

nearly halving the present top rate and dropping the only other rate to 15 percent. The Senate passed a \$1 trillion budget resolution. Miss Valerie Ter-rigno, the first professed lesbian mayor

of an American city, was sentenced to sixty days in custody and ordered to repay nearly \$7,000 in embezzled poverty funds. And on May 26 approximately 4,924,000 Americans held

hands along a 4,125-mile route from sea to shining sea to raise \$50 million to "assault hunger and homelessness." That will be added to the \$476 billion that the federal government now

spends on "human resources." In 1964 the government spent \$35 billion. The crisis goes on and this time stupidity has been enthroned.

—RET

## CORRESPONDENCE

### Aids Science

In their article on AIDS ("The Coming of AIDS," *TAS*, March 1986) James F. Grutsch, Jr. and A.D.J. Robertson complain of confusion concerning AIDS being "compounded by ill-informed reporting in which laymen, often from special-interest groups with their own furrows to plow, express opinions about scientific matters." After reading their article it seems that they are guilty either of what they accuse others, or of a more serious offense: deliberately deceptive reporting in order to further their own self-interests at the expense of the reputation of *The American Spectator*. While the authors may not be laymen, neither are they virologists.

The substandard scientific descriptions that are present throughout the article begin with Kuru and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease being called "slow viruses" by the authors. In fact, no virus particles have ever been isolated from tissues infected by these diseases. Research on these diseases has resulted in most scientists calling the agents of these infections "prions" (protein infectious particles). The inclusion of these diseases in a discussion concerning AIDS (which is known to be caused by a virus) is questionable.

At the very least, Grutsch and Robertson overstate their case in comparing other lentiviruses to HTLV III/LAV (the AIDS virus). While it is true that LAV is a lentivirus and that correlations on its behavior can be made from other lentiviruses, certain distinctions must also be made. Even though two viruses can be classified together in the same subfamily or genus, their modes of transmission can be drastically different. As an example, consider the genus of viruses called Alphaherpes viruses. Within this genus are the viruses that cause both chicken pox and venereal herpes, but no serious scientist would claim that venereal herpes is transmitted in the same way that chicken pox is transmitted. Yet the authors lead the reader to believe that this could be the case with AIDS and other lentiviruses. I find it extremely difficult to understand why the authors failed to make this crucial distinction.

Grutsch and Robertson correctly state that LAV can be transmitted through heterosexual as well as homosexual intercourse. It seems, however, that this was not satisfactory for them and they set out to make the spread of AIDS to the entire population seem even more likely. In this attempt, they cite the apparent transmission of AIDS to members of households in England and Italy. An additional case has been recently cited here in the United States. What each of these cases has in common is the fact that AIDS was transmitted by close and prolonged contact with body secretions and excretions during intensive nursing care without so much as the use of gloves. In the U.S. case, the woman who caught the virus from her child often failed to wash her hands after giving such care.

In the case in England, the woman who caught AIDS gave similar care to a Ghanaian man whom she denied having any sexual contact with. She recalled having small cuts on her hands in addition to chronic eczema. Grutsch and Robertson fail to mention these important facts in an apparent attempt to lend credibility to their completely unsubstantiated claim that it is possible for AIDS to be spread by coughing, insect vectors, and even through cow's milk. To call this hypothesis ludicrous would be an understatement.

Furthermore, the authors' statement that the overall fatality rate may approach 100 percent is also completely unsubstantiated. While they are correct in stating that the fatality rates are too conservative, the evidence hardly indicates that the fatality rate will come anywhere near 100 percent. The authors are also guilty of equating exposure to the virus and productive infection (i.e., actually having a case of AIDS). To take an example from another disease again, does an individual who gives a positive skin test for tuberculosis actually have the disease? No, he may or may not have it. All that giving a positive immunological result shows is that one has been exposed to the disease (or in some cases, has been immunized against it).

Finally, Grutsch and Robertson make an appeal for quarantine of all AIDS patients. While it may be entirely appropriate to isolate those who develop secondary diseases that can be transmitted by casual contact, quarantine of all AIDS patients would be unwarranted (since AIDS cannot be transmitted through casual contact) and would ultimately fail to stop the spread of AIDS. Given the long latency of the disease, even if all those who were found to be immunopositive for AIDS (again, not necessarily having AIDS) were isolated from those who gave a negative ELISA test, you could never completely eliminate the disease.

In short, it is clear that AIDS is a very serious threat. Yes, its modes of transmission make an excellent case for monogamy. At the same time, however, it seems that an even more contagious disease in our society is one whose symptoms arise whenever AIDS is discussed, and it mimics hyperthyroidism rather closely. It seems that seeing their names in print was too much of a temptation for the authors to resist, and they capitalized on the fear of the unknown on the part of the public in order to attain this goal. Hopefully this will be the last time we see LaRouchian doctrine in the pages of *The American Spectator*, except, perhaps, in the "Current Wisdom" section.

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James F. Grutsch, Jr. and A.D.J. Robertson reply:  
Kuru and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (C-J)

are generally referred to as slow viral diseases because they show an etiology of infection by a filterable particle but a symptom-free period of many years. We mentioned them to illustrate the points that there are already recognized diseases, with long latencies, causing neural damage leading to death in people, and that they may be spread by unusual behavior and by medical technology. C-J in fact is spread not only in preparations of human growth hormone, but also by surgical instruments, the stereotaxic equipment used in neurosurgery, and tissue used in grafts. The Aids virus, we know, is spread in protein preparations (Factor VIII), by needles, possibly in general surgery, and definitely in organ transplants, so the parallel is instructive rather than far-fetched.

It is true that no virus has been isolated from the tissue of Kuru or C-J victims and the protein fibrils are found in characteristic patterns in the brains of those infected. Similar fibrils are found in other diseases, including scrapie and the other infections producing "spongiform encephalopathies" in mammals including man. Because preparations containing these proteins are infectious it has been suggested that a new kind of disease carried by Prions—protein infectious particles—might exist. This possibility flies in the face of our understanding of molecular biology; for this reason its author himself advised great skepticism. Now that it is known that the proteins are translated from nucleic acids found in all host cells, not just in those infected with Kuru or the other diseases, most people doing research in this field would say, as does the discoverer of Kuru, that "prions . . . should be replaced by a term that . . . avoid[s] the increasingly unlikely contention that the protein itself is infectious" (*New England Journal of Medicine*, February 27, 1986, page 550). Similar hypotheses were entertained about other viruses before their nucleic acids were isolated; this was true, for example, of Tobacco Mosaic Virus, which is quite large, but has a very tough protein coat.

The viruses causing venereal herpes can be transmitted in many ways, including kissing and possibly sneezing, just like the chicken-pox virus. In their venereal manifestation they are usually (not always) transmitted in the ways we call venereal, but venereal herpes is not a separate disease.

We do not understand Mr. Cunniff's statements: "Grutsch and Robertson overstate their case in comparing other lentiviruses to the . . . Aids virus" and "it is true that the Aids virus is a lentivirus," which seem to us mutually contradictory. The more we know about the Aids virus, the more useful the comparison has become; in particular, all the ways in which the Aids virus is known to be transmitted have been found in the other lentiviruses, which makes it only prudent to be alert for transmission in ways known for lentiviruses in general, but not for the Aids virus in particular. The confusion here perhaps lies in

the concept of transmission. What we know about the transmission of the Aids virus reflects the commonest methods; homosexual men usually transmit the virus by sodomy because they indulge in it, just as surgeons have transmitted it by organ transplant. As more in the heterosexual population become infected, more heterosexual transmission will occur. We know from experiments that one virus particle can infect a cell; what we do not know is how many particles are usually needed for infection by each possible route. For example, it might be almost impossible to be infected by being in a room with one AIDS victim coughing, but quite likely with twenty—we simply do not know. Since the virus is found in respiratory secretions we know that infection in this way is theoretically possible; we just don't know, yet, how likely it is and no epidemiological study to date is sufficiently sensitive to tell us. This is not the fault of the epidemiology, but of the fact that too few people have been infected long enough to reveal effects of this kind.

The purpose of our article was to stimulate public debate before we reach the stage at which so many people are infected with the Aids virus that, if it is possible at all—and, as Mr. Cunniff agrees, we know it is—contagion by frequent contact becomes likely. After all, neither syphilis nor leprosy is passed by casual contact, and both are generally curable, yet we do not hesitate to restrict the freedoms of those infected with either. Any lethal venereal disease is bad enough in itself; one that produces a permanently infectious carrier state should not be allowed to spread under any circumstances, even if it cannot be passed by casual contact, whatever that is.

The Aids virus cannot be compared to the bacillus which causes tuberculosis. All the evidence to date is that infection with it is permanent and that production of antibodies implies infection, not merely exposure. As to the overall fatality rate, this of course is not yet known. The most detailed studies show unequivocally that over 90 percent of those infected have a measurable immune dysfunction and over 50 percent have at least one serious symptom. In the oldest cohorts studied the attack rate of AIDS itself has been found to reach 40 percent, without any sign of diminution; these figures, of course, do not include those for morbidity and mortality not included in the surveillance definition of AIDS. In particular, they do not include death due to brain damage caused directly by the virus. The highest AIDS incidences found so far are approximately 11 percent per year within three to four years of infection.

Finally, as far as we can discover (from the denizens of a booth at Logan Airport), the views of Mr. LaRouche coincide with ours to the extent that we all think it sensible to stop the spread of infection with the Aids virus; clearly Mr. Cunniff agrees here with both us and Mr. LaRouche. □

# EDITORIALS



## DO-NOTHING DEAVER

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

Knowledgeable followers of the great game of politics realize that one of the gauges by which a politico is measured is embedded in the late Mayor Richard J. Daley's honored question, "What have you done for me lately?" Its assumption of shared obligation lends to the hum and drum of political organization a certain nobility, to say nothing of a certain effectiveness. From all of the lurid charges that now glow above and about the words *Michael K. Deaver*, one might think that this former White House aide and present PR prodigy did quite a lot during his White House years and for multitudes.

But hold! A glance at the indignant mobs now maneuvering to do him in suggests that Mr. Deaver did not do nearly enough. In theory, had Mr. Deaver sagaciously dispensed favors during his days at the Palace he would now be shielded by legions of grateful friends, all steadfast in defense of him and of the system that served them well. In fact, right-wingers and left-wingers, journalists and politicians—all are avid to lay him low. In truth, Mr. Deaver was a very stingy dispenser of

favors. Occasionally he may have winked fetchingly at a prospective client, but he was no great malefactor as will be proved in due course.

He did have a talent for offending people. Many gifted politicians are possessed of an extraordinary charm. Theodore Roosevelt was born with it. Franklin Roosevelt learned it. Mike Deaver seems to have been born with its opposite. Since the mid-1970s I have on numerous occasions personally observed Mr. Deaver's mysterious knack for giving offense. Possibly it is a genetic defect. At any rate the consequences of his niggardliness and of his offensiveness are vividly observable in his present public trials.

I suspect that those innocent vessels of charm, Ronald and Nancy Reagan, recognized their loyal aide's weakness long ago, and that is one reason they have stood by him so loyally. But there is another reason for their fidelity. If Mr. Deaver never really has understood politics—not in the grand sense of clashing ideas and changing powers, nor in the pedestrian sense of shared obligations—he understood modern media politics. What Camelot in the 1960s confected with fustian and the camera, Mr. Deaver and his associates brought to the level of masterpiece. There were the timed speeches and staged events. There was the speech two years ago on a wind-swept summit in Normandy and then the legendary 1984 campaign. And consider our recent 12-minute raid on Libya. Has anyone noted that it began just as the evening news was getting underway and that it was over in time for the networks' scheduled commercials? Critics carp that until very recently Mr. Deaver was still privy to the President's daily schedule. If he can do for me the wonders he has done for the President he can have my schedule too, and I shall even include a small gratuity.

Now, however, we hear that justice is hot on his trail. Soon a shocking *corpus delicti* will be heaved up and it will be the gallows for this rogue, or at least

confinement and hard labor. Well, devotees of Puritan justice ought not to get their hopes up. Maybe Mr. Deaver will be found guilty of high crimes or perhaps only a minor statutory violation will be hung on him. Then too, as with so many other recent ephemeral scandals, the scandalizer may get off scot-free.

The press has gotten us in a lather over the alleged infamies of 110 Reagan Administration eminences, and what have we the people got to show for it? Only six were ever indicted. Two were acquitted. Two were jugged. And two still await trial. By this measurement the entire Reagan Administration compares rather more favorably than one Democratic family prominent in the last presidential election. Asserting that no other administration has had so many of its appointees accused of impropriety, Administration critics claim that we should hold it suspect. Actual-

ly if one weighs the puny outcome of all these accusations we are more justified in holding these wanton accusers suspect.

What is it that this Administration and that this rogue Deaver are guilty of? It is not the old-style graft, the critics admit, but rather the "appearance of impropriety." Well, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and in an age utterly bereft of standards, appearances are simply a matter of taste. What appears as uniquely grasping to Democrats might well appear to Republicans as typical Democratic behavior practiced more efficiently. It is ironic that Mr. Deaver—a master at creating appearances for pols—is, along with the Reagan Administration, being condemned on the grounds of mere appearances. And, *mirabile dictu*, those condemning him are utterly unaware of how they appear, to wit: as mere political opportunists. □

## THE GREAT EXPLAINERS

"Why do they hate me," the sorely pressed Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. must wonder as he reads the day's newspapers and puzzles over how luridly he is portrayed on TV news. Ever since two of his numbskulls captured lofty slots on the Democratic ticket in Illinois, LaRouche and LaRouchism have been the subjects of the Republic's indefatigable investigative reporters and of alarmed Democrats remonstrating against LaRouche's vows to infiltrate further into their party.

LaRouche's wonderment is understandable. After all, he is just another in our country's long line of Wondrous Explainers. To troubled pinheads LaRouche presents himself enhaloed with the promise that he can explain everything: high interest rates, foreign wars, high inflation rates, newfangled ways, high employment rates, foreign-born strangers in our midsts. Here in America, as elsewhere, there will always be tremulous little people of dim intellect and hyperactive imagination, burning for explanations to all life's

vicissitudes. They grow impatient with learned analyses of the present. They are defeated by histories that illuminate the past. No species of scholarship or analysis could ever satisfy them; for they need that Wondrous Explanation that will quiet all their fears, thrill them with villains to revile, and never tax their feeble powers of intellection. Bizarre fellows like LaRouche are quick to posit the Explanations: It is the bankers! British Intelligence! the Queen of England! the Rockefellers! the international drug cabal! Zionists! Deeper, ever deeper they dig into history's grab bag of bugaboos to explain what every intelligent mind knows can never be wholly explained.

Yet not all the Wondrous Explainers of our time are in bad odor, which doubtless is the cause of LaRouche's recent hopes and present dismay. Since the 1960s Wondrous Explainers have stepped ever closer toward the centers of American power. This is particularly true in the Democratic party where radical notions have often been con-

