

May 1981

Recently, former APHA President Mitt Terris, MD, suggested that, "Reagan's health budget is hazardous to the Nation's health." One does not need an in-depth review to determine that statement is indeed factual. Cuts in budgets and attacks on carefully-developed health and safety regulations and programs are being made by the Reagan Administration without any concept of their effects on people and the environment in which they live. When one views the attacks President Reagan and his key appointees are making on basic personal and environmental health programs and funding, one must be convinced that the President truly believes that *we must have a sick environment to have a healthy economy.*

When President Reagan was first elected, I mistakenly suggested in a President's Column that he might be more moderate than his campaign rhetoric would have suggested. Just the opposite has been true, and his measures stand to seriously undercut and damage the public and environmental health systems in this nation. The APHA has some type of membership or affiliated membership contact with some 52,000 health professionals in this nation. I cannot recommend too strongly that all of these individuals immediately mobilize to make their concerns known to their own congressmen and specific committee chairpersons charged with reviewing personal and environmental health budgets and legislation. While a detailed knowledge of the President's proposed damage is desirable, it would indeed be helpful if letters and telegrams to congressional leaders simply indicated opinions that the budget cuts are inappropriate, harmful to the nation's health, and penny-wise and pound-foolish in the long run. The damages resulting from some of these cuts in programs and activities such as the various prevention programs, may be noticeable for decades.

The President and David Stockman must believe that *pollution is our growing national resource* when they propose to cut the budget of the Council on Environmental Quality by 72 percent and dismiss all CEQ employees. They must strongly believe that *future research will prove that pollution is healthful* when they make their attacks on the basic substance of the Clean Air Act and the primary health standards required by the Act. They must truly believe that *we must live dangerously, breathe deeply*, when they ignore polls indicating that the majority of American citizens are still willing to pay for pollution control, even at a price. When they propose an "additional 37 million dollars for research" at Three Mile Island, perhaps they believe it is *business as usual, pending annihilation.* Their opposition to funding for family planning and abortion may show us how *dense people can become.* And their attacks on occupational safety and health measures would suggest that they believe that *no harmful effects have been shown on future generations.*

Interior Secretary James Gaius Wait caters to the elite mining, timber, and oil interests when he proposes development in those miniscule fractions of our nation, such as wilderness areas and breeding areas for whales. These areas, preserved as gifts for this arid future generations, can be irreversibly and permanently damaged. But, he doesn't seem to care whether *our environment is a treasure or a dumping ground.*

President Reagan is proposing a 25 percent cut in most of the basic health funding measures such as health education, venereal disease control, rat control, family planning, black lung services, community health centers, migrant health services, MCH services, immunizations, mental health, drug abuse, and alcoholism, to name a few. He is proposing that funding for smoking-cessation activities be decreased from three million dollars to one million, while reluctantly cutting eight million from the 300 million dollar tobacco subsidies.

There is need for cuts; and room for cuts, but how about having our allies in Europe help us with the costs of our European defenses and saving \$19 billion; improving administrative measures in the Navy and saving \$4 billion; cutting out General Accounting Office identified "fraud, inadequate accounting, and insufficient procedural control" in the Army and saving \$.5 billion; forgetting, overlapping computer systems in the Air Force and saving \$1 billion; recovering \$11 billion worth of overcharges by major oil companies; stop buying those desks and credenzas which the GAO pegged at \$1.7 billion; and giving synfuel production a shot of free enterprise thereby saving another \$4 billion. Another \$848 million could be cut from the Army Corps of Engineers water projects, and \$568 million should be dropped from the Department of Energy's uranium enrichment subsidies.

I no longer quote Pogo for I now believe that *we have met the enemy and he is President Reagan.*

Write, telegram, or call your Senators and Representatives today - now --not tomorrow! They need to know what you think!