
Profile: Dr. Otis R. Bowen

A new Dr. Brandt at the HHS

by Linda Everett

When President Reagan recently nominated Otis R. Bowen, the former governor of Indiana, as Secretary of Health and Human Services, the nation's media greeted the nomination with sighs of relief. Everyone had speculated over whether the President's choice would be of an "ideological cast" or of a "pragmatic" conservative stripe. With Bowen nominated, the administration's "ideological conservatives" are reportedly disappointed, and the "fiscal conservatives" are delighted.

The *New York Times* reports that Wilbur J. Cohen, who served as Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare under the Johnson administration, sees Dr. Bowen as "the one to manage the Reagan administration's cost-control program for physicians. He'll be the one who enforces fee controls. That's the right thing to do—appoint a person who can deal with the doctors."

Bowen's nomination recalled for many President Carter's threat to enforce the cost-efficient scheme of his secretary, Robert Derzon. In 1977, Derzon suggested in a private memorandum that any state which did not endorse "living will" legislation, would be cut off from Medicare benefits.

Just what is Dr. Otis R. Bowen, and what will he mean to the health and welfare of American citizens?

A profile

Dr. Otis R. Bowen bears more allegiance to the interests of banking and insurance companies than to his Hypocratic Oath. That makes him, under present circumstances, the sort of fellow we hanged at Nuremberg at the end of the last world war.

Currently clinical professor of family medicine in Indiana University Medical School, the 67-year-old Bowen is billed by the media as the most popular governor in Indiana's history, and a family doctor straight out of a Norman Rockwell painting. Besides serving two terms as Indiana's governor, Bowen also served for six years in the Indiana legislature as Speaker of the House.

While chairman of the Advisory Council on Social Security in 1982 and 1983, it is said that he displayed a "low-keyed, avuncular style." Yet it was in the capacity of chairman to that Council, created by the federal government to

recommnd "cost-containment" changes in Medicare, that he became known as the Republican version of Colorado's notorious Gov. Richard Lamm. His "recommendations" before the Senate Finance Committee in April 1984 are indicative:

"The Council endorses the concept of 'Advance Directives' or 'Living Wills' which are currently recognized by law in fourteen states. The Council called for a study to look at the impact on health expenditures in those states having such laws and encouraged other states to adopt similar legislation. Living Wills would prevent unnecessarily heroic measures being taken in the terminal days of life. Eleven percent of Medicare expenditures are spent in the last forty days of life and some 25 percent of Medicare expenditures are incurred in the last year of life. The Council fully recognizes that this may be a controversial recommendation; however, the Council unanimously endorsed it. As a physician, I initiated Council discussions on this subject having recently lost my father and thus knowing the enormous costs that were incurred in his terminal days prior to death."

In addition to nationwide adoption of "living wills," Bowen's Council recommended other measures which would mean a radical reduction in the amount and quality of health care available, including: raising the age of Medicare eligibility from 65 to 67, a measure which would mean early death for many elderly; taxing employer-paid health benefits; and increasing the amount Medicare recipients must pay for medical care.

The murder of 'Baby Doe'

In the case of "Baby Doe," the Bloomington, Indiana infant who was born with a mild case of Down's Syndrome and was allowed to starve to death, Bowen publicly backed the decision by State Supreme Court Chief Gibbon to permit the infant's parents and Bloomington hospital officials to withhold food, water, and medical treatment from the baby. Is there any reason to believe that this Nazi-styled decision would not be extended by Bowen to the elimination of nutrition and hydration from the terminally ill, handicapped, comatose—all cases where cutting lives would nicely cut costs?

This nation urgently requires a mobilization to wipe out cancer with national protocols. But Bowen is more likely to use his cabinet post to initiate the use of heroin or marijuana for "treatment of pain." He admits giving his wife, who was dying of cancer, a marijuana derivative and another drug, dimethyl sulfoxide, which was not approved for treatment of cancer patients. Bowen not only defended his action, but criticized the Food and Drug Administration, a part of HHS—for its "interference" in medicine.

The administration's economic policies have hurled the nation's health care over the brink of disaster. The nomination of Dr. Otis R. Bowen, however, will officially bring the nation under the goosetep of another "fiscal conservative" physician, Hitler's Dr. Karl Brandt.