



*Congressional
Black Caucus
Reports to the
People*

STOKES

National attention is focusing on a little known, but highly controversial brain operation called Psychosurgery. This highly experimental procedure has been performed on hundreds of mental patients, children, and even some prisoners to control aberrant behavior, thoughts, and emotions.

It differs from normal brain surgery (i.e. tumors, lesions, etc.) in that it is performed on non-diseased brain tissue. Healthy tissue is destroyed and since brain cells do not regenerate, the functions they govern are also obliterated.

The term psychosurgery refers to a variety of operative procedures. The most familiar form is the lobotomy which is the amputation of the prefrontal, bimedial or transorbital portions of the brain. Included in this scope of psychosurgery are those operative procedures which cauterize, place lesions, or inject foreign substances into specific areas of the brain.

Some psychiatrists and neurosurgeons have termed psychosurgery as "murder of the mind." Yet other medical professionals feel that is a legitimate way of treating severe mental and behavioral disorders. The controversy over this experimentation is so great that I have sponsored legislation prohibiting its practice in federally-funded institutions.

Furthermore, in 1974, the National Research Act (Pub. L. 93-348) was signed into law, thereby creating the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research.

The Commission, which was asked to make an indepth study on psychosurgery and determine the appropriateness of its use, recently submitted recommendations to HEW Secretary Joseph Califano endorsing the operation. Basically, the report recommends that psychosurgery be used only to meet the health needs of individual patients, and that an institutional review board (IRB), approved by the Department of HEW, should be instituted for the protection of the patient, especially when the subject is a prisoner, minor, or mental patient.

I am unequivocally opposed to the Commission's recommendations not only because psychosurgery is dangerous, experimental and of dubious medical value, but because it also presents a clear and present danger to disenfranchised minority groups.

The danger is permitting psychosurgery, in my opinion, is the possibility of a politically inspired move to employ psychosurgery to "rehabilitate" prisoners, "cure" sexual deviants, detoxify drug addicts, quiet unruly children and generally silence political dissenters.

In fact, several years ago, two Boston physicians suggested that urban rioters may be suffering from "brain dysfunction." Shortly thereafter, in 1968, it was reported that three inmates at California's Vacaville Prison were subjected to psychosurgical procedures. In Michigan, 13 mental patients were lobotomized before a court order averted further procedures.

It is estimated that 40,000 prefrontal lobotomies were performed in the U.S. in the decade following 1940. Recent estimates reveal that between 500 and 600 psychosurgical operations are now performed each year. In order to prevent further experiments and abuses, I have asked HEW Secretary Califano, who is scheduled to act on the recommendations by mid-January to reject the findings of the Commission.

In my opinion, the report is inadequate, inconclusive and incomplete. The Commission report is based on the studies of our surgeons and included only 61 case evaluations. This is not sufficient evidence on which to give the green-light to psychosurgery. Furthermore, only a few surgeons in the country have expertise in this delicate procedure. The Commission also failed to add my recommendation to their report that a minority person sit on the proposed National Psychosurgery Review Board.

They also rejected the findings of a Special Minority Conference on Human Experimentation sponsored by the National Urban Coalition. The minority report stated that psychosurgery should not be performed on prisoners, or those who are involuntarily confined in institutions, sexual deviants, social deviants, or political dissenters, and that funds for research should not be accepted from law enforcement agencies, pharmaceutical companies or other institutions that do not hold paramount the patients personal care.

In my letter to Sec. Califano, I also urged him to support my bill H.R. 7371 which would prohibit psycho-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14 COLUMN 2

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