

# Jocelyn Elders: peddling Norplant, abortion, and sex education

by Kathleen Klenetsky

The campaign to spread the use of Norplant, especially as an instrument for severely limiting the birth rate among welfare recipients and the minority poor in general, is expected to get a big boost from the Clinton administration, once Surgeon General-designate Jocelyn Elders is confirmed by the Senate later this spring.

Since then-Gov. Bill Clinton appointed Elders to head the Arkansas State Department of Health in 1987, the black pediatrician has made no secret that one of her main goals is to reduce the birth rate among the poor, and that she is willing to employ methods ranging from encouraging abortion-on-demand to aggressively peddling Norplant to accomplish that objective.

Elders recounted to the Feb. 16, 1992 *Washington Post* the conversation she had with Bill Clinton when he offered her the surgeon general post. "He said, 'Jocelyn, I want you to do for the whole country what you've done for Arkansas.'" Elders said that she replied: " 'Governor, you didn't really know five years ago what you were buying. Now you know exactly what you're getting if you're gonna make me surgeon general.' He shook his head and said, 'Yes, I do, Jocelyn, yes, I do.' "

What exactly is it that President Clinton, and the U.S. citizenry, are getting?

## A 'dangerous person'

"She's a dangerous person," Anne Dierks, director of the Respect Life office for the Catholic Diocese of Arkansas told *EIR*. "Her agenda will do so much damage to the born as well as the unborn."

Dierks, who formerly headed Arkansas Right-to-Life, has done battle with Elders on a number of issues, including Elders's ultimately successful effort to set up school-based clinics that now dispense contraceptives and offer abortion counseling to teenagers—one of the great "education" innovations which she and Clinton introduced in Arkansas.

In an interview with *EIR*, Dierks recounted some of Elders's more egregious actions, not least of which was her diversion of Arkansas Department of Health monies to these school-based clinics, without the consent of the state legislature, but with the backing of Governor Clinton.

Dierks also pointed out that Elders has clearly been groomed for some sort of high-profile national position for some time, citing laudatory profiles that were done of her by the *New York Times* and "Sixty Minutes" in 1989 as examples of the campaign that has been waged on her behalf by the major media.

A highly controversial figure who sits on the board of the Alan Guttmacher Institute and frequently addresses Planned Parenthood meetings, Elders has earned the unmitigated admiration of population control proponents, not only because of her defense of abortion "rights," but because she has made it obvious that her main health-care priority is not life-extension, but birth reduction, particularly among the "underclass."

Elders's nomination means "that for the first time we have a surgeon general who agrees with the majority of the American people on abortion," Nick Freudenberg, a public health specialist in New York City, told the *Washington Post*.

Elders not only strongly favors abortion-on-demand, but she has carried on a crusade against abortion opponents, in which she frequently makes provocative remarks about them. One infamous (but typical) instance occurred during a pro-abortion rally in Little Rock, Ark. in 1991. Elders told the crowd that abortion opponents should "get over their love affair with the fetus."

It does not appear that she intends to moderate her views in her new position. Late last year, shortly after her name surfaced as Clinton's likely nominee as surgeon general, Elders declared: "What we can do most to reduce infant mortality is to reduce unplanned, unwanted children. . . . [Abortion foes] love little children as long as they are in someone else's uterus."

## Elders 'hard-sells' Norplant, abortion

To those familiar with Elders's record and outlook, it came as no surprise that she has emerged as one of the most outspoken defenders of Norplant. Shortly after the controversial contraceptive was approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Arkansas became one of the first states to offer Norplant through its health department.

In December 1990, just days before Norplant won the

FDA's imprimatur, Elders vowed that "as soon it's approved, we'll have it in Arkansas."

That was no idle boast. In July 1991, the state started to dole out Norplant to Medicaid recipients.

That same month, Elders told the state legislature Subcommittee on Responsibilities of Parenthood that her department's personnel would try to "condition" pregnant teenagers to accept Norplant after they gave birth to their first child. "We will be hard-selling Norplant during pre-natal care," Elders bluntly asserted. "We feel, hopefully, that we can prevent the second" child.

Elders testified that her department would try to schedule Norplant implantation for the first post-partum visit. This would make financial sense, she said, since Medicaid income limits are 185% higher for pregnant women through two months after birth, than they are for other Medicaid recipients, meaning that more sexually active women could be implanted using Medicaid funds.

Describing Norplant as an "important breakthrough," she stressed in her testimony that "a five-year implant lets them [new mothers] have time to grow up and think." Within a year of Elders's testimony, the state had implanted the contraceptive into 1,500 women, mostly welfare beneficiaries and substance abusers.

For the Arkansas 1993 state budget, Elders managed to wangle an additional \$1.2 million appropriation for Norplant for the Health Department, plus another \$700,000 that would pay for the implantation procedure, as well as for tubal ligations and vasectomies. These funds "would allow us to ensure that Norplant is always available," Elders said.

The only area in which Elders's Norplant crusade ran into a roadblock was when she tried to get the state's school-based clinics to distribute the implant. In July 1991, she announced that the state would use Medicaid money to dispense Norplant in the school clinics. But because of an Arkansas law forbidding the use of state funds to buy contraceptives for distribution by public schools, as well as strong opposition by pro-family groups, Elders was forced to back down. Instead, a compromise was worked out, under which state health workers who were paid by federal funds could promote the implant.

## Recipe for genocide

No matter how hard Elders may try to paint the Norplant issue as one of simple family planning, there's no avoiding the genocidal edge of those who are promoting the drug as the antidote to the welfare "problem." Those who lined up behind Elders on the Norplant issue cited its cost-cutting benefits as primary.

One of the state's leading papers, the *Arkansas Democrat*, ran a lead editorial in its Christmas Eve 1990 editions entitled "Norplant Is Coming." Hailing Norplant as the "best contraceptive on the market," the editorial argued that the Arkansas legislature "can't worry" whether the contraceptive

leads to promiscuity. "It can only worry about those problems that directly affect the resources of government. Teen pregnancy and multiple-birth welfare mothers qualify."

The following June, Arkansas state Medicaid director Ray Hanley said that state officials hoped that making Norplant available to low-income women would reduce the number and cost of low-birthweight babies born in the state.

And Elders herself, in testifying before the legislature in favor of Medicaid funding for Norplant, stated bluntly that one of its great benefits would be to sharply reduce the number of children born to women on welfare.

Do the ideas implicit in such statements—namely, that the worth of a human life can be quantified in terms of money, and that some life is more deserving of protection than others—differ to any significant degree from the views expressed by Margaret Sanger and her patrons, who saw birth control as the most efficient and effective means of stopping reproduction of the blacks and other minorities, and the poor in general, on the grounds that they were inferior creatures?

Elders would undoubtedly bristle at the suggestion, protesting that she wants only to protect young people from becoming pregnant before they can establish a life for themselves. But her aggressive promotion of Norplant and abortion, her oft-repeated advice that "every girl should put a condom in her purse when she goes out on a date," her animosity to abortion opponents, bespeaks a contempt for the true dignity of man that places her, whether she is witting or not, in the same nihilist camp as Planned Parenthood founder Sanger and her patrons.

## Sex education and euthanasia

Although her vigorous advocacy of abortion and her fight to establish birth control distribution in Arkansas schools are better known, these are by no means the only aspect of her activities which should cause concern. Elders favors sex education as early as kindergarten, as well as legalizing marijuana for medicinal purposes, despite the fact that most medical experts dispute claims that the drug provides any medical benefits.

Furthermore, some of her public comments on medical cost-containment also suggest that she may harbor strong pro-euthanasia tendencies. She has, for example, bemoaned the fact that the United States spends \$14 on the elderly for every \$1 on children, and that "some 70 to 90% of our health care dollar is spent on the last few months of life." These are common themes of the euthanasia lobby, which tries to use these statistics to argue in favor of cutting back on health spending on the elderly and the terminally ill, on the grounds that medical outlays at the end of life are a misuse of scarce resources that could better be diverted to the young.

As a member of Hillary Clinton's health care task force, Elders will have had a hand in shaping the Clinton administration's health reform prescriptions even before taking over as surgeon general.