

Population Committee Launched

The Commission on Population Growth and the American Future, which released its findings last March after 2 years of study, has gone on the road. That is to say, a citizens' committee containing many former commission members has launched a year-long program to educate the public on the findings and recommendations of the report and to put pressure on government agencies to move ahead in particular areas.

The Citizens Committee on Population and the American Future, as it is called, has as its honorary chairman John D. Rockefeller III, who also chaired the commission. Cochairmen are Hugh Downs, former host of NBC's "Today" show, Eleanor Holmes Norton, activist attorney and chairman of the New York City Commission on Human Rights, and Stephen Salyer, who at 22 was the commission's youngest member. With a \$210,000 budget supplied by foundations and other private sources, the committee is trying to generate public support for recommendations that have generally been plowed under in the debate over the report's more controversial proposals, chief of which is the suggestion that women should have "liberalized access" to abortion.

Efforts to Increase Visibility

The commission, no doubt eyeing the fate of reports on such matters as marijuana and pornography, has avoided relying on the Administration for support. The report was released in three separate, highly publicized sessions, and a movie described as a cinematic version of the report will be aired over the Public Broadcasting System on 29 November. (The three major networks refused to show the film because they won't sponsor controversial shows over which they have no editorial control.)

Meanwhile, the committee is speaking to all the professional and volunteer organizations it can get its hands on—"from the AMA to ZPG," says executive director Carol Foreman—about the little-publicized aspects of the report. These aspects include sex education, adoption, fertility-related health services, women's rights, land use planning, jobs, and a multitude of other subjects related to the quality as well as the quantity of life.

The committee is acting as a speakers' bureau and will send witnesses to testify in behalf of its goals on Capitol Hill. This month it began sending people around to various government agencies to explain relevant areas of the commission's research. (The seven volumes of research, comprising 100 papers, will be available sometime in October.)

Everyone is bending over backward to make this a strictly non-partisan venture. At the press conference called to announce the program, Rockefeller and his colleagues had kind words for Congress (whose efforts in the areas of population and national growth have been marked by apathy), and Rockefeller even praised President Nixon for acting "pleased" when told about the committee's plans.

Nixon, it may be recalled, issued a short press release in May saying he did not plan to comment extensively on the report, but making known his strong personal objections to abortion ("an unacceptable form of population control") and to proposals that minors be given access to contraceptives and birth control information ("such measures would do nothing to preserve and strengthen close family relationships").

The committee can probably be expected to downplay such matters as abortion in the interest of gaining a fair hearing for its other proposals. Its basic purpose, as Downs put it, is "to integrate population considerations into the national agenda." The message has not yet come through very strongly to the federal government, but its ears may start to prick up if some clear vibrations start coming in from the public.—C.H.

and at achieving gains for minorities.

At NIH, the character of the work force creates special conditions. Researchers and administrators in NIH's intramural program are university trained and oriented, and there is considerable mobility between NIH and the universities and medical schools. And particularly among younger professionals, there is an assumption that university-style political and social activism will not be discouraged. To recruit and retain competent researchers, NIH officials have to keep this in mind.

The era of activism at NIH is traced by many observers from the rise of the Vietnam Moratorium Committee as an offshoot of the moratorium movement in 1969. A crucial incident occurred when Marston turned down a request from the moratorium group for permission for Benjamin Spock to speak on the NIH campus. The moratorium people went to court and obtained a temporary injunction which allowed Spock to appear. The injunction, which is still in force, proved to be the wedge that really opened NIH facilities to use for meetings on social and political issues.

Employee organizations at NIH have gained confidence in recent years. Of the organizations named among the petition's sponsors, the moratorium committee and Another Mother for Peace are specifically antiwar groups. The others deal with worker rights and working conditions in varying ways. (SESPA, which is relatively small at NIH, has a foot in both camps.)

The longest established of the groups is probably the Assemblies of Scientists of the institutes. These are made up of research scientists and are concerned mainly with general policies which affect research and with improving the professional atmosphere. For instance, they promote the arrangement under which graduate study is carried out in cooperation with Johns Hopkins University. The assemblies are open to all researchers and have generally been apolitical.

The All Concerned Employees Task Force (ACE) is concerned with reducing discrimination against minority employees and is really a local branch of the Government Employees United Against Racial Discrimination (GUARD). ACE concentrates on obtaining recruitment of more blacks to professional jobs at NIH and the improvement of pay, promotion, and working conditions for black employees