conditions than to the domestic situation. The preamble to the bill states, for example, that “*those nations in which population growth is most extreme and where the problems arising from such growth are most acute are, because of economic, technical, and other considerations, also the nations least able independently to cope with such growth and the problems connected therewith.*” And it points out that “*past and present efforts on the part of the United States in cooperating with and assisting nations desirous of dealing with urgent population problems with which they are confronted have not been sufficiently effective.*” As one line of remedial action, the Assistant

A Federal Agency “First”

The Department of the Interior will become the first federal agency to offer direct advice and service on birth control, according to an announcement last Saturday. Three departmental agencies have been directed to offer guidance on family planning and birth control, including provision of contraceptives, to American Indians on reservations, natives of the Pacific Trust Territory, and Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts in Alaska.

Secretary of State for Population Problems would be explicitly authorized to “*make available to recognized scientific and medical authorities in foreign countries, upon the request of the governments of such countries, information and assistance pertaining to medical and other aspects of population growth problems*”—a provision which has no precise parallel in the section of the bill dealing with domestic programs. The functions of the HEW population office would be limited to a continual “*review . . . [of] the health and medical programs of the Department insofar as they relate to the problems of population growth and health with a view to coordinating and improving such programs, as well as to determining the need for additional programs which relate to population growth and health.*”

The domestic section is a bit weaker than the foreign section also in that the Office for Population Problems is to be headed by an Assistant Secretary for Health, Medical Services, and Population Problems, who will take over the functions currently performed by the Special Assistant to the Secretary (Health and Medical Affairs), while his counterpart in the State Department will presumably be allowed to give full attention to population problems alone. With those key exceptions, however, the provisions for the two departments are essentially similar, having to do in large measure with the collection and dissemination of information on the activities of U.S., state, and foreign governments in the birth control field, and with encouraging the development and flow of new information.

Although the bill prescribes in detail a great number of specific tasks, the underlying point of the legislation is simply to provide some administrative

arrangement whereby population problems will no longer be shunted to one side and will begin to get the extraordinary attention many people think they deserve. "It is of the utmost importance," Gruening said in a brief speech in the Senate last week, "that we let the executive branch . . . know that we are serious, that we do intend to learn what is or what is not being done to solve the problem here and abroad."

So far the details of Gruening's bill have attracted little attention; there is more interest in the fact that he introduced it in the first place, and that a number of interested members of Congress agreed to testify on it this week in opening hearings before the Government Operations Subcommittee on Foreign Aid Expenditures, of which Gruening is chairman. (Several similar or identical bills have also been introduced in the House and sent to the Government Operations Committee, but there are as yet no plans to hold hearings there.)

In introducing the bill, Gruening and its cosponsors—Joseph Tydings (D-Md.), Ross Bass (D-Tenn.), E. L. Bartlett (D-Alaska), Paul Douglas (D-Ill.), Frank E. Moss (D-Utah), Ralph Yarborough (D-Tex.), and Stephen Young (D-Ohio)—have challenged what amounts to almost a mystical taboo on the part of Congress against getting directly involved in the population question. How necessary the caution is at this point is somewhat unclear. Two years ago Senator Joseph Clark (D-Pa.) made a speech on the floor of the Senate suggesting, on the basis of his own experience, that "there is a great deal of undue political timidity in dealing with the problems [of population planning]." Senator Gruening's office reports that all his campaigning for intensified federal involvement in birth control programs has so far brought in only one unfavorable letter. And there seems to be a feeling among representatives of organizations professionally concerned with population problems, such as Planned Parenthood and the Population Reference Bureau, that, as one of them put it, "the people are far ahead of their elected representatives on this issue—even the Church seems to be ahead of them"; and that there may be no reason to fear taking a public position any longer.

The Supreme Court decision of June 7 striking down the Connecticut anti-birth-control law, which prohibited the use of contraceptives and the distribu-

tion of information about their use, is likely further to embolden the proponents of change. In a theoretical sense, the population professionals seem to feel that there is no real necessity for the legislation that Gruening is proposing, for they contend that the agencies already have the legal power to carry out most of the programs he is recommending but have simply failed to use it. In terms of politics, however, they welcome the hearings, partly because they expect rising political interest to help push the executive branch into action, partly because they feel that, in the political blackness from which they are just emerging, almost all publicity is good publicity. "It's been our experience," one representative of Planned Parenthood commented last week, "that whenever we've made our case in public, with open debate, we almost always make real progress. It's the deals behind closed doors we tend to lose on."

As for Gruening himself, neither he nor his colleagues are reported to be particularly optimistic about the chances of passing a population bill in the immediate future, and they are said to regard the present hearings chiefly as an opportunity to help educate Congress and the public on the seriousness of the population problem. On the other hand, it must be remembered that in politics there are always surprises—and one of them occurred a few weeks ago when 42 members of Congress showed up for an 8 a.m. breakfast sponsored by Planned Parenthood—World Population, a turnout that astonished even the meeting's sponsors. "A few years ago such a turnout would have been unthinkable," said Robert Cook, head of the Population Reference Bureau. "Sometimes I think even we may not recognize how much public opinion has changed. Who knows—maybe this will be the year?" "The boss's attitude," an aide to Senator Gruening said recently, "is—if not this year, then next year, and if not next year, then the year after that. But the only way to begin is to begin."

—ELINOR LANGER

Announcements

NASA is accepting preliminary proposals for **scientific experiments** to be carried out on the first Voyager mission, scheduled for 1971. Plans call for orbiting a spacecraft around Mars and landing instrument capsules on the planet

to study the body, surface, atmosphere, and environment. Emphasis will be on Martian biology. Deadline for receipt of proposals: *1 August*. (R. F. Fellows, NASA, Code SL, Washington 20546)

The University of Miami has announced the establishment of an 18-bed **clinical research unit** which will be located temporarily at the National Children's Cardiac Hospital. The new facility will treat and study selected adults and children from the U.S. and Latin America. Patients will be selected by a medical school committee headed by William J. Harrington. The unit is being established under a \$623,000 grant from the National Institutes of Health, which will provide staff, equipment, and the first 18 months' operating costs. The co-directors of the facility will be Martin H. Kalser, professor of medicine and physiology, and William L. Cleveland, associate professor of pediatrics.

Meeting Notes

The first Latin American colloquium on **soil biology** will be held 13–17 October in Bahía Blanca, Argentina. Papers may be presented on the following topics: soil microbiology; soil-plant relationships; plant-harmful animals; ecology and geography of soil animals; interaction between soil animals, plants, and microflora; working methods. The papers may be original, or reviews of up to 3000 words; they may be in English, French, Portuguese, or Spanish. Abstracts of up to 500 words are needed; copies of those received by 1 September will be distributed during the meeting. (Organizing Committee, First Latin American Colloquium on Soil Biology, Instituto de Edafología e Hidrología, Alem 925, Bahía Blanca, Argentina)

Papers are invited for presentation at the 11th annual conference on **magnetism and magnetic materials**, 16–19 November in San Francisco. The topics to be covered include basic theoretical subjects; experimental investigations of magnetic phenomena and materials; and engineering applications, devices, and apparatus. Prospective authors should obtain instructions in advance for preparation of abstracts. Deadline for receipt of abstracts: *16 August*. (H. S. Jarrett, Central Research Department, E. I. DuPont de Nemours and Co., Wilmington, Delaware)