



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Office of the Assistant Secretary
for Public Affairs

Washington, D.C. 20201

5/25/95

Jennifer,

Per your request, please find attached a file of all the editorial clippings we have on Dr. Foster, in alpha order and divided into "favorable" and unfavorable categories.

Please give me or Ann a call should you need further info.

Monica Lewis
690-7850

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Editorial Index

Divider Title: _____

EDITORIALS WRITTEN ABOUT NOMINATION OF

DR. HENRY W. FOSTER, JR.

May 24, 1995

1. *New York Post*, "Senatorial profiles in courage", by Carl Rowan (Favorable)
2. *Washington Times*, "Dr. Foster's nomination" (Unfavorable)
3. *Washington Times*, "The larger case against Dr. Foster", by Thomas L. Jipping (Unfavorable)

May 18, 1995

1. *Baltimore Sun*, "Clinton rise in polls shows public hasn't given him up", by Jack Germond & Jules Witcover (Semi-Favorable)

May 16, 1995

1. *Charleston Daily Mail*, "Foster" (Favorable)

May 15, 1995

1. *Washington Times*, "Playmate Joycelyn Elders", by Suzanne Fields (Unfavorable)

May 13, 1995

1. *Washington Afro-American*, "Dr. Foster at his best" (Favorable)

May 12, 1995

1. *Washington Times*, "How to keep score in the Foster contest", by Philip Terzian (Unfavorable)

May 7, 1995

1. *Washington Times*, "Tell-tale results of Foster's program", by Cal Thomas (Unfavorable)
2. *Washington Post*, "Dr. Foster and the Kansans" (Favorable)

May 6, 1995

1. *Baltimore Sun*, "On Dr. Foster, It's Not Even Close" (Favorable)
2. *Washington Post*, "The Doctor Shows Up The Senator", by Dorothy Gilliam (Favorable)
3. *Washington Times*, "Dr. Foster and the confirmation process", by Walter R. Mears (Middle of the Road)
4. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, "Gridlock And Henry Foster" (Favorable)

May 5, 1995

1. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, "The Foster consensus" (Favorable)
2. *Washington Times*, "Dr. Foster's hearing" (Unfavorable)
3. *Chicago Tribune*, "Foster deserves Senate approval" (Favorable)

4. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, "Doctors Who Studied Under Foster Call Abortion Issue Politics, Not Medicine" (Favorable)

May 4, 1995

1. *Baltimore Sun*, "Dr. Foster is causing GOP to expect a painful delivery", by Jack Germond and Jules Witcover (Favorable)
2. *Washington Times*, "Abortion and the Foster hearings", by William Murchison (Unfavorable)
3. *Courier Journal* (Louisville), "Wronging Dr. Foster" (Favorable)
4. *Star-Ledger* (Newark, NJ), "Dr. Foster held hostage to abortion politics", by John J. Farmer (Semi-Favorable)
5. *Washington Informer*, "The Foster Nomination" (Favorable)

May 3, 1995

1. *New York Post*, "Dr. Foster: Still the wrong man" (Unfavorable)
2. *Baltimore Sun*, "The Senate's crazy world aims to doom a sane man", by Roger Simon (Favorable)
3. *Charleston Daily Mail*, "Foster" (Favorable)

May 2, 1995

1. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, "Henry Foster Must Provide Answers" (Unfavorable)
2. *San Francisco Examiner*, "Confirm Dr. Foster" (Favorable)
3. *Chicago Tribune*, "Secret codes: The power of 'C-words'", by Ellen Goodman (Favorable)
4. *San Francisco Chronicle*, "A Worthy Nominee For Surgeon General" (Favorable)
5. *Sacramento Bee*, "Listen to Henry Foster" (Favorable)
6. *San Jose Mercury News*, "Dr. Hero" (Favorable)
7. *New York Daily News*, "A fair hearing" (Favorable)
8. *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, "A public servant headed for a political execution", by Tom Teepen (Favorable)
9. *USA Today*, "If qualifications count, Foster deserves a chance" (Favorable)
10. *USA Today*, "Thumbs down on Foster", by Gary L. Bauer (Unfavorable)
11. *Arizona Republic*, "Henry Foster, in his own words" (Middle of the Road)
12. *News Journal* (Delaware), "Dr. Foster's hearing should focus on his real values" (Favorable)

May 1, 1995

1. *Washington Post*, "Dole's Sentencing Before Trial", by Jack Anderson and Michael Binstein (Favorable)
2. *Tennessean*, "Foster exactly right for surgeon general" (Favorable)

April 29, 1995

1. *Washington Post*, "What the Fight Over Dr. Foster Is About", by Ellen Goodman (Favorable)

April 28, 1995

1. *News Journal* (Wilmington, DE), "Dr. Foster's hearing should focus on his real values" (Favorable)

April 24, 1995

1. *Carrier Journal* (Louisville, KY), "A fight worth fighting" (Favorable)

April 22, 1995

1. *Baltimore Sun*, "GOP opposition to Foster comes with political risks", by Jack Germond and Jules Witcover (Favorable)

April 20, 1995

1. *USA Today*, "To find Dole, take a right", by Susan Estrich (Favorable)
2. *Washington Post*, "Will Dr. Foster Have His Day?" (Middle of the Road)
3. *Baltimore Sun*, "Is This Dole's Idea of Leadership?" (Favorable)

April 19, 1995

1. *Detroit Free Press*, "Henry Foster: His life's work qualifies him well for surgeon general" (Favorable)
2. *New York Post*, "The Foster solution" (Unfavorable)
3. *Topeka Capital-Journal*, "Is it Foster's fate?" (Middle of the Road)

April 18, 1995

1. *Los Angeles Times*, "Dr. Foster Deserves His Day in 'Court'" (Favorable)
2. *Boston Herald*, "Drop Foster's nomination" (Unfavorable)
3. *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, "Playing with political fire" (Favorable)
4. *Tennessean*, "Full Senate deserves to vote on Foster" (Favorable)

April 12, 1995

1. *Washington Times*, "Ten reasons to sink the Foster nomination", by Thomas L. Jipping (Unfavorable)

April 1, 1995

1. *Baltimore Sun*, "Judging Henry Foster" (Favorable)

March 21, 1995

1. *Florida Times-Union*, "Judgment is the issue" (Unfavorable)

March 10, 1995

1. *Washington Times*, "A man of our changing times?", by Paul Greenberg (Unfavorable)

March 7, 1995

1. *Washington Times*, "Persevering after the latest revelations", by Eric Breindel (Unfavorable)

March 6, 1995

1. *Time* magazine, "Pro-Life and Pro-Choice? Yes!" by George J. Church (Favorable)
2. *National Review*, "Who Is Henry Foster?" (Unfavorable)
3. *The New Republic*, "A Vote For Foster" (Middle of the road)

March 5, 1995

1. *Baltimore Sun*, "Should Dr. Foster Be Confirmed? Yes: Care For All Citizens Is at Stake", by Karen H. Rothenberg (Favorable)
2. *Baltimore Sun*, "Should Dr. Foster Be Confirmed? No: Pregnant Women Need Support, Solutions, Not a Deadly Quick Fix", by Frederica Mathews-Green (Unfavorable)
3. *Montgomery Advertiser*, "Did Foster Know Of Tuskegee Study?" (Unfavorable)

March 4, 1995

1. *Washington Afro-American*, "Foster foes are not 'fringe groups'", by Charles E. Williams (Unfavorable)

March 3, 1995

1. *Washington Afro-American*, "Dr. Foster should be confirmed", by Henry Ponder (Favorable)

March 2, 1995

1. *Washington Post*, "Medical Morality: When Consent Is Not Informed", by Willard Gaylin and Allan Rosenfield (Favorable)
2. *Washington Times*, "Foster furor bears a reminder", by John Leo (Unfavorable)

March 1, 1995

1. *Washington Post*, "Dr. Foster and the Syphilis Study" (Middle of the road)
2. *USA Today*, "Do we need a surgeon general?", by Michael Tanner (Unfavorable)

February 28, 1995

1. *Washington Times*, "New cloud adrift over Foster", by Mona Charen (Unfavorable)
2. *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, "Let a doctor be surgeon general", by Dr. Melvin Konner (Favorable)

February 27, 1995

1. *The Nation*, "Regarding Henry" (Unfavorable to PoTUS)
2. *The Nation*, "Subject To Debate", by Katha Pollitt (Unfavorable to PoTUS)

3. *U.S. News & World Report*, "Looking out for No. 1", by Gloria Borger (Unfavorable to PoTUS)
4. *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, "If Senate dumps Foster...", by John Head (Favorable)

February 25, 1995

1. *Washington Times*, "Checking vital signs of the nomination", by Doug Bandow (Unfavorable)

February 24, 1995

1. *New York Times*, "Searching for a Surgeon Politic", by Melvin Konner (Favorable)

February 23, 1995

1. *New York Times*, "The Double Wedge", by William Safire (Partly Favorable to PoTUS)
2. *New York Times*, "Their Own Petard", by Frank Rich (Mentions Foster, but story not on nomination)
3. *N.Y. Daily News*, "Fight to save Foster or Clinton?", reprinted from *U.S. News & World Report*, by Gloria Borger (Unfavorable to PoTUS)

February 22, 1995

1. *Florida Times-Union*, "Credibility is the issue" (Unfavorable)

February 21, 1995

1. *New York Newsday*, "State of Nation: Not Healthy", by Jimmy Breslin (Favorable to Foster; Unfavorable to PoTUS)

February 20, 1995

1. *Montgomery Advertiser*, "How White House Bungled Foster Nomination", by Martin Schram (Unfavorable to PoTUS)

February 19, 1995

1. *Washington Times*, "By the standards of our times", by Paul Greenberg (Unfavorable)
2. *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, "The power politics of terror", by Tom Teepen (Favorable)
3. *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, "America needs Foster care", by Cynthia Tucker (Favorable)

February 18, 1995

1. *Washington Afro-American*, "Dr. Foster for U.S. Surgeon General" (Favorable)
2. *National Journal*, "Foster Affair Can Be A Clinton Plus", by Jack W. Germond and Jules Witcover (Middle of the road)

February 17, 1995

1. *Washington Post*, "A Troubling Medical Act", by Charles Krauthammer (Unfavorable)
2. *Wall Street Journal*, "On Dr. Foster" (Unfavorable to PoTUS)
3. *Chicago Tribune*, "Dr. Foster and the ethics question", by Charles Krauthammer (Unfavorable)
4. *Kansas City Star*, "Two views of abortion and Foster's nomination", by Paul Greenberg and E.J. Dionne, Jr. (Favorable)
5. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, "Why I Want To Be Surgeon General", by Henry Foster (Favorable)

February 16, 1995

1. *USA Today*, "'Roe vs. Wade' dead? Foster debate says so", by Susan Estrich (Favorable)
2. *Washington Times*, "Temperature Readings on Dr. Foster", by Clarence Page (Unfavorable)
3. *Baltimore Sun*, "The Foster Nomination" (Favorable)
4. *Washington Post*, "A Lesson in Spin", by Mary McGrory (Unfavorable to PoTUS)
5. *Star Tribune* (Minnesota), "Why this prolife physician sympathizes with Foster", by Steve Calvin, M.D. (Favorable)
6. *The Reporter Dispatch* (Westchester, NY), "Hear Dr. Foster out at Senate hearing" (Favorable)
7. *Des Moines Register*, "Why he wants surgeon general job", by Henry Foster (Favorable)

February 15, 1995

1. *San Francisco Chronicle*, "Specter's Profile in Courage" (Favorable)
2. *Chicago Defender*, "Stop using Foster as political football" (Favorable)
3. *Omaha World-Herald*, "How to Get Consensus for Nominee", by Norman Mindrebo (Favorable)
4. *Reno Gazette-Journal*, "Another Clinton nominee caught in a battle" (Favorable to Foster; Unfavorable to PoTUS)
5. *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, "Don't let bully intimidate you", by Rheta Grimsley Johnson (Favorable)
6. *Omaha World-Herald*, "Why I Want to Be Surgeon General", by Henry Foster (Favorable)

February 14, 1995

1. *New York Post*, "Abort the Foster nomination" (Unfavorable)
2. *Baltimore Sun*, "Foster nomination exposes splits in GOP over abortion", by Jack Germond & Jules Witcover (Unfavorable to PoTUS)
3. *Los Angeles Times*, "Nomination Is Latest Battle in Abortion War", by Susan Estrich (Favorable)

4. *Washington Post*, "Stopped by Abortion", by E.J. Dionne Jr. (Middle of the road)
5. *Washington Times*, "The Left panics on judicial nominees" (Unfavorable)
6. *Washington Times*, "The Foster-Elders continuum", by Ralph Reed (Unfavorable)
7. *USA Today*, "Put an end to drive-by smearers", by Michael Gartner (Favorable)
8. *Sacramento Bee*, "Sticking with Foster" (Favorable)
9. *New York Times*, "The Wrong Target", by A.M. Rosenthal (Favorable)
10. *Washington Times*, "Pastor praises Foster's postnatal priorities", by Adrienne T. Washington (Favorable)
11. *State Journal Register* (Illinois), "A bungled nomination" (Favorable to Foster; Unfavorable to PoTUS)
12. *Star Tribune* (Minnesota), "Surgeon general: Playing a numbers game with Foster" (Favorable)
13. *Milwaukee Sentinel*, "Political blunder: Foster nomination gives 'extreme right' ammunition in its fight against abortion" (Unfavorable to PoTUS)
14. *Topeka Capital-Journal*, "Let senators know the right choice is to vote to confirm Foster", by Dr. Bill Roy (Favorable)
15. *Chicago Sun Times*, "Give Clinton His Surgeon General", by Dennis Byrne (Unfavorable to PoTUS)
16. *Tennessean*, "Keep an open mind on Foster nomination", (Favorable)

February 13, 1995

1. *Washington Times*, "Attitude adjustment...and retreat", by Paul Greenberg (Unfavorable)
2. *Washington Times*, "The divisive Foster nomination" (Unfavorable)
3. *New York Times*, "White House Releases Papers That Defend Foster", by Lawrence K. Altman (Favorable)
4. *New York Daily News*, "Abortion still nags America", by Charles Krauthammer (Unfavorable)
5. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, "Clinton made a mistake on the Foster nomination", by Claude Lewis (Unfavorable to PoTUS)

February 12, 1995

1. *Baltimore Sun*, "Another Nomination Nightmare" (Unfavorable to PoTUS)
2. *San Francisco Examiner*, "Don't dump Dr. Foster" (Favorable)
3. *Chicago Tribune*, "Conservatives out to stigmatize M.D.'s" (Favorable)
4. *Kansas City Star*, "Another fiasco from an inept White House", by Rich Hood (Unfavorable to PoTUS)
5. *Des Moines Register*, "Insidious attack on Foster", by Rekha Basu (Favorable)
6. *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, "Another bungled nomination" (Unfavorable for Foster and PoTUS)
7. *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, "Henry Foster owes no apology" (Favorable)

February 11, 1995

1. *Baltimore Sun*, "President wins even if he loses the fight over Foster", by Jack Germond and Jules Witcover (Semi-Favorable)
2. *Washington Times*, "Detours that lead to distraction", by Walter Mears (Unfavorable)

February 10, 1995

1. *Chicago Tribune*, "Foster nomination rekindles debate on morality of abortion", by Charles Krauthammer (Unfavorable)
2. *New York Newsday*, "Bill, Stand By Your Man", by Michael H. Cottman (Unfavorable to PoTUS)
3. *New York Post*, "There's something for everyone to dislike about Foster", by Cathy Burke (Unfavorable)
4. *New York Newsday*, "Clinton's Slow Learning Curve", by Murray Kempton (Unfavorable to PoTUS)
5. *New York Daily News*, "Putting the lie to top doc fight", by Amy Pagnozzi (Unfavorable)
6. *Oregonian*, "Anti-Foster campaign: The Big Chill", by David Sarasohn (Favorable)
7. *Washington Post*, "It's Not Just The Zealots", by Charles Krauthammer (Unfavorable)
8. *New York Times*, "The Tainted Foster Nomination" (Unfavorable)
9. *Los Angeles Times*, "Another Botched Job? Poor staff work at White House imperils Foster" (Unfavorable to PoTUS)
10. *Wall Street Journal*, "Clinton Fails His Own Litmus Test", by Paul A. Gigot (Unfavorable to PoTUS)
11. *Chicago Tribune*, "Surgeon general dispute delivers D.C. doublespeak", by Mary Schmich (Favorable)
12. *Seattle Times*, "Defending Dr. Foster, women's privacy rights" (Favorable)
13. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, "Foster Exposes Big-Tent Myth", by Gregory Freeman (Favorable)
14. *Oregonian*, "Foster is right for the job" (Favorable)
15. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, "False diagnosis" (Favorable)
16. *Detroit Free Press*, "The reluctant nomination: Clinton hems and haws and satisfies no one", by Richard Cohen (Unfavorable to PoTUS)
17. *Milwaukee Journal*, "It isn't Foster who should be fired" (Unfavorable to PoTUS)

February 9, 1995

1. *Des Moines Register*, "Clinton should stand by Foster" (Favorable)
2. *Des Moines Register*, "Why Foster is right for surgeon general", by Ellen Goodman (Favorable)
3. *Clarion Ledger* (Jackson, MS), "Foster: Nominee should be judged fairly" (Favorable)
4. *Denver Post*, "Clinton should stand behind Foster's nomination" (Favorable)

5. *Detroit Free Press*, "Surgeon General: Don't allow anti-abortionists undue influence" (Favorable)
6. *Tennessean*, "Painful process for Foster" (Favorable)
7. *Boston Globe*, "The demonization of a doctor", by Ellen Goodman (Favorable)
8. *Chicago Tribune*, "Dr. Foster: Is history repeating itself?" (Unfavorable to PoTUS)
9. *Chicago Tribune*, "Getting past the sound-bites on Foster's nomination", by Joan Beck (Favorable)
10. *Denver Post*, "Clinton should stand behind Foster's nomination" (Favorable)
11. *Washington Post*, "Surgeon General Dismay: They Keep Doing It", by Colbert I. King (Unfavorable to PoTUS)
12. *Washington Post*, "The Doctor Is In/Out", by Richard Choen (Unfavorable to PoTUS and Dr. Foster)
13. *New York Post*, "White House fumble on Dr. Foster" (Unfavorable to PoTUS)
14. *New York Post*, "Dr. Elders' Successor: '78 document may trip up surgeon general nominee", by Robert Novak (Unfavorable)
15. *Washington Post*, "The Surgeon General Melee" (Unfavorable to PoTUS)
16. *Washington Post*, "Scrutinizing the Numbers", by Robert D. Novak (Unfavorable)
17. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, "A Litmust-Test Nomination" (Unfavorable to PoTUS)
18. *Omaha World-Herald*, "Honesty the Question in Nomination" (Unfavorable)
19. *Milwaukee Sentinel*, "Foster matter: White House staff still hasn't learned" (Unfavorable to PoTUS)
20. *Wisconsin Journal*, "Don't judge foster on one issue" (Favorable)
21. *Honolulu Advertiser*, "Surgeon general: White House boots another one" (Unfavorable to PoTUS)

February 8, 1995

1. *Omaha World-Herald*, "'A Small Gain for Pro-Life Side'", by Mona Charen (Unfavorable)
2. *Patriot-News* (Harrisburg, PA), "Foster Flap, Pro-life gaining, judging from controversy", by Mona Charen (Unfavorable)
3. *Boston Herald*, "Public health vs. politics" (Unfavorable)
4. *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, "Clinton must stand by his choice" (Favorable)
5. *Dallas Morning News*, "Should Foster become surgeon general? Yes, only hypocrites would reject this choice", by Deborah Mathis (Favorable)
6. *Dallas Morning News*, "Should Foster become surgeon general? No, he is a clone of Joycelyn Elders", by Cal Thomas (Unfavorable)
7. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, "Defy the extremists; stand by nominee" (Favorable)
8. *Baltimore Sun*, "Clinton's 'weasel' words don't exactly help Foster", by Roger Simon (Unfavorable to PoTUS)
9. *Washington Times*, "Reincarnation...and obfuscation?", by Cal Thomas (Unfavorable)
10. *Washington Times*, "Cultural windshift", by Mona Charen (Unfavorable)

11. *Washington Post*, "The Medicalization of Teen Pregnancy", by Joseph A. Califano Jr. (Not Applicable)
12. *Times Picayune*, "Dr. Foster and teen pregnancies" (Favorable)
13. *Boston Globe*, "Good medicine from Dr. Foster" (Favorable)
14. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, "Defy the extremists; stand by nominee" (Favorable)
15. *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, "Clinton must stand by his choice" (Favorable)
16. *Baltimore Sun*, "Winning by Intimidation", by Ellen Goodman (Favorable)
17. *San Francisco Chronicle*, "Message to Clinton: Stand By Your Man" (Favorable)
18. *Omaha World-Herald*, "Another Dr. Elders, Same Ideas", by Cal Thomas (Unfavorable)
19. *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, "Foster merits confirmation" (Favorable)

February 7, 1995

1. *Milwaukee Journal*, "Good choice for surgeon general" (Favorable)
2. *Star Tribune*, "Surgeon General: The sound selection of Henry Foster Jr." (Favorable)
3. *Chicago Tribune*, "Let the good doctor be heard" (Favorable)
4. *Miami Herald*, "Don't rush to judgment" (Favorable)
5. *Arizona Republic*, "Congress and Henry Foster: Cowardice at his convictions" (Favorable)
6. *Tennessean*, "Foster shares goals of many of his critics" (Favorable)
7. *Sacramento Bee*, "Naming a new surgeon general" (Favorable)
8. *Chicago Sun-Times*, "Judge Foster on Qualifications" (Favorable)
9. *Washington Times*, "Dr. Foster and the art of the statement" (Unfavorable)
10. *Washington Times*, "Gilbert and Sullivan take it on the road", by Wesley Pruden (Unfavorable)
11. *USA Today*, "Ability, not abortion, is test of surgeon general" (Favorable)
12. *USA Today*, "Foster isn't fit for job", by Judie Brown (Unfavorable)
13. *Baltimore Sun*, "Effort to replace Elders has been made difficult", by Jack Germond and Jules Witcover (Unfavorable)
14. *Indianapolis Star*, "Dr. Foster: Two intransigent forces target a worthy nominee" (Favorable)

February 6, 1995

1. *San Jose Mercury News*, "Surgical decision: Clinton's nominee for surgeon general is a good one" (Favorable)
2. *Washington Times*, "Dr. Foster's nomination" (Unfavorable)
3. *Arizona Republic*, "He's no Joycelyn Elders" (Favorable)
4. *Hartford Courant*, "Dr. Foster is eminently suitable for the job" (Favorable)
5. *Omaha World-Herald*, "Assurances Needed From Clinton Nominee" (Favorable)

February 4, 1995

1. *Kansas City Star*, "Medical chief" (Favorable)

February 1, 1995

1. *Tennessean*, "Foster a wise choice" (Favorable)

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**Favorable/ Positive
Editorials**

Divider Title: _____

Clinton rise in polls shows public hasn't given him up

2A

WASHINGTON — An approval rating of 56 percent is nothing for a politician to write home about. But President Clinton is like the guy in the old country song who's been down so long it must look like up to him.

Several new opinion surveys, two of them published, have found the president's approval rating on the sunny side of 50 percent for the first time in several months and his disapproval down to just over 40 percent.

A Washington Post-ABC News poll, for example, had the ratio as 56-41, a gain for Clinton of 10 percentage points in a month.

There is, of course, a lot of reason for the White House to be cautious about putting too much stock in polling numbers that can be extremely volatile.

They understand, for instance, that the high marks the president received for his handling of the Oklahoma City tragedy — approval ratings above 80 percent — had some obvious effect on his overall ratings.

But political professionals in both parties also see some clear lessons in Clinton's improved position that may have implications for the re-election campaign ahead.

"He's looked and acted presidential, and that's where he's at his best," said Peter Hart, an astute Democratic poll-taker. Ray Strother, a veteran Democratic consultant, agreed. "Clinton's doing a lot of things right lately," he said. "He's acting presidential."

Just what constitutes "acting presidential" is open to some dispute when you get beyond the widespread consensus that carrying your own suitcase like Jimmy Carter doesn't qualify. But there seem to be two factors in Clinton's situation that are obvious.

First, the president has been far less visible on the television screens than he was a few months ago.

And when he has appeared, it has been under circumstances that suggested the power and dignity of the office rather than his amateur talent for playing the saxophone.

"He didn't know how to play the part, but he's learned," one strategist said.

Perhaps most important, however, has been the picture Clinton has projected lately as a leader of some strength taking strong positions with some show of determination.

In the aftermath of Oklahoma City, even Republican strategists agree, Clinton said the right things to express the national outrage and then to denounce hate speech and to defend his administration's position against assault weapons.



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Similarly, he has displayed a hard edge on less emotional issues — in standing firmly behind his nominee for surgeon general, Dr. Henry W. Foster Jr., and in confronting the Japanese with trade sanctions.

At this point, the president still has miles to go to convince many of his fellow Democrats in Congress that he can be depended upon to stand and fight on touchy political issues in the future.

They have seen too many times in which, in their view if not that of the White House, Clinton waffled or yielded in the face of determined opposition. Those who applaud his steadfastness behind Foster have not forgotten Lani Guinier.

There is also some fear the president may try to play cute and self-serving political games when he should be presidential.

"He has to guard against having a political angle for everything," said one consultant who cited Clinton's speech at Michigan State about talk radio hosts as "walking up to the line if not over it."

The questions on which Clinton has been effective lately are not the kind likely to cause him a lot of anguish.

After Guinier, he had no choice but to stand up for Foster. After Oklahoma City, it isn't really daring to oppose assault weapons and the National Rifle Association, which stepped so far out of bounds that even George Bush was offended. And taking a whack at Japan on trade is always a crowd-pleaser.

So the president's Democratic colleagues may be more impressed if, rather than trying to please both sides by waffling, he shows the same willingness to take a hard line and some risks on a more convoluted issue such as affirmative action.

But for the moment, at least, the poll numbers, ephemeral though they may be, have given Clinton a respite from months of bad political news.

And they have told the White House that the electorate is still listening and open to argument.

Charleston Daily Mail; 5-16-95

Foster

■ Americans want respectful hearings,
not more character assassinations

MANY of the Clinton administration's nominees for important government posts deserved the trouble they ran into. But it would be a mistake for Sen. Phil Gramm, R-Texas, to give Dr. Henry Foster a hard way to go in the U.S. Senate.

Not only would a filibuster against Foster be a disservice to the man, it would reflect on Gramm's character, not Foster's.

Foster, an obstetrician and gynecologist, is qualified to be surgeon general of the United States.

Democrats played to the worst instincts of the Far Left when they smeared Supreme Court nominees Robert Bork and Clarence Thomas. Most Americans were offended, and rightfully so.

If Republicans like Gramm try to foul out a man like Foster to placate the religious right of the Republican Party, they too will deserve condemnation.

Foster has a long record of trying to do something about what many people believe is the nation's No. 1 problem — teen-age pregnancy. Furthermore, Foster's stance on abortion — that it should be "safe, legal, and rare" — is an opinion shared by the overwhelming majority of the American people.

Barring some huge surprise, there seems no reason to disqualify Foster. There is every reason to get on with the national discussion over what to do about teen-age promiscuity, teen-age pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases.

Foster is qualified to lead that discussion. Let's let him get started.

Sacramento Bee; 5-16-95



'Ah'll tawk and Ah'll tawk and Ah'll tawk and Ah'll tawk and'

Wash. Afro-American; 5-13-95

Dr. Foster at his best

In a masterful appearance before the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee last week, Dr. Henry Foster, nominee for U.S. Surgeon General, laid to rest any legitimate doubts that might have existed about his integrity, honesty, and deep seated concern for the well being of all people.

Admitting that he might have initially spoken a bit too quickly when he understated the number of abortions he has performed over a long career as a physician, he responded fully to the senators' questions and in the process convinced several of the doubters that he was not the devil with horns that he had been painted by the right- to-lifers and the religious zealots.

He came across as caring physician who, given the opportunity to address his detractors in a public forum—a privilege denied to another Clinton nominee, Lani Gunier—convincingly demonstrated that he was an ideal nominee for the post for which he had been named.

For an inherently private person, the unaccustomed public scrutiny has been an ordeal, but the only time he showed a flash of anger was when his principal detractor, Republican Sen. Daniel R. Coats of Indiana, brought up the matter of the infamous Tuskegee, AL. experiment. This was the disgraceful episode in which African-American men with syphilis were denied treatment until the experiment was exposed in 1969.

In a voice, quivering with righteous rage, Dr. Foster responded:

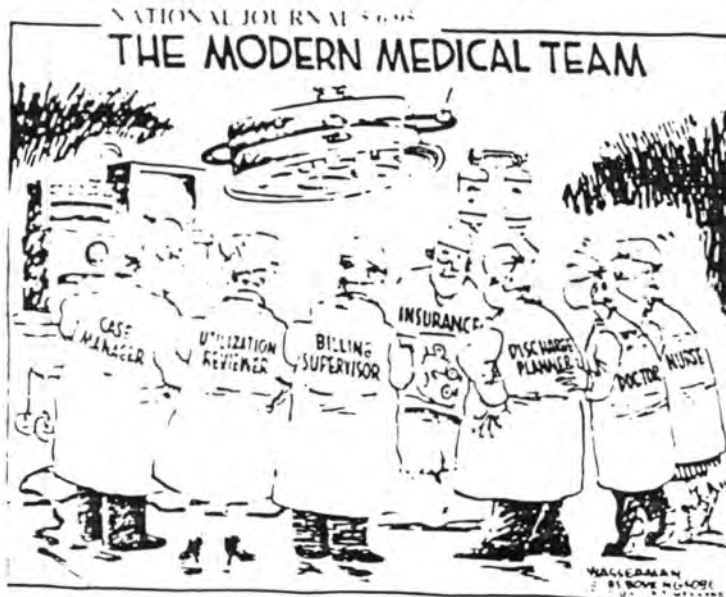
"Of all the things that have transpired over the past three months, I find nothing more offensive than the litany you just put forth. This was clearly a dastardly experiment conducted under the auspices of the U.S. government. And (that) someone would have the audacity to try to put that on the Black people of Tuskegee beggars description."

The odds are now rapidly increasing that Dr. Foster's nomination will receive a vote in the committee and be sent to the full Senate where the worse kind of political maneuvering has been promised.

Majority leader Bob Dole has already said he might not even let the matter come to the floor, and Jesse Helms, the most reactionary of the reactionaries, has promised a filibuster if it does.

Clearly the nomination should be brought to a vote, in which senators can either say yes or no.

If the Republican leadership fails to insure that this will happen, it will indeed forfeit any claim of fairness in this matter.



Wash. Post; 5-12-95

A Dr. Foster Quote

The May 1 Style story about Dr. Henry Foster included a quote of his mother's advice to him as he was heading off to the University of Arkansas Medical School as the only black in his entering class. It read, "Everything that happens to you bad is going to happen because you are a Negro."

If that's what the reporter heard Dr. Foster say, she heard him wrong. He said his mother's advice was: "Everything that happens to you bad is not going to happen because you are a Negro."

I have heard Dr. Foster repeat this story a dozen times, and each time he points out that his mother's message was meant to convey that race would not and could not be the justification for all negative occurrences. He went on to demonstrate, by example, how this advice positively affected his relationships.

JOHN PODESTA

Assistant to the President
Staff Secretary, the White House
Washington

NEW YORK POST, TUESDAY, MAY 9, 1995

THE Senate hearings into whether to confirm Dr. Henry W. Foster Jr. as surgeon general already have renewed the luster of that body. They have shown that not all Republicans are being held hostage to the presidential ambitions of Phil Gramm of Texas, Bob Dole of Kansas and a gaggle of right-wing candidates.

Sen. James M. Jeffords (R-Vt.) listened to Dr. Foster testify, said the embattled nominee had done "a superb job," then declared that he would vote for him. Jeffords surely also was impressed that freshman Republican Bill Frist of Tennessee had said of Dr. Foster: "He's compassionate. . . . He is an excellent physician. He's had the best interests of patients first and foremost in his practice, and that comes across in the hearings."

These displays of courage by Jeffords and Frist were in stark contrast to actions by Gramm, who, without hearing a word of testimony, declared that he will filibuster to block confirmation; and by Dole, who declared in shameful prejudice that he might not allow the nomination to come up for a vote.

Well, a Senate showdown is coming because the Senate

Senatorial profiles in courage

COMMENTARY

CARL ROWAN



Labor and Human Resources Committee, chaired with splendid fairness by Sen. Nancy Kassebaum of Kansas, is sure to recommend Foster for confirmation. Frist is not going to vote against him, and Mrs. Kassebaum may split with Dole and vote in favor of Foster.

It speaks well for the Senate that men like Jeffords and Frist were not cowed by the right-wing extremists and outright racists who have tried to portray the noted gynecologist as a lying closet abortionist.

Dr. Foster disarmed the grenades of this crowd by declaring himself "a doctor who delivers babies" — perhaps 10,000 of them during 38 years of practicing medicine in Tennessee and Alabama. He said convincingly that he "simply made a mistake" in telling a reporter that he'd only done a few abortions be-

fore checking his records and finding that he had done 39.

The hearings have, for fair and reasonable people, erased abortion as a reason to deny confirmation. The medical procedure is legal. But Gramm is neither a fair nor reasonable man, so he probably will go ahead with his filibuster. Sen. Trent Lott (R-Miss.) will try to give Dole cover by saying they cannot allow a talkathon to delay consideration of "more important business," so they will have to ignore the committee recommendation.

But refusal to allow a full Senate vote on Foster could drive a stake into Dole's presidential ambitions. I can guarantee the current GOP front-runner that if he panders so absurdly to the far right on this issue, millions of black voters who might otherwise "go fishing" on Election Day 1996 will be at the polls voting against him.

Beyond that, Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.) has warned Dole that if he or other Republican senators block a vote on Dr. Foster, Democrats can block



DR. HENRY FOSTER
Chances now good.

consideration of choice GOP pieces of legislation.

A Senate thrown into gridlock because Dole is trying to outdo Gramm in mean irresponsibility will undermine his chances of ever becoming a meaningful Senate leader, let alone president.

I think that because of some Republican courage in the hearings the chances of confirmation are now in favor of Dr. Foster. And that's good for this troubled country.

Wash. Post; 5-7-95

Dr. Foster and the Kansans

DR. HENRY FOSTER finally got a chance to present his own case to be surgeon general of the United States, and he made the most of it. In two days of testimony before the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee—during which his critics didn't pull their punches—Dr. Foster put his nomination back on solid ground by directly confronting, and we think persuasively handling, the charges that have been raised against his candidacy. In general, Dr. Foster came across as the open and dedicated practicing physician and medical educator that his supporters have made him out to be. Frankly, it took a performance on the order of last week's to overcome his disastrous White House-engineered introduction to the American people three months ago.

The committee now has the next two to three weeks to chew over Dr. Foster's responses to several key concerns. There is the credibility issue raised by the different answers he gave about the number of abortions he had performed (the discrepancies were due to lack of preparation and a faulty memory, not deceit, he testified), his knowledge of the infamous Tuskegee syphilis study before the story broke in 1972 (he maintains he never knew, even if others in small Macon County, Ala., did), and his sterilization of severely retarded women (within medical norms at the time, he said).

The committee's seven Democrats and at least one Republican, Vermont's Sen. James Jeffords, have made up their minds to support him. Committee chairman, Kansas Republican Sen. Nancy Kassebaum has yet to decide how she will vote but has said she has no interest in dragging out the nomination any longer. She wants to report Dr. Foster's nomination to the floor where the Senate can work its will.

Sen. Kassebaum's decision won't please social con-

servatives who would prefer killing off the nomination in committee or not letting it come to a vote on the floor. But Sen. Kassebaum, who is noted for her independence, fairness and integrity, made a call that is perfectly consistent with her well-deserved reputation. Dr. Foster is fortunate to have his nomination in the hands of the junior senator from Kansas. It's Kansas's senior senator, Majority Leader Bob Dole, who bears watching.

Sen. Dole is in a tight political spot of his own making. Since making known his presidential ambitions and at every turn, Bob Dole has been "jammed" by Phil Gramm, a chief competitor. The Texas senator's can-you-top-this? contest with Sen. Dole is part of their bidding war for support among social conservatives, who, unfortunately, have made Dr. Foster a cutting-edge issue. To slake their thirst, Sen. Gramm has promised to filibuster Dr. Foster's nomination. In an attempt to go him one better—or worse—Sen. Dole has threatened to bar a vote on the nomination. Sen. Dole needs to find a way out of that briar patch.

There are strong signs that many Republican senators would just as soon take a pass on engaging in an extended public donnybrook over a nominee of Dr. Foster's caliber and personality. The Clinton administration, having almost blown the Foster nomination at the starting gate and having watched his resurgence (despite White House involvement), is relishing the thought of Republicans' denying Dr. Foster a Senate vote. It may fall to Sen. Kassebaum, who conducted a splendidly fair and open hearing, and other moderate Republicans to speak with Sen. Dole about his plans. If Phil Gramm can succeed so easily in forcing changes on White House aspirant Bob Dole, he makes Kansas's senior senator seem to be more follower than leader.

Wash. Times; 5-6-95



Balt. Sun; 5-6-95

On Dr. Foster, It's Not Even Close

Before he announced Wednesday that he expects to vote for Dr. Henry W. Foster's confirmation as surgeon general, Sen. Jim Jeffords, R-Vt., got right to the heart of the Senate's advise-and-consent duty. "I have always believed," he said, "that in the matter of executive branch appointments it is the president's prerogative to choose his own people unless the nominee is unqualified for the post either because of lack of experience or ethical or legal problems. . . . Our task [is not] to assess ideological leanings. . . ."

The Labor and Human Resources Committee did an excellent job assessing Dr. Foster's qualifications. It demonstrated to all reasonable observers there is no ground for opposing this nomination.

The most effective questioner of Dr. Foster was freshman Sen. Bill Frist, R-Tenn. As a physician and a Tennessean, he knows more about the man he called "Hank" and the issues relating to medical ethics and professionalism than any other member of the Senate. His questions made it clear to all fair-minded observers that Dr. Foster's career is deserving of respect, even at each of the career junctures now being criticized by opponents — abortions, a syphilis experiment, sterilizations, a pregnancy prevention program.

We don't know how Senator Frist will ultimately

vote. He is under great pressure from his party to do his partisan duty. If he does, we believe he will with great personal regret — and the realization that politics, unlike medicine, "ain't beanbag." Committee Chair Sen. Nancy Kassebaum, R-Kans., is under double pressure on this nomination. Not only from her party; her Kansas colleague and friend, Sen. Bob Dole, has allowed the confirmation to become a critical battle in his war for the Republican presidential nomination.

"If Senator Dole with a Republican majority in the Senate cannot defeat a nominee he opposes," warned the Rev. Patrick J. Mahoney, director of the Christian Defense Coalition, "pro-family and pro-life activists have every reason to question his ability to lead and insure justice for all of its citizens." For that group, the fact that Dr. Foster has performed abortions is a litmus-test issue. But it is not, as both Senator Kassebaum and Senator Frist emphasized. "Given the breadth of issues that will face the surgeon general," Senator Frist correctly said, "I believe it is critical that we select someone well versed in public health issues generally, and that we not focus on one issue."

Focusing on all relevant issues, personal and professional, Dr. Foster is clearly a highly qualified nominee. It's not even a close call.

DOROTHY GILLIAM

Wash. Post; 5-6-95

The Doctor Shows Up The Senator

This is not a high moment in Sen. Bob Dole's presidential quest.

In fact, there's only one word for the Senate Republican leader's threat to let the nomination of Henry W. Foster Jr. to be U.S. surgeon general die without a vote on the Senate floor—well, maybe three words: unfair, unwise and undemocratic.

It's unfair because President Clinton's nominee for one of the nation's most visible jobs in the health field already has been made, in the words of Sen. Nancy Landon Kassebaum (R-Kan.), "a pawn in our abortion debates." Foster's confirmation hearings were delayed for months while criticism from both sides of the political aisle muddled his name, reputation and nomination.

In two days of hearings, Foster took the blame for some of the criticism because he initially underestimated the number of abortions he had performed during his decades as a practicing physician. He projected a strong and positive image. "There was never any intent to deceive," he told the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee. He looked and acted so much like an old-fashioned, amiable Southern doctor that he won over many of his opponents, who complimented him on his personality and credibility.

Senate Democratic leader Thomas A. Daschle (S.D.) was right when he said Foster "deserves a full and fair hearing" in the Senate. Democrats noted that they allowed nominations of Republicans who were more controversial than Foster—including Supreme Court nominees Robert H. Bork and Clarence Thomas—to go to the Senate floor for a vote.

Dole defended his threat to prevent a vote on the floor in a letter to Daschle, saying Democrats had used the tactic when they controlled the Senate. He cited numerous

judicial nominations and the controversial case of William Lucas, the Bush administration's nominee to head the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division.

What Dole's letter fails to point out is that judicial nominations are more likely to meet that fate because they often are caught up in politics and that Democrats often allowed contested nominations to come to the floor.

Dole's actions are motivated, in part, by his presidential duel with key rival Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Tex.), who has threatened to filibuster the nomination to death should Dole allow a floor vote. Antiabortion sentiment is strong among the Republican activists who vote in presidential primaries. Dole does not want Gramm to be able to claim credit for stopping Foster's nomination.

But if Dole caters to the far right by killing Foster's chances, he may be setting up a political backlash. "Dole is in a George Bush situation," said political scientist Linda Williams, of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation. "He's never going to be the candidate of the ultra-right. He has a history that puts him closer to the center of the party."

"He pushed for creation of the Glass Ceiling Commission, and he's voted for civil rights before his recent anti-affirmative-action statements. Gramm will always be to the right of him. Meanwhile, if [Dole] doesn't bring the nomination

See GILLIAM, B4, Col. 1

GILLIAM, From B1

to a vote, he may alienate some of the center, or at least not pick up their support."

Kate Michelman, president of the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League, said that blocking the Foster nomination would be a "dangerous ploy" and that Dole could expose a fault line within the Republican Party over the abortion issue.

"It is a primary presidential ploy, which could cause in the long run a general election backlash," Michelman said. "Dole is trying to win favor from and among the radical right of his party, which does indeed hold a great deal of power in the primary process. But if he defines himself as a right-wing supporter, that will cost him votes in the general election. George Bush lost 17 percent of the Republican vote [in the 1992 general election] because of the issue of choice."

It is a mark of their good sense and judgment that a growing number of Republicans are questioning Dole's tactics. Sen. James M. Jeffords (Vt.) said he had talked to six centrist Republicans who think Foster's nomination should come before the full Senate. Sens. Alan K. Simpson (Wyo.), John H. Chafee (R.I.), James M. Inhofe (Okla.) and Kassebaum—the Dole presidential supporter who has conducted exemplary hearings on Foster's nomination—also say he deserves a vote.

After millions of Americans read news accounts and viewed the Foster hearings, there is also a distinctly undemocratic ring to Dole's threat. Although the Senate can hide behind rules and precedent, most Americans basically believe that people deserve to have their day.

Moreover, it became clear during the hearings that Foster is a man who is respected by his own community, his medical peers and even a Republican president who gave him a "point of light" award for his "I Have a Dream" program to fight teenage pregnancy. In addition

to expected questions about abortions and hysterectomies, there were questions about his program and about language he used in a medical journal article.

While some of that questioning was legitimate, at times it seemed to cross into grilling. The typical American sees a guy who wants to serve his government and who in most other forums would be lauded as a hero. At the hands of this panel, however, he is microscopically picked apart—all in the interest of high-stakes politics.

The rank hypocrisy displayed by some legislators was chilling. Sen. Dan Coats (R-Ind.) seemed especially disingenuous. Although Foster went to the South to help the poor, Coats asked whether he helped cover up the U.S. government's horrifying syphilis experiments on poor black men. Coats professed to be troubled, but there is nothing in his legislative history that would indicate deep care and concern about poor blacks.

Similarly, it was difficult to take seriously some senators' professed concern for the sterilization of four poor, black mentally retarded women when House Republicans have just voted to remove aid from as many as 600,000 severely disabled children, including those with Down's syndrome.

Through it all, Foster showed no rancor, bitterness or meanness.

Foster has demonstrated that he would be a strong surgeon general, a good spokesman for realism when it comes to such issues as teen pregnancy and disease prevention. It is good that the White House showed that it finally has learned something about pursuing difficult nominations and that it is willing to go to the mat for Foster.

While the fate of Foster's nomination is largely in Dole's hands, if he survives to become the nation's doctor, it will be largely due to the caliber of the man himself.

SATURDAY, MAY 6, 1995

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Gridlock And Henry Foster

With confidence and wit, Dr. Henry Foster used two days of Senate hearings to bolster his case for confirmation as the next surgeon general. His responses to questions about abortion and teen pregnancy should reassure any members of the Senate Labor Committee who might have had doubts about his fitness. The decent thing for the committee — and the full Senate — to do is confirm him.

By assuring the committee that he is, first and foremost, a doctor who delivered babies, Dr. Foster took the sting out of efforts by anti-abortion groups to make an issue out of the handful of abortions he had performed. He went further by insisting that abstinence was the answer to teen pregnancy.

He also argued convincingly that he did not know prior to 1972 of a government study that included denying treatment to 400 black men with syphilis. He added that he was outraged and had said as much once he learned all the ramifications of this study.

He seemed to have convinced the panel that the hysterectomies he performed on some severely retarded women in the 1960s and 1970s were well within then-accepted norms of medical practice.

The Labor Committee is expected to vote within

three weeks on Dr. Foster's nomination. It can either send it to the floor with a favorable recommendation or no recommendation or send the nomination back to the president.

Even if the majority does the right thing by approving the nomination, there's no guarantee that the full Senate will exercise equal common sense. Many of its members undoubtedly will be influenced by anti-choice groups still seeking to make this nomination a litmus test for Senate Republicans.

That fact may explain why two GOP senators with presidential aspirations — Majority Leader Bob Dole and Phil Gramm of Texas — are trying to outdo each other in appeasing anti-abortionists. Even before Dr. Foster had a chance to testify, Mr. Gramm had threatened to wage a filibuster against the nomination if it reaches the Senate floor. Then, not to be upstaged, Mr. Dole said he might not bother to call up the nomination for a vote.

The public is poorly served by this selfish political game of gridlock for gridlock's sake. If the committee clears the nomination, the full Senate should vote to confirm Dr. Foster on the basis of his impressive record and his persuasive testimony.

Chgo. Trib.; 5-5-95

Foster deserves Senate approval

In two days of hearings, neither Henry Foster nor the Senate panel members considering his nomination to be surgeon general addressed perhaps the most compelling question: Why have a surgeon general?

The focus of the Labor and Human Resources Committee wasn't on why the nation has to have a bully pulpit for health care. Or on the remarkably limited duties and powers of an office that has created so much heat in the last couple of years.

That's a debate for another day. Right now, the question to be resolved is whether Foster should fill it. And the answer would seem to be: Why not?

Nothing that emerged during his confirmation hearings suggested that Foster is unqualified for the job, either on medical or moral grounds. Advocacy groups on both sides of the abortion issue have been waging war over this nomination, sending out treatises on why Foster's nomination is critical to their respective causes. But the only legitimate issue is whether the Senate should consent to Foster's filling the symbolic role of the nation's top doc. It should.

Foster went into the hearing dogged by questions about how many abortions he has performed. Was it "fewer than a dozen," as he once said, or 39, as he later asserted. While the discrepancy was initially troubling, his explanation sounded perfectly plausible: it was the difference between an off-the-cuff

response and one given after a diligent check of 38 years of records.

What's more important is that, while zero would be the only acceptable number to opponents of abortion, 39 in a 38-year career hardly suggests that Foster ran an abortion mill, as his most virulent opponents tried to insinuate. There's no reason that abortion should derail his nomination.

Foster's prospects for approval by the committee appear to be good, but a foul situation is developing in the Senate, with presidential politics as the pollutant. Sen. Phil Gramm, a Republican presidential aspirant, hopes to score points with abortion opponents by leading a filibuster against the nomination on the floor. Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, the early front-runner in the GOP pack, has threatened to outdo Gramm by preventing the Foster nomination from coming to a debate or vote by the full Senate.

If Dole acts on his threat, it will be a gross misuse of power. The public expects the Senate to discharge its constitutional responsibility to advise and consent by debating this nomination and making a decision.

It's a wonder that a respected, veteran physician would ever subject himself to this demeaning nomination process. At times, it seemed that Foster was ready to break under the strain. But he survived, and he has made his case to be surgeon general.

FRIDAY, MAY 5, 1995

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

GREGORY FREEMAN URBAN VIEW

Doctors Who Studied Under Foster Call Abortion Issue Politics, Not Medicine

THREE ST. LOUIS DOCTORS say they just don't get it.

They don't understand why there's all the fuss surrounding the confirmation of Dr. Henry Foster as surgeon general.

They don't understand the efforts by some Senate Republicans to tear down Foster's reputation and career of 40 years as an obstetrician — all for political gain.

They don't understand why they haven't seen the Foster they know portrayed in the news media.

All three physicians studied under Foster at Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tenn. Because the school is small, students and doctors got to know one another.

"He was the kind of doctor that you'd say, 'Hey, this is the type of doctor I want to



be,' " said Dr. Carmel Boykin-Wright, a physician with the Grace Hill Neighborhood Health Center. "He was well-respected by his patients and very supportive of the students. He was the kind of doctor who wanted you to do your best and was willing to help you do that."

Dr. Robert Scott, a physician at St. Louis University Hospitals, recalled Foster as being a knowledgeable doctor with a good bedside manner. "He was very well-read in his area," Scott said. "He was as good as anybody in his field. I once watched him do a complete C-section, completely in control, talking to the patient and her husband the whole time, letting them know everything he was doing and why and making sure that the students watching knew what was going on."

"I left there feeling that this is someone I would want to deliver my child. I can't say that about every doctor I've met."

Dr. Michael Slaughter, a physician at St. Mary's Hospital in East St. Louis, said one statistic about Foster had stuck in his mind.

"By 1991, after he had been a doctor for many, many years, he had never been sued," Slaughter said. "That's remarkable, when you consider how easily people are willing to sue doctors who deliver their children."

Slaughter also remembered Foster as being well-respected by students. "He was known nationwide as well because of all of his hard work and was probably the most prominent physician at Meharry," he added.

All three doctors criticize senators for using the fact that Foster performed some abortions over the years as a reason not to confirm him.

"If you're talking about molesting kids, abusing women or certain flaws in character, yes, those would be reasons not to confirm him," said Scott. "But we're not talking about that here. We're talking about something that's a legal and medically accepted procedure. Just because something's not politically popular is no reason that should be held against you."

Some critics say Foster tried to cover up the number of abortions he performed. Fos-

ter initially gave one figure and then, he said, after checking records found that he had been the physician of record on 39 cases, some of which may have been done by residents.

Scott said he has no problem believing Foster: "Considering the job of surgeon general, with what it pays and what little rewards there are, I can't imagine why he would lie. No one would lie about something like this, especially since a medical record is a legal document, accessible at any time."

Foster, who has said that abortions should be "safe, legal and rare," said that the abortions he performed were in life-threatening situations where a decision had to be made as to whether a baby or its mother would live.

"How can a doctor tell a woman that she should lose her life for the sake of having a baby — especially when a mother may have three or four other children to take care of?" Scott said. "It borders on malpractice in this day and age. You'll have a lawyer on your doorstep the same afternoon."

Slaughter wonders about people who want to politicize the job of surgeon general by wanting the candidate to pass a litmus test on a particular issue. "The public should realize that these people are doctors first and politicians second," he said. "The surgeon general has to deal with so much more than one issue — heart disease, cancer, Alzheimer's, AIDS. It's a shame to see people try to define the position with only one issue."

If Foster is judged on his qualifications, the doctors say, he will win confirmation as surgeon general. If, however, he's judged based on politics — as it certainly looks now — his chances may be doomed.

And, worse than that, the reputation of a good man will have been dragged through the mud for political expediency.

The Phila. Inq.; 5-5-95

The Foster consensus

*He's prudently conservative; he favors abstinence;
can a nominee be more middle of the road?*

The real story of the nomination of Henry W. Foster to be surgeon general isn't how little his views are in sync with those who find him unacceptable — but how much.

Had he not faltered at the starting gate, flubbing with White House assistance the first questions on the precise number of abortions he'd performed in a long and distinguished career, the anti-Fosterites might have had to confront that rawest of dilemmas in American politics — what to do when the other side (horrors!) agrees.

Indeed, if ever there was a narrowing of the divide over how to deal with one of the nation's chief public-health problems — the debilitating rise in unwed, teenage mothers — the nomination of the fundamentally prudent, conservative, decent Dr. Foster was it.

He is not about those things that inflame the political right. He does not proselytize about condoms in the schools. He does not pop off — even in symposia, so far as we know — about educating youngsters about the mysteries of masturbation. And we doubt he'd be likely to start yacking about legalizing drugs without explicit Oval Office clearance.

No, he is not Joycelyn Elders.

He is the flip-side of Dr. Elders: He carefully emphasizes the family's role in talking out touchy sexual topics. He doesn't put down abstinence; he lauds it.

And he has succeeded, to some extent, with a teen pregnancy pre-

vention program that used job training, tutoring, medical services and family planning to get teenagers to delay sex and childbearing.

In other words, he brings to the table both the style and proven strategies that, for years in this country, most Americans have found both sensible and worthy of pursuing.

For goodness sake, President Bush awarded Dr. Foster one of his Points of Light. Add up the Americans who voted for Mr. Bush and Bill Clinton, and that's quite a majority.

Henry Foster should be hailed as the dream compromise nominee — neither anti-abortion nor, certainly, pushing abortion as the panacea to unwanted pregnancy.

But this is, of course, the beginning of a presidential campaign. And it has fallen to those who should find solace in the Foster nomination to reflexively and, in some cases, dishonestly try to defame his reputation and overlook his conciliating views.

They should not win this debate. They should not be permitted to destroy the Foster consensus for momentary advantage in New Hampshire.

The need to get on with combating the complexities of teen pregnancy — poignantly chronicled on The Inquirer's Commentary Page this week — is, frankly, far too important.

For that special reason, Dr. Foster may well be the most qualified physician to assume this crucial bully pulpit. He should be voted out of committee and voted on by the entire Senate.

And confirmed.

San Jose Mercury News; 5-3-95



Wronging Dr. Foster

FOR how many years have conservative Republicans been preaching this message: "Abstinence is good for young people"?

For how many years have they been the authors of statements like this: "When you've had the good fortune to participate in the miracle of birth ... it is difficult to stand on the sidelines and watch so many people wasting this precious gift of life"?

The quotes this time, however, aren't from the Christian Coalition, National Right to Life or any other anti-abortion group, but from the nominee to be U. S. surgeon general, Dr. Henry Foster. Yet the response has been stunning: Instead of claiming victory — taking credit for the fact that a Democratic President has been forced to appoint a surgeon general who preaches their message — members of anti-abortion groups are rallying to discredit Dr. Foster.

Because Dr. Foster performed 39 abortions in four decades as an obstetrician, they claim he's just a "repackaged" Joycelyn Elders.

But Dr. Foster and the former surgeon general have only three things in common: They're doctors, they're African Americans, and they come from the South.

Dr. Elders was called the "Con-

dom Queen" because she was an advocate for passing out condoms to young people ("Well, I'm not going to put them on their lunch trays," she once moderated). Dr. Foster's confirmation hearing was disrupted by a member of ACT UP, an AIDS activist group that opposes his nomination because he is against condom distribution.

Dr. Elders went into every controversy issuing fighting words.

Dr. Foster has a more conciliatory nature — "Since the President nominated me," he told senators in his opening statement this week, "there has been some confusion ... about who I am and what I stand for."

Dr. Elders told abortion foes they should get over "their love affair with fetuses." Dr. Foster has dedicated his

life to protecting fetuses. His claim to fame is a program he created in Nashville housing projects to eliminate teen-age pregnancy. It stresses abstinence, the very same thing conservatives want.

Which gets to the heart of the absurdity of this controversy: How many abortion foes can say they have done as much as Dr. Foster to eradicate abortion?

There are plenty of tough issues to fight about right now. How wrong it is for those who oppose abortion to fight against someone who is working on their side.



AP PHOTO

Foster: No friend of abortion



THE STAR-LEDGER, Thursday, May 4, 1995

Dr. Foster held hostage to abortion politics

For the record, the hearings on the nomination of Dr. Henry Foster to be U.S. surgeon general are being held by the Senate Labor and Human Resources. But they might as well be held by the Republican National Convention. For it's GOP presidential politics that are most likely to determine Foster's fate.

The Senate committee gets the first shot at the good doctor, deciding after hearings whether to vote to send his nomination to the full Senate. Since the GOP enjoys a 9-7 majority in the committee, it can, should it so choose, kill the Foster nomination in its cradle. But odds are that at least two more Republican committee members—Sens. Nancy Kassebaum of Kansas and Bill Frist of Tennessee—will join the Democrats to vote out the nomination and send it to the floor. GOP Sen. Jim Jeffords of Vermont announced his support for the nomination yesterday.

That's when the real fireworks will begin—day one, as it were, of the GOP presidential convention.

It's not clear how Foster would fare in a straight up-or-down vote in the full Senate if one were allowed. But he enjoys overwhelming support among the Democratic Senate minority and the guess here is that he'd pick up enough votes from moderate Republicans to win approval, though narrowly. But it may never get that far.

The stopper is likely to be the push-and-shove going on between Senate GOP leader Bob Dole of Kansas and Phil Gramm of Texas over who's first in line for presidential support from anti-abortionists and Christian fundamentalists.

Gramm has threatened a filibuster to block Foster's confirmation, one that would, in all probability, succeed for the



John J. Farmer

most pragmatic of reasons: Too many Republicans, even pro-choice moderates, would rather not have to vote at all on a nomination so burdened with abortion baggage. It's a divisive issue even among Republicans. The anti-abortion forces are deemed a formidable factor in the GOP nomination process, which explains the Gramm-Dole tussle, but not nearly so strong among the general electorate, which explains why so many Republicans would rather the issue evaporate.

Dole, however, is determined not to be outbid by Gramm for the fundamentalist vote. And since he controls the Senate agenda, Dole can put Gramm's filibuster on ice by putting Foster in the deep freeze—simply refusing to schedule a vote on the nomination.

That the nomination should have become a political issue is a product of White House incompetence and the growing importance of one-issue politics in presidential campaigns.

The job itself is powerless; it functions primarily as a bully pulpit from which to call attention to health issues and

to prod the public and, to a lesser extent, the medical profession, to do the right thing. In that regard, Foster seems eminently qualified, a respected physician, honored by such Republicans as President George Bush and Lamar Alexander, then governor of Foster's home state, Tennessee, and now a GOP presidential candidate. The fact that Foster has long been active in fighting teen pregnancy, one of the major health and social issues of the age, adds to his fitness for the job.

But the nomination was botched by a White House staff that failed to see the potential to play abortion politics with any gynecologist-nominee. Foster's own faulty memory—was it one abortion he performed or a dozen or now 39?—compounded the problem and gave the GOP an added and unexpected stick with which to beat him: his credibility.

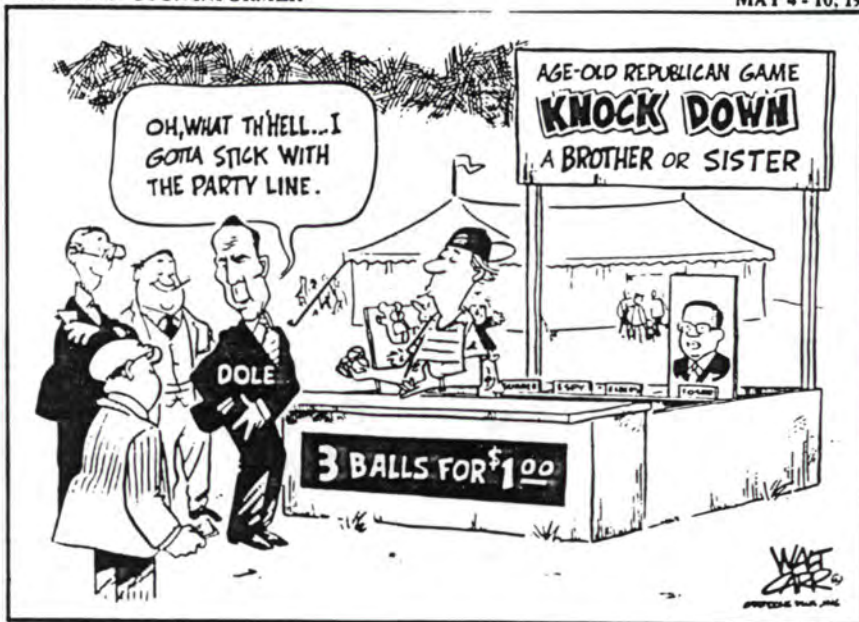
Foster insisted before the Senate committee that his credibility should not be an issue. He spoke too soon and mistakenly about his record, he said, under press scrutiny that took him by surprise. And, perhaps to his further surprise, Frist, a conservative and a fellow physician, threw him a tourniquet. The hearing, Frist said, "is not the time or the place to revisit our policy on abortion... I can tell you from experience as a physician that no one practices medicine as long as Hank Foster has—38 years—without making mistakes."

Undoubtedly Frist is correct. But Nancy Kassebaum, who chairs the committee and is viewed as more sympathetic to Foster than are most Republicans, showed a surer grasp of the political realities in her sum-up of Foster's situation.

The nominee, she said, "has been made a pawn in our abortion debates." Ain't that a fact.

THE WASHINGTON INFORMER

MAY 4 - 10, 1995



EDITORIAL

The Foster Nomination

The nomination of Dr. Henry Foster Jr. as the next U.S. Surgeon General is now before the Senate for confirmation. But already, politics is about to raise its ugly head.

Instead of debating whether the nominee is qualified for the post or whether there is a legal or ethical problem or not, the confirmation hearing is steering towards Foster's credibility and the issue of abortion.

During hearings early this week before the Labor and Human Resources Committee, one senator observed that "this forum ought not to be the place to revisit our national policy on abortion." Which is exactly what is taking place on Capitol Hill.

Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kan.), is running for President in 1996 and has noted his opposition to a woman's right to choose. And as majority leader, he has vowed not to allow a full floor vote on Foster nomination, regardless of the committee's recommendation. Another presidential aspirant, Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Tex.), has also pledged to implement a filibuster, which would mean an almost-certain death for the nomination.

Dr. Henry Foster, 61, is a highly respected obstetrician and gynecologist, whose nomination has been in limbo for nearly three months now. Congress must stop playing politics and present the nomination for a full vote on the Senate floor.

Balt. Sun; 5-4-95

Dr. Foster is causing GOP to expect a painful delivery

WASHINGTON — The Republicans have backed themselves into an awkward corner in their ideological crusade to prevent the confirmation of Dr. Henry W. Foster Jr. as surgeon general. In political terms, the best they can get is the worst of it.

Foster's soft, down-home style in testimony before the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee has disarmed those who have tried to depict him as a conniving abortionist not fit for the federal post.

The result is that only two outcomes seem possible. Either the Republicans lose the fight outright, which now seems possible if unlikely, or they win it but only by paying a heavy political price among fellow Republicans and Independents who do not share their hard-line views against abortion rights.

From the outset, the opposition to Foster has been driven by the implacable hostility of the religious right.

That is what led Sen. Phil Gramm of Texas, a candidate for president, to promise a filibuster to block the nomination before he had heard a word of Foster's testimony.

And, perhaps most significantly, it was what drove another candidate, Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, to threaten to deny a vote in the Senate on the nomination even if it limps out of the labor committee.

But actions as drastic as those threatened by Dole and Gramm would seem to require a menace to the national well-being of grand proportions, not just a mild-mannered 61-year-old black man who describes himself as "a doctor who delivers babies" — perhaps 10,000 of them in his 38 years of practicing medicine and teaching in Alabama and Tennessee.

For Dole, the political stakes are particularly high. Gramm's extremism fits his record and his aggressive personality and has an obvious appeal to his core constituency on the far right of the Republican Party.

But Dole is considered a more moderate conservative and one who has always seemed more interested in getting things accomplished in government than braying loudly about some social issue.

The issue is tricky for the majority leader at several levels. First, having put himself out on the limb by suggesting he would not even allow a floor vote, Dole must deliver or face another clear political embarrassment akin to the one he suffered when the balanced budget amendment failed in the Senate.

Beyond that, he must produce a rationale for his actions that makes sense to those moderate Republicans



JACK & JULES
GERMOND & WITCOVER

who support abortion rights and already are extremely uneasy about the influence of the religious right within their party.

Foster looked like a much easier target right after President Clinton announced the nomination, and the Nashville physician gave misleading and mistaken answers to questions about just how many abortions he has performed.

But he has admitted his error and offered explanations reasonable enough so that the question is essentially moot.

Now the Republicans on the labor committee find themselves grasping for other crumbs of dirt in Foster's background.

He is being questioned on whether the statistical claims made for his program to prevent teen-age pregnancies have been inflated; the answer seems to be that they may have, but it is no big deal.

And it is being suggested that he knew about — and, by implication, approved — the infamous federal government experiment 30 years ago in which black men living around Tuskegee, Ala., were denied treatment for syphilis so they could serve as a control group.

Foster says that he didn't know about it until everyone else did and would have deplored it if he had known. And he hardly seems to fit the mold of the callous scientist conducting research at the expense of his patients.

On the contrary, the best description of him may have come from Sen. Bill Frist, the freshman Republican from Tennessee and a physician himself who has not yet committed to supporting the nomination.

"He's compassionate," said Frist. "He is sympathetic. He is an excellent physician. He's had the best interests of patients first and foremost in his practice, and that comes across in the hearing."

Indeed it does. That is precisely why the raving of the far right seems so discordant, and why Bob Dole and the Republican Party are likely to end up paying a high political price for opposing him.

Charleston Daily Mail; 5-3-95

Foster

■ Confirm him; "safe, legal and rare" is the centrist position on abortion

THE Surgeon Generalship of the United States is a largely symbolic position. The post has been without an occupant for several months now without any noticeable harm to anyone's health.

But if this vacancy must be filled, let's get on with it.

President Clinton picked Dr. Henry Foster to be surgeon general. So be it.

Foster seems genuinely concerned about teen pregnancy. As surgeon general, he might be able to get a few kids to think twice before having unwise sex. Fine.

Some Republicans in the Senate are balking at approving the nomination. Foster has performed abortions in the past.

But Foster doesn't seem to be very big on abortion. He thinks it should be "safe, legal and rare." He'd rather build the self-esteem of teen-agers so they won't cop out and become parents too soon.

Birth control is available throughout the United States. Abortion is common. Yet American children are having children at an embarrassing rate.

Foster wants to try another tactic, and most Americans are willing to let him give it a try.

As for Republicans, they too will be judged — on how fairly they handle Foster's nomination.

NEWS JOURNAL 5/2/95

(DE)

OUR VIEW

SURGEON GENERAL

Dr. Foster's hearing should focus on his real values

WHERE WE STAND

Abortion is a phony issue in this nomination fight.

For a party that has wed itself to the concept of a return to traditional family values, the Republicans have created a strange enemy in Dr. Henry W. Foster Jr., the

embattled nominee for surgeon general who begins his nomination hearings today.

Until he began to be slandered by the anti-abortionists and the far right, Dr. Foster is best known for his high profile crusade against sexual promiscuity, particularly among the young. You can't get a much more rock-bottom traditional family value than that. So why do the Republicans think he is an enemy? Because years ago, he performed some legal abortions. And when asked about it, he gave conflicting numbers until he went back through his records.

Let's make no mistake about it. Some Republican senators on the Labor Committee are going to throw up the "issues" of credibility and suitability, but the real issue is abortion. The Christian Coalition has targeted Dr. Foster in order to prove it has enough muscle to make things happen — or not happen — in Washington.

Dr. Foster says he finds abortion distasteful, but, as a physician, he refuses to condemn it absolutely. That probably is the way the majority of lay Americans feel.

As an ultra-conservative political issue, however, it is handy to use against Dr. Foster, whose position in government would be largely symbolic in any case.

Not only is Dr. Foster being attacked being politically incorrect on abortion — from the conservative viewpoint — but, being an African-American, he also makes a nice unspoken target of those who assume that he is an affirmative action "quota." Ultra-conservatives are looking for a twofer on this one.

The Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee shouldn't give it to them. Dr. Foster should be approved by the committee and his nomination ratified by the full Senate as promptly as possible.

MIND YOU, DR. FOSTER,
OUR OPPOSITION HAS
NOTHING TO DO WITH
LEGAL ABORTION—
WE'VE THOUGHT UP
SOME ENTIRELY
DIFFERENT REASONS

THAT'S IT—
NOT ABORTION—
WE'VE DECIDED THAT
YOU'RE NOT
FORTHRIGHT
—LIKE WE ARE



THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO
WITH THE FACT THAT I'M
RUNNING FOR THE G.O.P.
NOMINATION AND
WOULDN'T DARE
CROSS THE
ANTI-ABORTION
LOBBY

IT'S ABOUT
THINGS HAVING
NOTHING TO DO
WITH
ABORTION

The Senate's crazy world aims to doom a sane man

WASHINGTON — Dr. Henry Foster Jr. was so earnest, so pleasant and so obviously good-willed in the witness chair yesterday, it seems a shame he will not become our next surgeon general.

Even if Foster's nomination gets out of the Labor and Human Resource Committee, it must be confirmed by the Senate.

And too many senators are running for president for this to happen.

Presidential candidate Sen. Phil Gramm, a Republican from Texas, has promised to filibuster the Foster nomination to kill it.

And why should Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, also running for president, give Phil Gramm all that TV time and allow him to become an even greater hero to the party's anti-abortion right wing?

No, it's a lot safer for Dole simply to block the vote on Foster and let his nomination languish and die.

After all, it is not like the country is in dire need of a surgeon general.

With a staff of just 18 and a budget of just \$1 million, in federal terms the post is not just small potatoes, it is barely succotash.

Why have one? Because, as labor committee chairwoman Nancy Kassebaum, R-Kan., said, the country needs a national "scold" and "cheerleader" on health matters.

But there are many scolds and cheerleaders out there these days: We have Ralph Nader, the Center for Science in the Public Interest, the Consumer Federation of America, Common Cause and on and on.

We have so many people telling us to eat our vegetables and to skip Chinese food that it sometimes is hard to tell them apart.

Besides, there is the real question of just how outspoken a "scold" Henry Foster would be allowed to be.

Ronald Reagan grew to hate his surgeon general, Dr. C. Everett Koop. Aside from issuing a report saying there was no conclusive evidence that abortions were harmful to women, Koop also issued an AIDS report that used the words penis, vagina, and condom. ("I didn't know what else to call them," Koop said.)

But Ronald Reagan never fired Koop.

Bill Clinton, on the other hand, fired his surgeon general, Dr. Joycelyn Elders, for speaking out on behalf of masturbation as a form of safe sex.

On Monday, however, Bill Clinton was pretending he wanted a strong advocate in the job and that Foster should not "be put in a little box for somebody's political objectives."

But as coincidence would have it, Foster serves Clinton's political objectives just fine.



ROGER
SIMON

Clinton is championing a doctor who is black and pro-choice, which appeals to two powerful groups within the Democratic Party.

Further, any issue such as abortion that splits Republicans, especially Republican men and women, helps Clinton's re-election chances.

"If we can't confirm Henry Foster to be the surgeon general of the United States, what kind of person can we confirm?" Clinton asked.

Good question.

Rep. Tom A. Coburn, a doctor and pro-life Democrat from Oklahoma, told the labor committee yesterday that he wanted a surgeon general "who was not controversial."

So all he wants is a surgeon general who will take strong stands on AIDS, sex, abortion and birth control, but not be controversial.

Which makes you wonder what kind of alternate universe some members of Congress live in.

While many were saying that Foster's performance in front of the labor committee is critical to his chances for confirmation, this is probably not true:

Of the 16 senators on the committee, 13 announced their decision before Foster said a single word.

All seven Democrats have said they plan to support Foster, and six of the nine Republicans have said they plan to oppose him.

Which leaves us with only three committee members who are even going to pretend to listen.

If Foster has a chance, it might be to use the same tactic that Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas did: Accuse the virtually lily-white Senate of a "high-tech lynching."

And in February, Foster said his critics were "white, right-wing extremists." But he later said he had not meant to say "white."

And yesterday he refused to play the race card. Sometimes speaking softly, sometimes speaking passionately, Foster at all times showed himself to be sincere, dedicated, and decent.

Which makes you wonder why he wants a Washington job in the first place.

San Francisco Chronicle; 5-2-95

EDITORIALS

A Worthy Nominee For Surgeon General

AT A TIME when the nation suffers from an epidemic of teenage pregnancy, President Clinton has nominated as surgeon general one of the few people in the United States with success in combatting the crisis.

Yet, far from exploring this important accomplishment of nominee Dr. Henry Foster, a group of anti-choice zealots has succeeded in reducing

*We deserve
better than
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debate the
confirmation
process*

an illustrious 30-year career to the performance of several dozen abortions — a legal, necessary medical procedure that a majority of Americans believe is a constitutional right.

Foster — and the country — deserve better than to see a single-

minded minority debate the confirmation process while delivering the message that healers who perform abortions had best forget about serving the public in any official capacity.

Foster's confirmation hearings begin today before the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, and let us hope our elected representatives will focus on the 61-year-old obstetrician-gynecologist's estimable qualifications, which include being chairman of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at both Meharry Medical

College and the Tuskegee Institute in Tennessee and being dean of the School of Medicine at Meharry. Foster was one of the youngest people ever inducted into the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences.

Last week, about 30 doctors who received their medical training from Foster at Meharry Medical College in Nashville traveled to Washington to speak to individual senators on Foster's behalf. Yesterday, several dozen young people who journeyed by bus from Nashville met with senators to tell how they have been helped by Foster's "I Have a Future" program.

The nationally recognized program, which has a established a record of steering its participants away from early pregnancies, promotes abstinence by presenting incentives for teenagers to delay sexual activity and childbearing — and it emphasizes job training, drug prevention and education.

Foster also is one of the nation's leading authorities on reducing infant mortality and on teenage drug abuse. The number of babies he has delivered — 10,000 — far outnumbers the abortions he has performed.

Consider the benefit to the nation if Foster were able to use the bully pulpit of the surgeon general's office to reduce teenage pregnancy, much as Dr. C. Everett Koop used the office to educate Americans about the health dangers of tobacco.

An enlightened Senate will allow Foster to do just that.

Sacramento Bee; 5-2-95

Listen to Henry Foster

The Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee takes up the nomination of Dr. Henry Foster, an obstetrician/gynecologist, to the post of surgeon general today. It may be too much to hope that his confirmation hearing will be more a reasoned exploration of his qualifications than an exercise in political posturing. But Foster deserves a fair hearing.

It's unfortunate for Foster that the White House was not better prepared - and didn't better prepare him - for the inevitable questions about how many abortions he had performed over his long career. The administration initially said it was one; Foster later said less than a dozen. After more careful review he revised the estimate to several dozen. Each was a legal procedure, which many physicians of his specialty have performed. The mistake was to make it appear that the nominee had something embarrassing to hide.

While he will undoubtedly be asked the clarify that history, Foster's record begs other, perhaps more legitimate questions - about his performance of hysterectomies on mentally retarded women decades ago, for example. The nominee deserves a chance to answer them before a panel of open minds.

Unfortunately, Sens. Bob Dole and Phil Gramm, both Republican presidential candi-

dates, have said they will use procedural maneuvers to prevent the full Senate from voting on the nomination, regardless of what Foster says. Dole says his opposition is "not a question of abortion," but stems from the fact that the nominee and the administration had not "leveled with the American people."

There's no question that the handling of the nomination was clumsy. But should that render the nominee ineligible even for a vote of the full Senate? What's certain is that the nomination shouldn't be reduced to a political football - kicked around between Republican presidential hopefuls, who are eager to pander to their party's religious right, and the White House, which may have become just as much interested in using the battle to galvanize women voters as it is in getting the nominee confirmed.

Foster might bring a great deal to the post of surgeon general, most particularly what appears to be a deep commitment to reducing teen pregnancy, one of the nation's most intractable and troubling social problems, and also considerable understanding of how that might best be done. Let's hear what he has to say.

San Jose Mercury News; 5-2-95

Dr. Hero

If Foster is rejected as surgeon general, the nation loses

IN a world ruled by reason, surgeon general nominee Henry Foster Jr. would be a hero of those who oppose abortion.

The physician's "I Have a Future" program in Nashville is one of the most successful in the country at preventing teen pregnancy. It preaches not birth control but abstinence and personal responsibility. It should be a model for programs nationwide, and Foster could use the surgeon general's bully pulpit to make it so if his nomination is approved by the U.S. Senate.

But anti-abortionists do not want to hear about the abortions Foster has prevented by helping teenagers stay healthy and in school, or about the 10,000 babies he has delivered. They focus instead on the 39 abortions the 61-year-old obstetrician/gynecologist says he has performed over his long medical career, and they are deter-



Foster

mined to prevent his confirmation. Hearings begin today in the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee.

The Clinton administration got Foster's nomination off on the wrong foot three months ago by underestimating the number of abortions he performed. That was stupid — another in a series of White House blunders. But Foster's nomination itself was smart. He is an excellent choice for surgeon general.

Foster believes abortion should be "safe, legal, and rare," a philosophy that polls indicate a majority of Americans share. He performed abortions for medical reasons. Had he done so indiscriminately, the number would be much higher.

Opponents have trumped up other allegations against Foster to smear his reputation. But there is no evidence that he has ever been anything but a conscientious physician with a powerful commitment to public health. As a dean and acting president of Meharry Medical College, he never lost touch with the broader community.

In Nashville, Henry Foster is a hero. If he fails to win Senate confirmation, the loss will be the nation's.

Tuesday, May 2, 1995 • DAILY NEWS

A fair hearing

Three months after President Clinton nominated him to be surgeon general, Dr. Henry Foster finally will get a Senate hearing today. But whether it will be a fair and honest hearing remains very much in doubt.

Already subjected to a vicious character assassination, Foster is now caught in two political crossfires. Sens. Bob Dole and Phil Gramm, both presidential candidates, are eager to derail the nomination to wound Clinton. And Dole, eager to show he is more conservative than Gramm, suggests that he may not even allow a full Senate vote, thus topping Gramm's filibuster threat. Very clever politics — and absolutely wrong.

The battle over Foster's confirmation should be waged *after* the hearing — with a vote on his qualifications. And so far, nothing has emerged that should prevent Foster from being America's chief public health official.

Certainly nothing about the abortion issue should disqualify him. Foster concedes that in a medical career of nearly 40 years, he performed about 40 fully legal abortions, which is not surprising for an obstetrician-gynecologist. He also estimates that he delivered some 10,000 babies — a fact never mentioned by the anti-abortion activists seeking to quash his nomination. Moreover, he has had a distinguished career, including creating a widely praised program aimed at preventing teen pregnancy.

More troubling are questions of his veracity. Both Foster and the White House hurt themselves with their oft-changing "facts" on the abortion issue. Another issue likely to get scrutiny concerns what and when Foster knew about an infamous syphilis experiment conducted at Tuskegee Institute.

Those questions, and a few about current public health issues, should be asked — which is what confirmation hearings used to be about. They could be again — if Dole and Gramm would put their presidential campaigns on hold.

A public servant headed for a political execution

If everything goes according to schedule, they'll start burning Dr. Henry Foster at the stake today. The only question is whether he'll be slow-roasted or cindered on the spot.

The spot being the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee.

As fair-minded inquisitors, the Republicans on the committee will give Foster a chance to speak first — to recant or, failing that, to explain his lapses from Republican orthodoxy.

But in the manner of any sound auto-da-fe, President Clinton's nominee for surgeon general will be put to the torch even if he repents. Regretted sin is still sin.

Don't be misled. The issue here is anti-abortion politics, and that's the only issue.

There will be a lot of fine blather about credibility and other abstractions, but as an obstetrician and gynecologist, Foster has performed a few abortions.



TOM TEEPEN

The religious right hates that, and this is the sort of matter about which the GOP these days only asks, "How fast?" when the Christian Coalition and like-minded groups say, "Dance."

People for the American Way has been tracking the religious right's campaign of smear and slander against the physician.

A commentator for James Dodson's Family News in Focus said Foster "has blood on his hands." Patrick Mahoney of the Christian Defense Coalition characterized Foster's views as "radical and extreme."

James Smith of the Southern Baptists' Christian Life Commis-

sion called the nominee the "Condom King." Judie Brown of the American Life League said he is "a ghoul," and the Traditional Values Coalition called him "a Dr. Kevorkian." The Christian Coalition's Marshall Wittman said Clinton chose Foster in order to "pursue a left-wing agenda . . . of condom distribution." Pat Robertson, the proselytizer of conspiracy theories, even managed to muddle the Foster nomination together with some supposed homosexual agenda.

The real man lost in all this political caricature is a rather mild-mannered and politically moderate physician and medical educator. He has been regarded highly in his profession and often honored by it.

The "I Have a Future" program that Foster developed to cut teen pregnancies was so successful it was recognized as one of President Bush's "Thousand Points of Light." It certainly allows for birth control — no sen-

sible program can fail to — but it emphasizes sexual abstinence.

It is possible there are enough vestigial Republican moderates on the committee — Sen. Nancy Kassebaum of Kansas will be key — to send the nomination to the floor, though if so, probably without a recommendation.

If it does reach the full Senate, sly Phil Gramm, Br'er Fox, will be waiting to pounce on Foster, by way of proving his bona fides to the religious right and advancing his presidential ambitions.

Henry Foster is the sort of accomplished, caring person who, in the recent past, would have been hailed for taking up public service.

These days, he is just another victim of a venomous politics that, allowing no quarter, rushes to demonize anyone put forward who does not perfectly suit its doctrinal hard line.

Tom Teepen is national correspondent of Cox Newspapers. His column appears Tuesdays and Sundays.

If qualifications count, Foster deserves a chance

OUR VIEW Some Republican senators who want to play politics with the nomination are wrong.

Here's a radical prescription: Let qualifications, not abortion politics, determine the fate of Dr. Henry Foster's nomination as surgeon general.

Going into today's hearing before the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, Foster is a definite underdog. The 61-year-old Nashville obstetrician and gynecologist has been denounced and condemned, tried and convicted by some before testimony even begins.

Even if he wins approval from the GOP-dominated panel, Republican Sens. Bob Dole of Kansas and Phil Gramm of Texas threaten to block a vote on the Senate floor.

Qualifications or politics?

First, a look at the former. For almost 40 years, Foster distinguished himself through his practice of medicine and his public service. He delivered 10,000 babies and waged a war on infant mortality in the South. He served as acting president of Meharry Medical College in Nashville and founded "I Have A Future," a program to curb teen pregnancy that was selected as one of President Bush's 1,000 points of light. Throughout his career, Foster has been an articulate advocate for medical care for the poor and the disadvantaged.

This certainly seems the perfect portfolio for a surgeon general — a slightly bizarre federal job that holds little authority yet offers a national platform for influencing

public health policy.

Next, the abortion politics.

Foster performed abortions. Not the dozen he first acknowledged but 39 during 38 years of medical practice. Anti-abortion foes condemned him first for the admission and then for the numbers. No matter that all were legal medical procedures.

The abortion revelations led to allegations that Foster was involved in forced sterilizations, medical experimentation and a secret government program to deny poor black men treatment for syphilis. In these, Foster vehemently denies any wrongdoing — a contention backed up by his professional colleagues. Again, no one has produced evidence that he did anything illegal or unethical.

So what's the fuss about? Abortion.

Dole and Gramm, both presidential contenders, need to validate their credentials with opponents of abortion. Although a minority nationally, abortion foes hold much power in the Republican nominating process. Enough, apparently, to veto nominees even if they obey the law and dedicate their lives to public service.

It's not the first time abortion has defined the debate for a surgeon general. Republican nominee Dr. C. Everett Koop took his lumps from the Democrats because of his conservative views on abortion. In the end, Koop got the job based on qualifications, not politics. He went on to win admiration with his articulate advocacy of public health issues.

Henry Foster deserves the same chance.

► The Foster fight, 4A

San Francisco Examiner; 5-2-95

Confirm Dr. Foster

The rap on the surgeon-general nominee is that he did abortions; the reality is he founded a program to prevent teen pregnancies

THE IRONY OF the vicious attack on Dr. Henry Foster by partisans of the Christian Coalition is that Foster is a fighter for many of the same values the religious right espouses, including sexual abstinence before marriage.

President Clinton's nominee for U.S. surgeon general was scheduled to get the chance to defend his record Tuesday before the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee. Even with a stupendous performance, Foster faces a hard row to win approval by the committee and confirmation by the full Senate.

His nomination has become a hostage of election year politics, as well as of the ill-tempered national debate over abortion.

The worst smoke screen spewed by Foster's critics is over his candor.

The truth — no matter how badly the White House fumbles the facts — is that Foster performed about 39 abortions during a 38-year career as an obstetrician-gynecologist. Find an ob-gyn of Foster's age and experience who *hasn't* done some abortions — now that's remarkable.

In this country, it is not a crime for a doc-

tor to perform an abortion.

Three Republicans hold the key to Foster's getting committee approval. They are committee chair Nancy Kassebaum of Kansas, who is pro-choice; Bill Frist, a fellow physician from Foster's home state of Tennessee, and James Jeffords of Vermont, who sometimes votes with Democrats. One of them must vote with seven Democrats in order to advance Foster's nomination.

Committee survival isn't enough. Presidential aspirants Bob Dole, the Senate majority leader, and Sen. Phil Gramm vow to bottle up the Foster nomination. Dole says he may not let it get to a floor vote. Gramm says he'll filibuster. But who's pandering to the religious right?

Here's the nonsensical part: Foster is the founder of the "I Have a Future" program in Nashville, which counsels teenagers to continue their education and postpone having babies. Abstinence is part of the teaching. That contribution to family values has prevented young women from having to face the difficult decision of whether to have an abortion.

Foster is a dedicated physician with an admirable record of public service. He would make a sensible and moderate surgeon general. He deserves confirmation.

Chgo. Trib.; 5-2-95

Secret codes: The power of 'C-words'

BOSTON—There is some solace in hearing Henry Foster's opponents trip over their tongues as they try to explain their hostility to the doctor without using the "A-word."

Republican leaders have been left stammering by the prospect that Tuesday's confirmation hearings will turn into another party-splintering debacle. Even ardent anti-abortion advocates have chosen to stutter over the three C's rather than stick to the one A.

The fight over Foster's nomination to the surgeon general's post isn't really about abortion, they all insist. It's about Credibility. It's about Character. It's about Controversy. As Ann Lewis of Planned Parenthood puts it, "I haven't heard so many transparent excuses since the dog ate the homework."

Last December Joycelyn Elders had to turn in her surgeon general's uniform after she gave the impression of appearing to be saying that it wasn't a bad idea to teach masturbation in school.

Henry Foster was her conservative replacement. He was the safe, consensus candidate for the job, the picture-perfect profile of a gray-haired doc who once delivered babies of poor black women barred from white hospitals and ran programs to prevent teen pregnancy.

The 61-year-old Ob-Gyn had also—shock and amazement—performed abortions. That outraged the hard-core troops who want to make doctors pariahs, and made some politicians nervous. But when the number of abortions was called into question—how many did he do? how many did he say he did?—many in Congress latched onto the numbers game like a political life raft.

The issue wasn't really abortion, they swore, padding as fast as they could away from this hot issue, it was Credibility. Why, they would have been just as outraged if a nominee had miscalculated how many tonsillectomies he performed.

When that didn't quite wash, the usual suspects began floating reports of forced sterilizations, and publicizing accusations—roundly denied—that Foster approved of the infamous Tuskegee experiment which left black men untreated for syphilis. The issue wasn't abortion, it was Character.

Finally of course, in the way of Washington, all these charges rolled up into the one killer charge. The people who created a controversy now insist that Foster is disqualified because he is too Controversial.

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Dr. Henry Foster



Illustrations by Kerry Wagborn
Nancy Kassebaum

Ellen Goodman

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But in some ways, these reports have been exaggerated. After all, she voted for Clarence Thomas as well as Robert Bork. She voted in favor of the Hyde Amendment, which bans federal funds for abortion except in cases of rape or incest. In some years, she won a higher rating from pro-life groups than pro-choice groups.

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When all is said and done, Foster is another in a line of private citizens who have been escorted onto the public stage and walked right into a political propeller. As surgeon general, he wants to lead a national campaign against teen-age pregnancy—a campaign that would make abortion less necessary. He's targeted by people who would rather make abortion impossible.

For months, he's watched his life's work twisted into some unrecognizable shape. At the very least he deserves a trip to the Senate floor and a full vote. Come to think of it, maybe this isn't about abortion. Maybe it's about another word: Fairness.

The Boston Globe Newspaper Co

JACK ANDERSON and MICHAEL BINSTEIN

Wash. Post; 5-1-95

Dole's Sentencing Before Trial

Surgeon General-designate Henry W. Foster Jr. charges it would be "un-American" for Senate Majority Leader Robert J. Dole (R-Kan.) to prevent a vote on his nomination from reaching the Senate floor.

In the only interview he's granted in the 10 days before this week's confirmation hearings, Foster broke his silence on Dole's threat to deny him the basic fairness of a straight up-or-down vote before the full Senate.

"I don't think Senator Dole would do that . . . because that would be so un-American," Foster told our associate Ed Henry in an interview at the White House. "I just don't think the senator would do that. I think he has too much integrity to do that."

Under Dole's Alice in Wonderland-style justice, Foster is facing sentencing before a trial. Dole has threatened to keep the vote off the Senate's schedule—effectively killing it—even if the nomination is given a favorable recommendation by the Labor and Human Resources Committee.

Foster feels, however, that Dole will back down. "I don't think he's going to go through with it, is what I'm telling you," said Foster. "I think he's a man who believes in the American way. . . . I'm not taking it lightly, but people say things in the heat of battle [like] 'Read my lips!'"

Dole appears less concerned about sinking Foster than shoring up his support with the far-right wing of the GOP. He's not so much battling Foster as he is bowing to the true believers who decide Republican primaries. Dole's accusation that Foster has a "credibility problem" rings hollow in the context of the Kansan's recent kowtowing on issues ranging from taxes to affirmative action.

To be sure, the Clinton administration has supplied enough ammunition to antiabortion conservatives. Early on, officials kept revising the number of abortions Foster performed, prompting Dole to claim that Foster "didn't tell the truth." But since when was lying a disqualifying factor for winning Dole's vote?

Just seven months ago, Dole was posing with a perjurer named Oliver L. North, endorsing North's Senate candidacy and writing out a \$5,000 campaign check. North was convicted of lying to Congress and of two other criminal charges for his role in the Iran-contra scandal. (The three convictions were later overturned on a technicality.)

"I'm very proud of Oliver North and very proud to be here," Dole said at a campaign stop for North in Virginia. "I don't make any bones about that." Dole not only rode to North's rescue from Democratic broadsides, but proclaimed that wounded veterans like he and North "have to swallow hard" to accept President Clinton as their commander-in-chief.

"It's a wild stretch to suggest that support for the North Senate campaign requires support for the Foster nomination," Dole told us in a written statement. "The bottom line is that Dr. Foster has a here-and-now credibility problem, and it has nothing to do with the Republican leader campaigning for a Republican nominee in a political race."

Like Foster, Dole is guilty of flip-flopping. Back in 1988, Dole called North "a loose cannon" who "overstepped his bounds" in the Iran-contra affair, and "is not a hero." But last year, Dole was almost apologizing for North.

"My view is, he made a mistake," Dole said in November. "He's made mistakes. He said so. So, what do you do?"

By that same standard, Dole should be able to judge Foster on his entire 38-year medical career. While Foster is the physician of record on 39 abortions since 1973, he has delivered more than 10,000 babies. And his program to fight teen pregnancy was honored as one of President George Bush's "thousand points of light."

Win or lose, Foster will not heal overnight from charges by Dole and others that he says depict him as a "sleazy sort of person."

"I know what my credibility is," Foster said. "People can find reasons to justify what they want to do. If you really want to know about my credibility, why don't you go to the Nashville Academy of Medicine? Ask them why I am now serving my 10th consecutive year as a member of the ethics board there."

Dole unwittingly made the case for Foster last September, when he was campaigning for North. Besieged with questions by reporters about North's role in the Iran-contra affair, Dole retorted: "Well, I know there are a lot of allegations. But there are probably no perfect senators."

There are probably no perfect surgeons general either.

Foster exactly right for surgeon general

THERE'S only one thing standing between Dr. Henry Foster and the position of United States Surgeon General.

Politics.

If Foster's appointment hinged solely on his years of dedicated service and his devotion to the future of health in this nation, his nomination, due for review by a Senate committee beginning Tuesday, would be a breeze. As it is, however, the debate over Foster threatens to center less on his commitment and more on the politics of abortion. And it will include a power play of a few key figures, including Republican candidates for president.

Foster's career is impeccable. And it would have been hard for anyone to challenge him had it not been for a bungled start to his nomination. The White House goofed by not addressing Foster's history on abortion when it researched his record. And, it should be noted, Foster himself goofed when he first attempted to answer questions about his background. He at first said he had performed fewer than a dozen abortions, when further review showed he had been responsible for 39.

To his credit, Foster acknowledged his misstep. But it was too late to stop his detractors. They had something to seize upon, and they ran with it.

If Foster is not confirmed as surgeon general, it will be the nation's loss.

Unfortunately, the Foster nomination has become a political skirmish in the larger war for the presidency. Already,

Frist is in unique position to help Foster

Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole, R-Kansas, and Sen. Phil Gramm, R-Texas, both of whom now seek the GOP nomination, have threatened to block a vote on Foster in the full Senate. Clearly, Foster gives them fodder to appeal to right-wing forces that could boost their campaigns.

The most maddening aspect of the Foster fight is the characterization that he is an "abortionist." The truth is that Foster, an obstetrician/gynecologist, has devoted his professional life to reducing teen pregnancies and giving young people a future. He works to prevent abortion. For that work, he should be embraced by anti-abortion activists.

Tennessee Sen. Bill Frist, the Senate's lone physician and a member of the Labor and Human Resources Committee, is in a unique position to help Foster. His unequivocal support for Foster would say a lot to fellow senators.

The surgeon general's job is essentially a bully pulpit for leadership about health issues in this nation. There's no more pressing issue than troubled teens. And there's no better voice on that issue than Henry Foster. The Senate will serve the nation best by paying much more attention to Foster himself tomorrow than to the political winds around him. ■

What the Fight Over Dr. Foster Is About

BOSTON—There is some solace in hearing Henry Foster's opponents trip over their tongues as they try to explain their hostility to the doctor without using the A-word.

Republican leaders have been left stammering by the prospect that Tuesday's confirmation hearings will turn into another party-splintering debacle. Even ardent anti-abortion advocates have chosen to stutter over the three C's rather than stick to the one A.

The fight over Foster's nomination to the surgeon general's post isn't *really* about abortion, they all insist. It's about Credibility. It's about Character. It's about Controversy. As Ann Lewis of Planned Parenthood puts it, "I haven't heard so many transparent excuses since the dog ate the homework."

Last December Joycelyn Elders had to turn in her surgeon general's uniform after she gave the impression of appearing to be seeming to be saying that it wasn't a bad idea to teach masturbation in school.

Henry Foster was her conservative replacement. He was the safe, consensus candidate for the job, the picture-perfect profile of a gray-haired doc who once delivered babies of poor black women barred from white hospitals and ran programs to prevent teen pregnancy.

The 61-year-old ob-gyn had also—shock and amazement—performed abortions. That outraged the hardcore troops who want to make doctors pariahs, and made some politicians nervous. But when the number of abortions was called into question—how many did he do? how many did he say he did?—many in Congress latched on to the numbers game as if it were a political life raft.

The issue wasn't really abortion, they swore, paddling as fast as they could away from this hot issue, it was Credibility. Why, they would have been just as outraged if a nominee had miscalculated how many tonsillectomies he performed.

When that didn't quite wash, the usual suspects began floating reports of forced sterilizations, and publicizing accusations—roundly

denied—that Dr. Foster approved of the infamous Tuskegee experiment, which left black men untreated for syphilis. The issue wasn't abortion, it was Character.

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Wilmington (DE)
 News Journal
 4/28/95

OUR VIEW

SURGEON GENERAL

Dr. Foster's hearing should focus on his real values

WHERE WE STAND

Abortion is a phony issue in this nomination fight.

For a party that has wed itself to the concept of a return to traditional family values, the Republicans have created a strange enemy in Dr. Henry W. Foster Jr., the

embattled nominee for surgeon general who begins his nomination hearings today.

Until he began to be slandered by the anti-abortionists and the far right, Dr. Foster is best known for his high profile crusade against sexual promiscuity, particularly among the young. You can't get a much more rock-bottom traditional family value than that. So why do the Republicans think he is an enemy? Because years ago, he performed some legal abortions. And when asked about it, he gave conflicting numbers until he went back through his records.

Let's make no mistake about it. Some Republican senators on the Labor Committee are going to throw up the "issues" of credibility and suitability, but the real issue is abortion. The Christian Coalition has targeted Dr. Foster in order to prove it has enough muscle to make things happen — or not happen — in Washington.

Dr. Foster says he finds abortion distasteful, but, as a physician, he refuses to condemn it absolutely. That probably is the way the majority of lay Americans feel.

As an ultra-conservative political issue, however, it is handy to use against Dr. Foster, whose position in government would be largely symbolic in any case.

Not only is Dr. Foster being attacked being politically incorrect on abortion — from the conservative viewpoint — but, being an African-American, he also makes a nice unspoken target of those who assume that he is an affirmative action "quota." Ultra-conservatives are looking for a twofer on this one.

The Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee shouldn't give it to them. Dr. Foster should be approved by the committee and his nomination ratified by the full Senate as promptly as possible.

A fight worth fighting

THERE are so many fights going on in Washington right now — big fights over big issues like welfare reform, crime and the budget — that the arguing over Dr. Henry Foster's nomination to be surgeon general seems in some ways silly.

Should the President really distract himself from the big issues to fight about a position that is mostly ceremonial? Wouldn't it make more sense for him to save his energy for other battles and give in to the Republicans who want him to give up on his nominee?

For two reasons, President Clinton should stand by Dr. Foster. First, the obstetrician-gynecologist is the right person for the job, and, second, this is a good chance for Mr. Clinton to demonstrate how trapped the Republicans are by their right-wing minority.

By any logic, Dr. Foster is the type of physician who ought to be embraced for the job of surgeon general. Yet he's being touted as an "abortionist" by Republicans who want his name withdrawn.

He is no abortionist. In his 30 years of medical practice, he did perform some abortions — 39, a review of medical records show, and he oversaw 55 more. But he dedicated his life to something else: to stressing sexual abstinence to teen-agers in a program he created in Nashville for the poor.

"My life's work has been dedicated to making sure young people don't have to face the choice of abortion," he says. George Bush thought so highly of that work that he made Dr. Foster one of his "Thousand Points of Light."

Yet the Republicans are dedicating their lives right now to making him look like an abortionist. They are threatening to turn Dr. Foster's confirmation hearings into a referendum on abortion.

Let them.

Let Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole — once a moderate Republican but now hellbent on satisfying the far right — lead filibusters and refuse to call Dr. Foster's nomination for a vote. Let Sen. Nancy Kassebaum, a Republican

who has always supported abortion rights, chide the President for his nominee. Let Lamar Alexander, who like Dr. Foster is a Tennessean, explain such double-talk as, "I know Dr. Foster well. He is a good man. But he is the wrong man for that position."

Let the Republican presidential contenders be so threatened by the religious right that they forget that they ought to be more threatened by the polls that show Americans overwhelmingly favor abortion rights.

The issue of abortion has no place in the question of Dr. Foster's qualifications, since he has spent 30 years preaching what the most conservative of Republicans say they favor: abstinence. Unfortunately, those very Republicans are missing that point.

And they seem to be missing some other points as well: that the Republicans' success in the last election was largely due to Democrats looking like hostages of special interests, and to voters agreeing that government should play a smaller role in their lives.

GOP opposition to Foster comes with political risks

2A

WASHINGTON — The Republicans are playing a risky political game in coalescing against the nomination of Dr. Henry Foster of Nashville to be surgeon general.

No one would question the proposition that Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole has the clout to block the confirmation of Foster if he delivers on the threat he made the other day. He may even be able to stifle the nomination in committee, which is chaired by his colleague from Kansas, Sen. Nancy Kassebaum.

But the operative question is what price Dole might pay in terms of damage to both his presidential candidacy and the image of his party.

On the surface, the political equation in the Foster controversy seems simple enough. The Republicans never get much support from black voters anyway, so it may be argued that there is no potential loss there for either Dole or the party if the rejection of Foster were seen, as it surely would be in some quarters, as racially motivated.

And it is also true that there are currents of racism — or at least racial resentment — running through the electorate these days. That is obvious in the hostility toward affirmative action among whites.

But this is too narrow a view of the way politics operates. The notion that Foster might be rejected unfairly, whether or not on racial grounds, would be offensive to many white voters as well as to blacks and to many Republicans.

No one who knows Bob Dole imagines that he is operating out of racism. That never has been part of his makeup. Political reporters recall him making a strong case after the defeat of the ticket on which he ran with Gerald Ford in 1976 that the central failure of Republicans that year was the failure to reach out to more black voters.

But Dole's political motive in rejecting Foster doesn't seem much more elevated. He is obviously responding to the pressure put on him by the man he sees as his prime rival for the 1996 nomination, Sen. Phil Gramm of Texas.

Gramm has been out front against the Foster nomination from the outset simply because the Tennessee physician has performed abortions in the past — a piece of personal history that puts him beyond the pale for the religious right of the Republican Party.

Indeed, the senator from Texas seems to be the one calling the tune here in competing for those cultural conservatives. Lamar Alexander, the former governor of Tennessee, also has gone on record against Foster, praising him as a good man whom



JACK & JULES
GERMOND & WITCOVER

he has known in the past but not the right man for this job. That is a particular stretch since the job of surgeon general is largely ceremonial and has no significant duties. The only inference any reasonable person can draw is that Alexander, too, is trying to keep pace with Gramm.

All of these Republicans have a cover story, of course. That is the complaint that Foster misled Kassebaum at the outset on the issue of how many abortions he had performed and under what circumstances. And it is true that the White House handled the nomination with its usual clumsiness in failing to recognize the hazards of choosing an obstetrician and in failing to prepare him properly for the vetting process.

But Foster has offered reasonable explanations of the original bumbling, and there is no evidence of any smoking gun in his background that would prevent his confirmation. If the opponents of abortion rights were not in full cry, the nomination is one that would be approved in routine fashion and short order.

Instead, the prospect is for a full-scale brouhaha next month. President Clinton has said repeatedly that he is standing by the nomination of Foster. He could hardly do otherwise given his history of throwing another prominent black nominee, Lani Guinier, over the side two years ago.

What this means is that Henry Foster is going to be given his chance to tell his story in public hearings before the Kassebaum committee. And if he is a convincing witness, the Republicans and Bob Dole in particular are going to be in an awkward position. They are going to have to let the nomination go through or be accused of applying an abortion rights litmus-test dictated by the Christian Coalition. And, deservedly or not, they will be seen by many black Americans as resisting a black nominee for racial reasons.

All the smart money says Clinton is facing an uphill fight for re-election next year. But there are issues on which the Republicans can make themselves vulnerable. The Foster nomination is one of them.

Balt. Sun; 4-20-95

Is This Dole's Idea of Leadership?

Sen. Phil Gramm can't resist the opportunity to one-up Sen. Bob Dole and vice versa. It's inevitable with both of them running for president, but this is getting silly. Senator Gramm says not only is he opposed to the nomination of Dr. Henry Foster to be surgeon general — he won't even let the Senate vote on the nomination. He'll filibuster it when it comes to the floor. To which Senator Dole, the majority leader, says he might not let it come to the floor, even if approved in committee.

We can't think of a presidential nominee, once approved by a committee, being denied a full Senate vote (except in end-of-session traffic jams). Senate leaders often bring controversial nominations to a floor vote even when they have not won committee approval, especially when one party controls the Senate and another the White House.

In 1991, the Democratic-controlled Judiciary Committee declined to report favorably on Republican President George Bush's nomination of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court. That could have killed it, but the Senate Democratic leadership allowed a full Senate vote. In 1989, the Democratic Armed Services Committee did not approve the nomination of Sen. John Tower to be secretary of defense, but Democrats allowed a vote by the full Senate. In 1987, the Democratic Judiciary Committee rebuffed Ronald Reagan's nomination of Robert Bork to the Supreme Court, but the Senate was allowed to vote on his nomination anyway.

That's the way the Senate ought to operate. Dr. Foster deserves a full Senate debate and vote on his nomination, if he chooses to make the fight, even if he is not approved by the Labor and Human Resources Committee next month, and certainly if he is. Either way, President Clinton is right to pledge to "go to the mat" for his nominee. It is the political thing for him to do, given that his pro-choice, pro-affirmative action base wants Dr. Foster confirmed, but more to the point it's the presidential thing to do.

Senator Dole is trying to out-bid Senator Gramm for the pro-life vote, which is legitimate politicking, but he is mistaken if he believes pulling a parliamentary trick on the Foster nomination would demonstrate leadership. He would look more like a follower, afraid of Phil Gramm's shadow. A real leader opposed to such a nominee would round up the votes to defeat him.

The majority leader has a political problem unrelated to Dr. Foster. The Senate never rubber stamps the House's agenda item by item, and it is not going to on the Contract with America. That will no doubt prompt sniping at Mr. Dole by Mr. Gramm. But what Senator Dole must do is get as much of the contract enacted as he wants and can get passed, then explain to the American public why the Senate wouldn't eat the whole thing. That's leadership. He should be positive, not negative — and definitely not petty and silly.

To find Dole, take a right

The fight over abortion, Foster nomination shows candidate is pandering to extremists.

LOS ANGELES — It "has nothing to do with abortion," said Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole last weekend in pronouncing Dr. Henry Foster's nomination as surgeon general "not very viable." "In fact, he didn't tell the truth."

Who does he think he's kidding?

How dumb does he think we are?

Foster's patients and colleagues are unanimous in their praise of him.

► He founded a program in Nashville called "I Have a Future" to help teen-agers find a path other than pregnancy.

► He was one of George Bush's points of light.

► His ability to defuse racial tensions helped forge a major hospital and medical school merger in Tennessee.

► As a doctor at Tuskegee providing medical care to the rural poor, he sometimes delivered three babies a day and took care



COUNTERPOINTS

By Susan Estrich

of hundreds of poor women who couldn't afford to pay.

Treat every patient, no matter how poor, "like your wife or your mother or your grandmother," Foster taught his students.

If the issue isn't abortion, what is it?

Will Jesse Helms challenge Foster's commitment to serving the needy?

Will Strom Thurmond take him on for being insensitive to the needs of poor blacks in Tuskegee?

Will the Republicans turn him into Anita Hill?

If Henry Foster is half as good in person as he is on paper, if his colleagues are half as positive as witnesses as they have been in newspaper reports, if the teen-agers whose lives he changed and the women whose babies he delivered have half the impact in Senate hearings that they do in print, then Foster's fight may be what it takes to wake up the country to what is happening to the Republican Party.

The Christian Coalition, the political arm of the religious right, has announced that abortion will be a litmus test for the Republican ticket.

According to a survey it commissioned, 42% of likely Republican primary voters identify themselves as born-again evangeli-

cal Christians.

Both Iowa and New Hampshire, the states hosting the first presidential contests, have large and aggressive religious right groups that have vowed to oppose any Republican who compromises on abortion.

When the Christian Coalition says jump, Dole isn't the only one asking "how high?"

Moderates may decide general elections, but ideologues generally get to pick the candidates.

So Dole is appealing to the ideologues now, embracing the religious right's position on abortion and the National Rifle Association's position on assault weapons, and figuring that the more moderate majority isn't paying attention or doesn't care or won't remember.

There's nothing Americans are more contemptuous of these days than a hypocrite playing politics.

The perception that the president doesn't stand up for his beliefs has hurt him almost as much as the tough stands he has taken.

The idea of Dole as a mature man, seasoned and experienced, a man of judgment, is what wins him points in the polls and what he is risking in his cynical rush to the right.

And it isn't the only risk.

Most Republicans don't in fact agree with the religious right's hard stand against all abortions. Most Republicans would probably find more common ground with Foster, who believes abortion should be legal but rare.

A recent survey of New Hampshire Republicans and independents found that 53% of them said they would be more likely to support a candidate who favors abortion rights, while only 26% would be more inclined to support a candidate who opposes a woman's right to choose.

But unlike the activist religious right, abortion does not rank among the issues of greatest concern in this larger universe of potential primary voters.

At least not yet.

Abortion doesn't become a voting issue for most people until they see abortion rights in jeopardy. Right now, there's widespread complacency about a woman's right to choose.

That may change when Americans see what happens to a distinguished gynecologist seeking to serve his country.

COUNTERPOINTS' four columnists provide views from diverse perspectives on today's issues. **Mondays:** Tony Snow; **Tuesdays:** Michael Gartner; **Wednesdays:** Linda Chavez; **Thursdays:** Susan Estrich.



DOLE

AP

Detroit Free Press (MI): April 19, 1995

HENRY FOSTER

His life's work qualifies him well for surgeon general

Dr. Henry Foster deserves to be surgeon general of the United States. It really is that simple.

During his medical career of more than 37 years, Dr. Foster has delivered thousands of babies into the world. He has worked to educate and expand health services for poor young people most at risk from violence and disease. His record is plainly that of a man who has committed the bulk of his professional life to helping those most in need of the considerable amount of medical knowledge he has to offer.

Dr. Foster has also said he performed close to 40 abortions. But abortion is not a crime, and being out of step with right-wing fundamentalists, who have been working overtime to torpedo this nomination, is not a disqualifying offense. The full record of Dr. Foster's career, including his innovative programs to deter teen pregnancy,



DENIS PAQUIN/AP

Foster: High standards

shows that belief in true family values, personal responsibility and wise choices lies at the heart of his work.

Unfortunately, both Sens. Bob Dole of Kansas and Phil Gramm of Texas, the two leading candidates for the Republican presidential nomination, are making noises about the dim prospects Dr. Foster has for nomination. They indicate they will do whatever they can to derail it, and are obviously planning to capitalize on the matter to endear themselves to the far Right.

But this nomination shouldn't be about setting a standard to help define which Republican candidate is the farthest to the right. This nomination should be about what kind of individual best demonstrates — overall, not in part — the kind of values, compassion and knowledge that would best serve this country in the capacity of surgeon general. Dr. Foster can measure up to that high standard with ease.

The Atlanta Journal - Constitution GA 4/18/95

Playing with political fire

How convenient for Republicans if they could make the Henry Foster nomination just disappear. No bitter fight, no fractious wrangling over abortion. Poof! He's quietly flushed down the procedural drain of filibusters.

But how foolish if the White House and Democrats let that happen.

The fate of Foster's nomination as surgeon general has greater consequence than the job title suggests. This is about presidential politics and how far to the right Republican candidates must move in order to win their party's nomination.

Sen. Bob Dole's announcement Sunday that he would oppose the nomination of Foster — an eminently qualified obstetrician-gynecologist from Tennessee — is the Senate majority leader's latest sign that he intends to lay claim to the party's most conservative wing. Dole said on NBC's "Meet the Press" that even if the nomination gets out of committee, he may refuse to bring it up for a vote. Sen. Phil Gramm of Texas, another Republican presidential hopeful, threatened last month to filibuster the nomination in the Senate.

But as each man tries to prove he is further right than the other, focusing on abortion is a bit like playing with fire. The most recent Gallup poll shows that only 15 percent of Americans believe abortion should be illegal; 44 percent of the nation's women think it should be legal under "any" or "most" circumstances. And when asked whether performing abortions should disqualify a physician from becoming surgeon general, 80 percent of the American public said no.

That's why Dole, in announcing that Foster's nomination is "in extremis" or all but dead,

said it had "nothing to do with abortion." Rather, he said, Foster lied about how many abortions he had performed.

First, let's get one thing clear. This has nothing to do with Foster's "lying" and everything to do with abortion. It wouldn't have mattered if Foster had performed one abortion or 1,000 — those who wish to derail his nomination oppose the fact that he did any at all.

Yet Dole, in another news show in February, absurdly blamed the president for using the Foster nomination "to make abortion an issue to divide Republicans." It's not the president who's trying to transform Foster into a demon for doing his job.

In 39 years, Foster delivered more than 10,000 babies. He also performed 38 abortions. Yes, that's more than he initially stated when asked for an off-the-cuff number. But expecting him to remember the precise number of abortions is like asking an internist to remember how many heart attack victims he has attended.

President Clinton has said he believes abortion should be "safe, legal and rare." Foster has practiced what the president preaches. In fact, few have done more to prevent abortions than he has. Foster is a national leader in the fight against teen pregnancy. His "I Have a Future" Program, which teaches abstinence, was praised by President Bush.

Clinton needs to go to the mat on this one. And if Republicans block votes, Democrats should respond in kind. The good name of Foster should not be sullied by anti-abortion extremists.

This nomination isn't dead until Clinton pulls the plug.

Dr. Foster Deserves His Day in 'Court'

Dole may block surgeon general vote by Senate

Bob Dole, the Senate majority leader and candidate for the Republican presidential nomination, has announced that he will not vote to confirm Dr. Henry W. Foster Jr. as U.S. surgeon general, assuming the question ever comes to a floor vote. That's suddenly a big assumption, because Dole is also hinting that if the Foster nomination clears committee he might refuse to let the full Senate decide on the controversial physician's fate.

Dole has the power under Senate rules not to schedule a floor vote. Such a move would block the nomination and force President Clinton to begin searching for a new candidate for the nation's top public health post, presumably one whose professional background—Foster is an obstetrician and a gynecologist—would present fewer problems. Smothering the nomination this way would of course boost Dole's standing among those who are unforgiving toward any doctor who has ever performed abortions, as Foster has. It would also moot the threat by Dole's currently strongest rival for the GOP nomination, Sen. Phil Gramm, to organize a filibuster to prevent a floor vote on the nomination.

All this may be not-unexpected presidential politics, but it's important that Americans not lose sight of the central issue. The central issue is not the nomination prospects of the hopefuls from

Kansas and Texas but rather Henry Foster's right—and beyond that the right of the President and of the American people—to have his fitness judged by all 100 members of the Senate, on a recorded vote, as the Constitution intends. To sacrifice that right on the altar of presidential politics may, under Senate rules, be permissible, but it would be neither fair nor responsible.

The Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee has scheduled hearings on Foster in two weeks' time. Dole suggests the nomination may never make it out of the Republican-dominated committee. Whether that view reflects his own vote counting or is aimed at pressuring uncommitted committee Republicans to bury the nomination isn't clear.

The White House's handling of the Foster nomination, as we have remarked before, will never be taught in schools of government as a model of skillful political preparation or presentation. The Administration failed to do its homework and failed to brief Foster adequately on how to handle the inevitable abortion questions. The result was that his credibility quickly was damaged, even though he is yet to testify about his background and beliefs. He deserves that right, and the full Senate should have the chance to pass on his fitness, whatever the presidential ambitions of Dole and Gramm.



Dole has Foster in cross-fire.



Balt. Sun: 4-1-95

Judging Henry Foster

Sen. Phil Gramm has said he will filibuster if need be to defeat the nomination of Dr. Henry Foster Jr. to be surgeon general of the United States. That shows just how distorted judgment can become when presidential fever heats up a candidate's brain. The Republican senator from Texas is saying that if a majority of a Republican-controlled Senate favors a Democratic president's nominee, he will try to prevent the nomination from coming to a vote.

Such a tactic would be pure grandstanding. It will help Senator Gramm with the most far-out of the anti-abortion crowd. But a lot of other Republican voters must wonder about his sense of proportion and propriety.

A thoughtful presidential-wannabe should say that his decision on the Foster nomination will await the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee's hearings, vote and report. That committee is chaired by the moderate, pro-choice Sen. Nancy Kassebaum of Kansas, but it has several very conservative Republican members, including freshman Sen. Bill Frist, a Tennessee surgeon who has known Dr. Foster professionally for many years. Its hearings begin May 2.

Our own view as of now is that Dr. Foster's most talked-about liability is a non-issue. He performed a number of abortions in a long career as an OB/GYN physician. If, as seems the case, all were legal and safe, it would be unfair of a senator to deny, for that reason alone, a president the nominee of his choice. Dr. Foster would have, in fact, been untrue to his profession if he had refused to perform abortions for patients in need of them.

Two other charges have been leveled at Dr. Foster. One is that he gave silent approval to an experiment in which black men were denied treatment for syphilis while being led to believe they were being treated. A second is that he performed sterilizations on mentally retarded women.

The committee needs to investigate these charges fully and fairly, since they go to the question of Dr. Foster's staying within the legal and ethical bounds expected of a member of his profession. If he did stay within those bounds, then even those who find the practices objectionable have no legitimate grounds for voting against the nomination — and certainly none for trying to prevent the full Senate from exercising its responsibility to vote for or against confirmation.

HENRY PONDER SAYS.....

Wash. Afro-American; 3-18-95

Dr. Foster should be confirmed

I support Dr. Henry Foster's nomination to become the next Surgeon General of the United States.

I would speak against the three most mentioned reasons why he should not be confirmed. They are: (1) the number of abortion procedures he has performed over the last 30 years; (2) Dr. Foster's integrity; and (3) the bungling of his nomination by the Clinton White House.

Regarding the first point, it is yet to be proven that Dr. Henry Foster committed any crime or illegalities in the years that he has practiced medicine as one of America's premier Board Certified Obstetrician/Gynecologist. It must be reiterated that abortion is not considered illegal in America for, under Roe vs. Wade, the Supreme Court has ruled that abortion procedures performed by a doctor, however abhorrent and immoral it is to a sizable portion of Americans, is still constitutionally acceptable. Until that ruling is reversed, Dr. Foster, and any

number of other doctors, will not be in violation of the law should they have to perform abortion procedures within the parameters set forth by law.

Ironically, Dr. Foster pointed out recently on Nightline with Ted Koppel, that he "abhors abortion." In cases which he had to perform abortion procedures, he said they were only "for rape, incest and saving the life of the mother." Should a man be castigated for something his society allows or permits as lawful, or should his society confer good behavior upon him for being law-abiding? I think rational men and women would agree with the latter rather than the former.

It can be clearly shown that Dr. Foster has done nothing wrong, illegal or unconstitutional. He has stayed within the confines of his professional ethical code and parameters and societal jurisprudence. He should be commended and not assailed.

The second issue being used to stop Dr.

Foster's nomination is integrity. It is said that, at different times, Dr. Foster said he performed some 700 abortions over the last 30 years. Dr. Foster said that he mis-spoke about the number of abortion procedures he has performed in his career. How many of us have not mis-spoken and corrected ourselves when we learned the facts?

I think the worst kind of man is the one, who refuses upon learning he is mistaken, to correct himself. Dr. Foster, before the nation and on "Nightline," stated that upon reflection and in hindsight, he should have consulted his records more thoroughly about how many abortions he has performed before speaking extemporaneously to reporters about it. When Dr. Foster had the chance to re-examine his files, he as any man with integrity will do, corrected himself and apologize for the error.

This should not taint one's character. It should rather brighten it. But,

unfortunately, in today's America, contrition on the part of anyone is a sign of "a damaged good" that is irreparable. Even the good book, The Holy Bible, says that one should be forgiven in their contrition. Integrity to me is being able to say you are wrong when you discover that you are. Dr. Foster should not be raked over the coals for admitting error, if in the process, he sets his records straight.

Thirdly, there is no question that the White House bungled this nomination. They have said as much. This whole affair could have been handled better in a straight and clearer manner by presenting Dr. Foster as a nationally renowned medical practitioner who, over 30 years, has performed abortion procedures to save the life of the mother or due to rape or incest. It could also have been communicated that he, Dr. Foster, abhors abortions and only performed them under the rarest of such cases.

I accept the statements by the

president's staff that they made a mistake in handling the nomination and concur with them that the strong credentials Dr. Foster brings to the position of Surgeon General outweigh presidential staff bungling and error or at worst misjudgment.

I wholeheartedly support Dr. Foster's nomination and I ask the Senate to confirm him and for the country to stand by the president's excellent choice. He should not be punished or scapegoated for the controversy and the tensions that abortion brings to the political arena for there are rational people on both sides of the battle. Better yet, there are some who are working to eliminate at the root, the instances that lead to teenage pregnancy. Dr. Foster is a general in this army and he deserves to be confirmed as Surgeon General.

Dr. Ponder is President of Fisk University, Nashville, Tenn.

-Balt. Sun, 3-5-95

SHOULD DR. FOSTER BE CONFIRMED?

**YES: Care
For All Citizens
Is at Stake**

By KAREN H. ROTHENBERG

Will Dr. Henry W. Foster Jr. be confirmed as our next surgeon general? Whether or not he is, the controversy surrounding his performance of abortions compromises the quality of comprehensive health care for all citizens — especially women.

Dr. Foster has the background and training to tackle some of the most pressing public health problems facing our nation. Prevention of infant mortality, teen-age pregnancy and heterosexual transmission of HIV could be brilliantly addressed by a physician committed to care in obstetrics and gynecology. Yet, the professional commitment that brought Dr. Foster to President Clinton's attention now threatens to permanently exclude him or any other OB/GYN from serving as surgeon general.

Until a few years ago — before doctors who performed abortions were shot at or threatened — most OB/GYNs were trained to perform the procedure. In fact, unless they had a conscientious objection, it was considered part of the package of medical procedures they learned and were prepared to perform. Quite simply, without abortion services, physicians would not be able to provide comprehensive care to women in need of OB/GYN services.

Ironically, if Dr. Foster had never performed an abortion, many more of us might have wondered whether he was in fact qualified to be surgeon general. Barring a strong religious conviction, not performing an abortion would have meant that he had abandoned (midstream) the care of many of his patients who had determined that a safe and legal abortion was the medical procedure of choice. Nobody chooses to get pregnant to have an abortion. So, to abandon women who are in need of care is to ignore the moral and legal obligations of the OB/GYN. Selective care of patients would have raised real doubts as to whether Dr. Foster had the commitment and compassion to be surgeon general. Regardless of whether abortion is unpopular, unpleasant, or a risk to one's livelihood, it is legal and Dr. Foster ap-

Karen H. Rothenberg is the director of the Law & Health Care Program at the University of Maryland School of Law.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dr. Henry W. Foster Jr. speaks about his nomination difficulties last Sunday at the First Baptist Church in Nashville, Tenn.

propriately made this medical service available to his patients.

Yet, with increasing frequency, abortion services have become marginalized in free-standing abortion clinics, away from the base of care and practice of many OB/GYNs. More and more residency programs (not only the Catholic-based hospitals) stopped requiring or even offering training in abortion, even though the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology appears to have recently renewed its commitment to this training for residents seeking certification as OB/GYNs. Sadly, the majority of OB/GYNs do not perform abortions. In some states, not a single physician provides these services.

Whether or not surgeon general nominees should have to pass the political litmus test of abortion, an appreciation for historical and social context also is critical when evaluating an individual's deeds over a professional lifetime. Consider, for example, the other major controversy at issue in Dr. Foster's nomination: the sterilization of the mentally retarded. For many of us, at first blush, it would seem distasteful that Dr. Foster sterilized mentally retarded individuals in the 1970s. This clearly is not, and should not be, the standard of care in 1995. Over the past 25 years, significant civil rights protections and procedures for the mentally retarded have been well-established.

Yet it also was true in the 1970s that physicians and parents routinely allowed infants born with Down syndrome who suffered from esophageal atresia to starve to death without corrective surgery. Such inactions in 1995 would clearly be deemed contrary to standard practice and be labeled as medical neglect. Medical, ethical, and legal standards do change. And any physician with a lifetime of pro-

fessional experience will be caught up in these currents.

Actually, the most damaging criticism of Dr. Foster may hinge on recent accusations concerning his role in the Tuskegee experiment in which black men with syphilis were used as "guinea pigs" in a U.S. Public Health Service research project. At issue is whether Dr. Foster knew that these men were deliberately denied treatment when he served as vice president of the local medical society in 1969. If he knew, and took no action, his credibility as a surgeon general should be challenged. But if, as Dr. Foster maintains, he immediately called for a halt to the study when he learned of it through news reports in 1972, then his nomination should go forward.

In the often contentious marriage of politics and public health, we must ask ourselves if the issues of sterilizing the mentally retarded or the Tuskegee experiments would ever have been raised had the abortion issue not been raised first. To Dr. Foster's naysayers, if abortion is wrong, it is wrong, period, and no other issue really matters. Thus, the number of abortions performed or the reasons should not really matter either. In the end, however, abortion opponents may be satisfied with any reason that derails Dr. Foster's nomination.

In my lifetime, I do not recall a surgeon general who ever was an obstetrician/gynecologist, and maybe now I know why. But Dr. Henry Foster has the creativity and vision to make a difference at a time when our country needs leadership to address so many challenges in public health. Unless we have the capacity to de-politicize abortion, we may never benefit from the training, perspective and compassion an obstetrician/gynecologist could provide as surgeon general. And what a loss that would be for all of us.

Medical Morality: When Consent Is Not Informed

Every week seems to bring a new undocumented assault on the character of Dr. Henry Foster, the U.S. surgeon general nominee.

In response to the disclosure that in 1974 Foster performed a "small number" of sterilizations on severely retarded women (four seems to be the number), Charles Krauthammer asked whether it was "ethical to perform surgery and permanently sterilize women in no position to give consent" [op-ed, Feb. 17]. Krauthammer, who is not only a respected journalist but also a physician with a well-known interest in and sensitivity to moral problems in medicine, raised precisely the right question. Unfortunately he came to an uncharacteristically simplistic judgment.

Medical ethics in this most individualistic of all modern cultures has been "autonomy"-driven. Informed consent is at the heart of it. But with the seriously mentally impaired, consent itself can be immoral—if not impossible—to obtain. For example, one would not allow a significantly impaired person to sign away her fortune and her security. Nor, by the same token, should she be allowed to make major decisions that infringe on her health and survival. Whether she is to be subjected to an amputation, a coronary bypass or a sterilization procedure will all be decided by others.

In the case of the mentally impaired, we are

forced to violate a cardinal principle of medical ethics: We abrogate her authority to decide for herself, assigning this right to others—the family or institutions of society and the state.

Sterilization procedures have traditionally aroused anxiety and distrust, particularly

Taking Exception

since the World War II horrors of Nazi "eugenics" and the complicity of German doctors in racial experiments. So strong was the fear of eugenics that even authentic research in genetic influences on behavior was viewed with distrust. As distinguished a biologist as E. O. Wilson was assaulted by some of his colleagues as a fascist for daring to present the data (suggesting that human beings, like insects, have genetic directives) that have since built his reputation as one of the great and humane scientists of our day.

But in the 1970s a counter-trend emerged. The civil rights movement had become a model for many disenfranchised populations other than African Americans, among them the handicapped. Consumer advocacy groups were being formed. The rights of the mentally retarded were freshly reasserted by organiza-

tions formed to defend them, which questioned even the definition of retardation. Mainstreaming became the order of the day.

Oddly enough, this new attitude created an atmosphere in which such extreme measures as permanent sterilization for the retarded were discussed in terms of their beneficence and as promoting the rights of the individual. The argument was that they would offer retarded persons an opportunity to participate in the new sexual freedom, unfettered by fears of pregnancies and child-rearing, which they might not be able to manage.

All this is by way of pointing out that what was morally correct and incorrect had hardly been settled by 1974, when Dr. Foster performed his operations. The law was confused, the philosophical community was divided, and the medical community was uncertain. Even the advocacy groups for the mentally retarded were deeply divided.

So great was the confusion that in 1976 a grant was given by the National Science Foundation to the Hastings Center (a nonpartisan, nondoctrinaire research institute concerned with society, ethics and the life sciences) to convene a group of scholars and advocates to help sort out the moral contradictions in this complex area.

The nature of that ethical discourse is too

extended to be encompassed in this article, but a number of variables obviously would determine moral justification for sterilization procedures: Who initiated it, the government or the individual's family? If the government, what section: the punitive branch of the Justice Department in a criminal case or some paternalistic (although not necessarily more to be trusted) institution of mental care?

Also to be considered: Things done to a person to serve her interest are judged by different standards from those done her in the interest of her family, other like individuals, the institution or the state. Moral dilemmas exist under all these conditions, and the proper resolutions in each case may be entirely different.

In that debate a distinguished liberal philosopher argued that sterilization of mentally retarded persons would be morally *mandated* if it would "enhance their position in the moral community" by facilitating their living together at home or in small communities outside traditional institutions. We do not have to accept that particular argument, but what is clear to those of us who were privy to these discussions is that the moral question was not settled then, as it is probably not settled now. It is particularly unjust to equate a doctor who performs sterilization procedures for therapeutic reasons—even if you feel he is misguided—with doctors who participated in radiation experiments on unconsenting, unsuspecting subjects during the Cold War years, let alone the obscene Nazi camp experiments.

Krauthammer argues that "sterilization of the mentally infirm is a morally problematic procedure"; with that we heartily concur. But it is clearly immoral (nothing problematic here) to impugn the ethical character of Henry Foster on the basis of sterilization procedures he has performed or, for that matter, on abortions he has performed.

People of goodwill and good heart are entitled to hold differing views on emotionally charged social issues (in-vitro fertilization, assisted suicide, organ transplants, genetic engineering or, for that matter, divorce, capital punishment and gun control) without being demonized. For the Senate to form a judgment on Dr. Foster's character on the basis of his having performed such procedures would be indefensible and indecent.

Willard Gavlin is professor of psychiatry at Columbia University and co-founder of the Hastings Center. Allan Rosenfield is dean of the Columbia School of Public Health.

Let a doctor be surgeon general

Leave the politics to the politicians. Let Foster, and all the surgeons general who will follow him, care only for the nation's health.

By Dr. Melvin Konner

Abortion will again be at the center of the battle for the White House next year, and the first skirmish will be next month's confirmation hearings on Dr. Henry Foster, President Clinton's choice for surgeon general.

So forget that Foster has had a distinguished 40-year career in medicine. Forget that he was the youngest person ever elected to the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences, America's most prestigious medical organization. That for many years he has managed the astounding balancing act of running a medical school clinical department while practicing hands-on community medicine. That former President George Bush praised Foster's teenage pregnancy prevention program as one of his own "Thousand Points of Light."

No, let us concentrate on something really important: Henry Foster has done abortions. What a revelation! Does anybody think someone can become an obstetrician without doing abortions? Abortion is, among other things, a lifesaving emergency procedure that every obstetrician, and indeed most emergency room physicians, must be prepared to do.

Yes, Foster also performed some non-emergency abortions. They were not only legal, they were standard medical practice. Foster believes, properly, that abortion should be safe, legal and rare. In his career they have been astonishingly rare — fewer than 40 in more than 40 years.

A similar sort of political test was applied to a previous nominee for surgeon general, Dr. C. Everett Koop, but fortunately for the nation, that appointment was not derailed. Koop was appointed by Ronald Reagan for his dyed-in-the-wool conservatism, period. Before the 1980 election, his name was circulated by an aide to Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.).

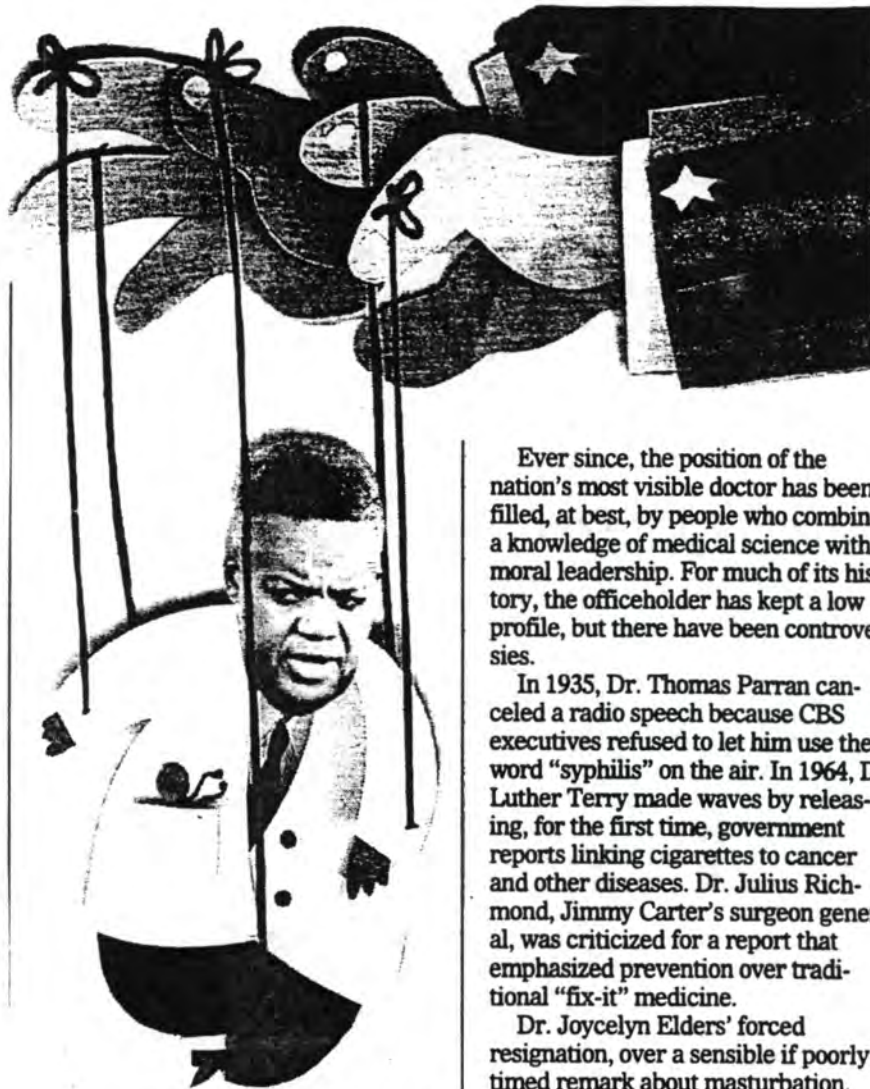
He was nominated because of the pro-life stands he had repeatedly taken in public. And during his long preconfirmation process, he was savaged by liberals as badly as Foster is now being savaged by conservatives.

But the conservatives had not thought clearly enough about one item on Koop's résumé: He was a doctor. He was a compassionate caregiver who felt and thought deeply about difficult questions, and who used science as a basis for his decisions. And almost as soon as he took office he began doing something the conservatives couldn't fathom: He acted like a doctor.

Koop outraged the right by calling for sex education and condoms as part of the fight against AIDS, while opposing mandatory HIV testing as counterproductive for public health. He brought passive smoking to the forefront as a threat to health and thus lost the friendship of Helms. He called violence a public health issue, angering those who saw it solely as a moral one.

But his most disappointing performance, from the viewpoint of conservatives, was on abortion. Over conservative protests, he told the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to continue collecting data on abortion. He published a report on the psychological effects of abortion that did not support claims of lasting damage.

Worst of all, he never viewed his office as a bully pulpit for damning elective abortion. He personally opposed elective abortion, but he did not see ending it as a major public health priority. The result was that most of his former friends became his



WILSON LOWREY / Staff

enemies. Koop liked to joke about the medals on his uniform: "The top row is for what the liberals did to me; the bottom row is for what the conservatives did to me."

This politicization of the office goes back to the Founding Fathers. A physician named Benjamin Waterhouse served Presidents John Adams and Thomas Jefferson in a public role that combined medical supervision and disease prevention — similar to that of the surgeon general today. He successfully pursued policies requiring vaccination, quarantine at immigration and other methods of infection control necessary in the high-mortality world of early America. But such efforts were viewed as radical, and when James Madison became president in 1809 he dismissed Waterhouse, bowing to conservative medical opposition.

Ever since, the position of the nation's most visible doctor has been filled, at best, by people who combine a knowledge of medical science with moral leadership. For much of its history, the officeholder has kept a low profile, but there have been controversies.

In 1935, Dr. Thomas Parran canceled a radio speech because CBS executives refused to let him use the word "syphilis" on the air. In 1964, Dr. Luther Terry made waves by releasing, for the first time, government reports linking cigarettes to cancer and other diseases. Dr. Julius Richmond, Jimmy Carter's surgeon general, was criticized for a report that emphasized prevention over traditional "fix-it" medicine.

Dr. Joycelyn Elders' forced resignation, over a sensible if poorly timed remark about masturbation, hurt the prestige of the office, but it is not she who should be blamed. When Clinton caved in, he paved the way for Foster's difficulties. By comparison, Adams and Jefferson stood by Benjamin Waterhouse when it would have been much easier to set him aside and mollify his critics. Reagan did the same with Koop. If liberal leaders continue to beat their early retreat on Dr. Foster, they will [further] hurt the prestige of the office, perhaps irreparably.

Koop was qualified. Foster is qualified. That, in a halfway intelligent world, would be the beginning and end of it. But the surgeon general's reputation is now a political football. We should let Foster, and all the surgeons general who will follow him, go about their medical work and leave the politics to the politicians.

Melvin Konner is a physician who teaches anthropology at Emory University.

If Senate dumps Foster . . .

I fervently hope Dr. Henry Foster wins Senate confirmation as surgeon general next month. It's not just that he is a highly qualified and deserving candidate for the job. The bonus would be that ending the search with Foster spares the nation more of the nastiness and silliness that now passes for reasoned consideration of nominees for high office.

What with White House bumbling and Sens. Bob Dole and Phil Gramm involved in a pitched battle for the title of meanest man in America — while angling for the Republican presidential nomination — any more tries at filling the surgeon general's spot could be painful to watch. It would make Bill Clinton's first stabs at finding an attorney general (Remember Zoe Baird? Remember Kimba Wood?) look like a cakewalk.

I can imagine how it would go down:

April: Determined not to repeat the Foster fiasco, the president selects a candidate who has never performed an abortion. She is the eminent dermatologist Dr. Norma Rash. Her stewardship of the nation's health promises to be low-key, as she says her top priority is lowering the incidence of sunburn. She also pledges to put the first surgeon general's warning labels on tanning beds.

Things go well until the investigative reporter from the Times asks if it is true that Rash was involved in Michael Jackson's skin-lightening treatments. She admits that she was.

Afro-centric groups around the country are outraged, charging that Rash will promote turning black people white. The candidate defends herself, saying the treatment was medically justified. "My position is the same as the president's," she says. "Making black people look white should be safe, legal and rare."

Of course, it's not enough. Bob Dole gleefully sounds the death knell of the nomination. "With this choice, the president obviously made a rash decision," he quips.

June: Next up is Dr. Thomas "Tommie" Tuck, the world-renowned plastic surgeon. He gets



JOHN HEAD

the nod only after swearing that he had nothing to do with any of Michael Jackson's 37 cosmetic surgeries. His motto as surgeon general will be, "America: You've had a New Deal, a New Frontier and a New Covenant. Now try a new face."

Tuck seems a shoo-in, until the man from the Times strikes again, asking the good doctor if it is true that he has done breast enlargements, and, if so, how many. "I've done a few. Maybe a dozen silicone implants," Tuck replies.

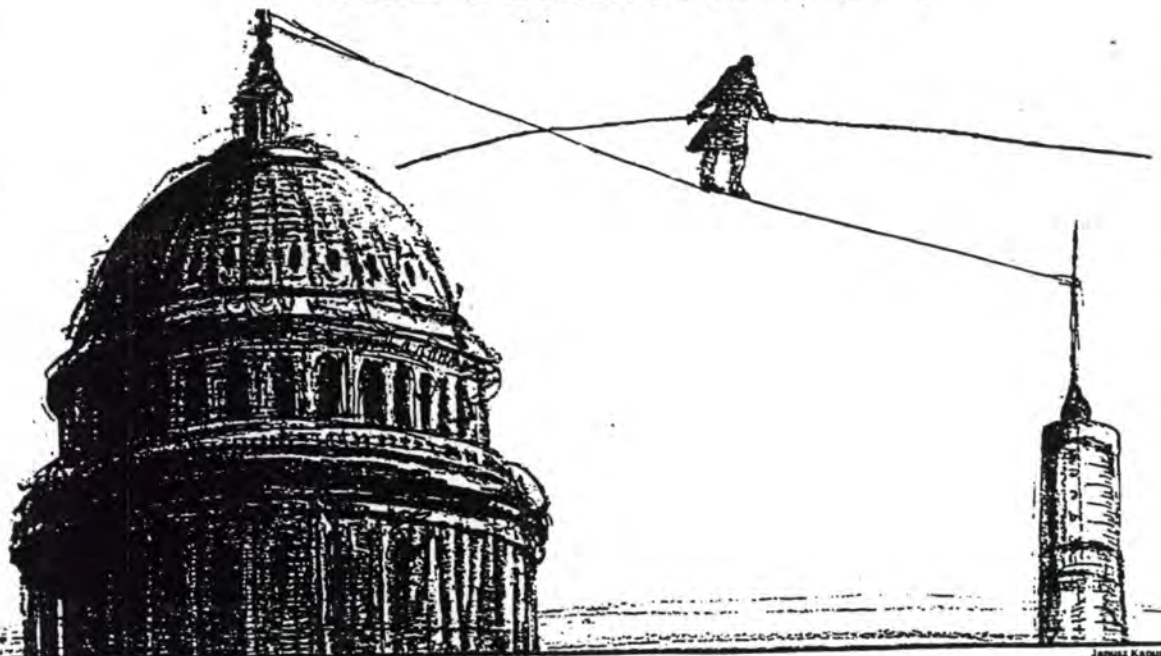
Some feminists go ballistic, accusing Tuck of sexist surgery. A grass-roots movement to defend Tuck springs up, calling itself "pro choice" ("We believe in a woman's right to choose larger breasts"). This proves to be tainted support, as the Times reporter finds out that the group is made up mostly of truck drivers and is funded almost entirely by men's magazines.

Then it turns out that Tuck misspoke on the number of breast implants he has done. He should have multiplied by two. "His credibility has to be questioned," Phil Gramm says. "What's next? Triple the number?" The nomination is withdrawn.

Finally, the president decides that it isn't just the nominees who are controversial; it's the job itself. He huddles with House Speaker Newt Gingrich, an advocate of abolishing the surgeon general's post. They reach a compromise designed to ensure that nobody is bent out of shape when the appointment is made.

Bill Clinton announces that he will soon name the nation's first chiropractor general.

John Head is a Constitution editorial writer. His column appears Mondays.



N.Y. Times, 2-24-95

Searching for a Surgeon Politic

By Melvin Konner

As Republican Presidential hopefuls began their initial forays into the New Hampshire woods this week, most were clamoring to prove their impeccable pro-life credentials. Abortion will again be at the center of the battle for the White House, and the first skirmish will be next month's confirmation hearings on Dr. Henry Foster, President Clinton's choice for Surgeon General.

So forget that Dr. Foster has had a distinguished 40-year career in medicine. Forget also that he was the youngest person ever elected to the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences, America's most prestigious medical organization. That for many years he has managed the astounding balancing act of running a medical school clinical department while practicing hands-on community medicine. That George Bush praised Dr. Foster's teen-age pregnancy prevention program as one of his own "thousand points of light."

No, let us concentrate on something really important: Henry Foster has done abortions. What a revelation! Does anyone think that you can become an obstetrician without doing abortions? Abortion is, among other things, a life-saving emergency procedure that every obstetrician, and indeed most emergency room physicians, must be prepared by training to do.

If you or your daughter suddenly begin bleeding uncontrollably in the midst of a natural miscarriage, you had better hope that the doctor on call has been well trained in therapeutic abortion and can complete the spontaneous abortion nature has botched. Because if the doctor has not been so trained, you or your daughter may well die.

Yes, Dr. Foster also performed some non-emergency abortions. They were not only legal, they were standard medical practice. Dr. Foster believes, properly, that abortion should

be safe, legal and rare. In his career they have been astonishingly rare — fewer than 40 in over 40 years.

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But the conservatives had not thought clearly enough about one

Centers for Disease Control to continue collecting data on abortion. He published a report on the psychological effects of abortion that did not support claims of lasting damage.

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stood by Benjamin Waterhouse when it would have been much easier to set him aside and mollify his critics. Ronald Reagan did the same with Dr. Koop. If liberal leaders continue to beat their early retreat on Dr. Foster, they will hurt the prestige of the office, perhaps irreparably.

It is hardly surprising that Dr. Foster did not remember exactly how many abortions he has done. He does not remember how many emergency Caesarian sections or forceps deliveries he has done either. He has also been criticized for performing hysterectomies on women with severe mental handicaps in the 1970's; they were compassionate acts, valid within the medical and ethical guidelines of that era. His patients were suffering and he helped them as best he could.

Dr. Koop was qualified. Dr. Foster is qualified. That, in a halfway intelligent world, would be the beginning and end of it. But the Surgeon General's reputation is now a political football, and every time it gets clumsily kicked it veers further from the goalposts — on the one side, the nation's public health; on the other, the quality of all our medical care. We should let Dr. Foster, and all the Surgeons General who will follow him, go about their medical work and leave the politics to the politicians. □

Henry Foster is the latest pawn in a 200-year-old game.

item on Dr. Koop's résumé: he was a doctor. He was a compassionate care giver who felt and thought deeply about difficult questions, and who used science as a basis for his decisions. And almost as soon as he took office he began doing something the conservatives couldn't fathom: he acted like a doctor.

Dr. Koop outraged the right by calling for sex education and condoms as part of the fight against AIDS, while opposing mandatory HIV testing as counterproductive for public health. He brought passive smoking to the forefront as a threat to health and thus lost the friendship of Senator Helms. He called violence a public health issue, angering those who saw it solely as a moral one.

But his most disappointing performance, from the viewpoint of conservatives, was on abortion. Over conservative protests, he told the

Melvin Konner, a physician who teaches anthropology at Emory University, is the author of "Becoming a Doctor."

America needs Foster care

It seems I've tumbled down the rabbit hole and encountered the Mad Hatter and the Queen of Hearts. There is an Alice-in-Wonderland quality to the controversy over Dr. Henry Foster Jr., President Clinton's nominee for surgeon general.

It is curiouser and curiouser that a physician with an admirable track record in the crusade against adolescent pregnancy is being treated in some quarters like a pariah. Through a program he founded in Nashville — the "I Have A Future" project — Foster has done more to combat too-early parenthood than any of his critics.

There is nothing about Foster that should stir outrage. In fact, the need to quell the epidemic of births to unmarried young women is the one issue on which virtually all Americans agree, whether liberal, conservative or moderate, whether pundit, politician, preacher or teacher. I know of no one who nods with approval at the notion of 15-year-old mothers.

Charles Murray, a conservative political theorist, has called the surge in out-of-wedlock births "the single most important social problem of our time." Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.) has gone so far — too far, actually — as to suggest that the rise in out-of-wedlock births may be leading to the creation of a new species. Jesse Jackson has said, "Babies making babies is morally wrong."

There is good reason for the worry. Most unmarried adolescent mothers are ill-prepared for parenthood. They tend to drop out of school, trapping their children in poverty and dependency. Teen fathers are no better. They tend to desert their children early, leaving them without financial or moral support. Worse still, the children of these children tend to repeat the cycle, leading to the creation of a growing underclass with little chance of making its way into the American mainstream.

Given the dire consequences of teen pregnancy, Foster ought to be carried to Capitol Hill in a palanquin, with a grateful nation applauding his appointment. Instead, the good doctor is reduced to making the rounds of Senate offices as a supplicant, begging to



CYNTHIA TUCKER

be heard above the din of the mad Queen who keeps yelling, "Abortion! Abortion! Off with his head!"

The last time I checked, abortion was both legal and well within the bounds of standard medical practice. In fact, the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education has just voted to require training in abortion skills for all prospective obstetricians because the council is concerned that young physicians are not getting adequate training in the procedure. The requirement was endorsed by the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

It is worth taking a closer look at the weird politics that have provoked the fury over Foster. There is a lesson here about an attitude that infuses the reactionary right. Many of Foster's critics prefer punishing teen pregnancy to preventing it.

That punitive strategy shows up in other areas, as well. Look at what congressional Republicans want to do to last year's crime bill. They propose to take some of the money that has been earmarked for more police and divert it to new prisons.

Now, I know of no crime victim who would not have preferred to have had a cop around to stop the crime in the first place to having the offender serve long years in prison later. But House Republicans would rather punish than protect.

So it is with Foster's critics. Think about it. America has the highest rate of teen pregnancy in the industrialized world, despite having the resources to curb it.

Curiouser and curiouser.

Cynthia Tucker is editor of the Constitution's editorial pages. Her column appears Sundays and Wednesdays.

The power politics of terror

There are two ways to deny women lawful abortions, and opponents haven't been able to make abortion illegal again, so they're using the other one. They're terrifying the health system out of providing the service.

Dr. Henry W. Foster, President Clinton's nominee for surgeon general, is the latest victim of that harassment.

The Clinton White House couldn't play outfield with a net and fumbled the appointment in a distracting dispute over numbers, but it doesn't really matter to Foster's anti-abortion opponents whether he performed a dozen abortions or two score.

The militants are out to make an example of him that they hope will intimidate other physicians.

The message is simple and brutish: Perform any abortions in your career and that will be used to trash your reputation. Foster's standing was splendid until he was honored for it by this nomination.

Foster ought to be a conservative's dream surgeon general.

With teen pregnancy a major public health problem, Foster created an effective program against it, emphasizing sexual abstinence. His success won Point of Light recognition from the Bush administration.

But as any obstetrician-gynecologist is likely to do, Foster has performed abortions for medical reasons, and that is enough for the zealots to demonize him beyond recognition.

The number of counties with abortion service fell from 714 in 1978 to 495 in 1992, the latest year in a Guttmacher Institute study. Abortion is virtually unattainable in small towns and rural areas; 94 percent of non-metropolitan counties have no service.

The number of providers dropped 18 percent from 1982 to '92. Hospitals especially have quailed, leaving the job largely to clinics. Between 1988 and '92, the number performing abortions declined by 185.

Training is shrinking, too. In



TOM TEEPEN

1978, 26 percent of ob-gyn residency programs required abortion training; now only 12 percent do. In 1978, only 7 percent didn't offer abortion as a training option. By 1992, 30 percent didn't.

Whatever other factors may be involved in these changes, plain terrorism is a major cause.

Five abortion providers have been murdered and one other physician wounded, and each shooting has boosted death threats to clinics and doctors. Clinics have been shot up and firebombed.

Hospitals are shying away from abortion in part because board members have been harried. Some have been picketed at home; others have seen their kids targeted for harassment at school. Hospital financial contributors have been menaced.

Operation Rescue's "No Place to Hide" project fingers physicians for abuse at work and at their homes. The Lambs of Christ — don't you love it? — stalk doctors and clinic workers.

Foster is the victim of political stalking.

He is a member of the Institute of Medicine, former president of the Association of Professors of Gynecology and Obstetrics, an examiner for the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology.

But to abortion foes, he's just cannon fodder, someone whose nomination is to be cynically blown away as a warning to other physicians to restrict their medical care for women.

Tom Teepen is national columnist for Cox Newspapers. He is based in Atlanta. His column appears Tuesdays and Sundays.

Dr. Foster for U. S. Surgeon General

With many decades of total commitment as a caring, compassionate and sensitive physician, who has made matters of public health a primary concern, Dr. Henry W. Foster Jr., scarcely needs the type of vicious mud slinging by right wingers and abortion foes that took place this week.

Nominated by President Clinton as surgeon general to replace Joycelyn Elders, Dr. Foster seemed the picture of an ideal candidate for the post until the fringe groups--which would probably oppose anyone the president nominated, even if he or she walked on water--went to work to discredit him.

They certainly could not challenge his credentials. As an obstetrician-gynecologist, he has delivered thousands of babies, and been involved in teenage pregnancy prevention programs where abstinence was recommended. He has also been involved in Planned Parenthood programs and, as a practicing physician, he is obviously in touch with the reality of patient care.

He has also performed some abortions--which are legal--and these are what seem to have aroused the wrath of the right-to-lifers who obviously have zero tolerance for anyone who does not walk their straight and narrow party line.

Dr. Foster has not broken any law, or violated any medical standard. In fact, by all indications he is the epitome of integrity, a man much honored by his patients and colleagues.

The right-to-lifers have a right to their opinion, but we believe that it is highly improper and just wrong-headed to use the issue of abortion as a litmus test of an individual's fitness for office.

We urge that President Clinton not buckle under to the growing pressure, but continue to give his full support to a supremely qualified individual, Dr. Henry W. Foster.

Two views of abortion and Foster's nomination

Both parties must deal with the contradictions of their positions

By E.J. DIONNE JR.

First, a cautionary tale. The story came out last weekend and, if it made your paper at all, was probably buried inside. Here in Little Rock, it appeared on Page 7A under the headline: "Six Japanese tell of WWII research, including dissections of live humans."

It seems that 50 years after the end of World War II, a 74-page book has been published about a biological warfare unit of the Japanese army that performed experiments on human subjects. In exchange for not having to face war-crimes trials, six members of Unit 731 detailed its activities in Manchuria, where they injected germs, chemicals and gangrene-inducing shrapnel into humans to study the effects.



PAUL Greenberg

At least 3,000 people from China, Russia, Korea and Mongolia were subjected to these experiments. "Sometimes dissections were carried out without anesthesia," according to one former member of the unit. "They would let out a horrible shriek but then fall silent right away."

Surely somewhere in the Imperial War Office the activities of Unit 731 were duly logged.

explained and euphemized as scientific research. Just as in Berlin, similar assignments on a massive scale were to be described as population transfers. It was all in accordance with accepted policy and current regulations.

Everything was legal. All the papers were in order. Long after the war, the noted intellectual Hannah Arendt attended the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem. Here was her opportunity to look into the very heart of darkness. All she found was an upwardly mobile, lower-middle-class ex-salesman who had hit upon a successful career in political administration. Her discovery profoundly insulted many who preferred to think that Evil wears red socks, smells of fire and brimstone and is immediately identifiable. Instead, Hannah Arendt had identified its most salient characteristic in this technologically advanced century. She called it the Banality of Evil.

In 1995, elective abortion is both accepted policy and the law of the land. Yet the nomination of Henry Foster, M.D., as Surgeon General of the United States has stirred questions about this perfectly legal, constitutional procedure. It seems some Americans are still uncomfortable about the widespread practice of abortion, including Foster, who says he finds it "abhorrent."

The debate over his confirmation, he adds, is ironic, since "my life's work has been dedicated to making sure that young people don't have to face the choice of abortions." The doctor points out that he has performed fewer than a dozen abortions, or rather only 39, during a long, 38-year career in medicine, principally for therapeutic reasons. So what's all the fuss about?

But the latest Authorized Version of the number of abortions performed by Foster doesn't include those in a drug trial of a vaginal suppository that induced abortions in 55 of the 60 women to whom it was given for no clear therapeutic reason. If he found abortion abhorrent, why did he supervise this test at Meharry Medical School?

Foster explained why in a televised interview last week: "To keep my veracity. We are in a medical setting. We had a research grant. We have to do that to train our residents. We were in a multi-center study with the Upjohn Company, and we tested a product, a suppository, not a mechanical procedure, to train residents. . . . That's a part of keeping our program accredited, and at that time, and, like now, 20 percent of all universities survive on grant funds. That was a grant."

Foster has made it clear how a physician, and not just a physician, can be induced to do something he finds personally abhorrent: Use a chemical agent instead of a mechanical procedure, insuring the key element in carrying out any morally dubious policy — distance. Call it reproductive health care. Do it in the name of scientific research. Or grantsmanship. Or accreditation. Do it for the unit, the team or, in this case, the school. Depersonalize the decision. Keep telling yourself it is all legal, constitutional, etc.

Indeed, Foster's long and distinguished career would seem to conform admirably to the medical, social, legal and constitutional standards of our times. There is nothing in his record that violates official policy. When it comes to his performing abortions, as the good doctor noted the other day, his "patient records and operative logs" are all in order.

One hopes that all the support for Foster out of the White House does not turn out to be the usual prelude to a cave-in, and that Henry Foster — unlike Lani Guinier — will get his day in front of a congressional committee. By now the doctor may have been sufficiently sensitized by this arduous process of confirmation to make a good surgeon general. His statements against abortion and in favor of sexual abstinence for teen-agers would seem to make eminently good sense, socially and morally. Like old Noah in the Book of Genesis, he seems a righteous man in his generation.

The hearings on Henry Foster's nomination offer the American people something more important than an opportunity to judge his fitness for high office. Confirmation hearings can be about a lot more than confirmation. They offer an opportunity to explore the medical, social, legal and constitutional standards that have shaped his and all of our attitudes on matters of life and death, science and morality. The hearings could even offer a clear look at the banality of evil. It would be interesting to see how many of our distinguished leaders could recognize it.

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TIM BRINTON

It seems some Americans are still uncomfortable about the widespread practice of abortion, including Foster, who says he finds it "abhorrent."

But abortion is also difficult because it raises questions that go directly to the contradictions in what both Republicans and Democrats claim they stand for.

thought it had found someone whose story and record matched the country's desire to temper the rights acquired over the past two decades (on abortion, for example) with a sense of responsibility rooted in old-fashioned virtues.

Foster supported birth-control efforts, but he did not pretend that birth control and sex education on their own would solve the teen pregnancy problem. He has long argued, correctly, that the values and aspirations of individuals matter far more than the mechanics of human sexuality.

But no one in the administration went much beyond this appealing story line — by asking much about what this ob-gyn physician's practice was on abortion — and so Clinton is smack up against the great tension in the Democratic creed: that Democrats are big on "community" when what's at stake involves sharing money across classes or healing racial wounds, but become staunch individualists when matters turn toward sexuality or abortion rights. Now, Clinton has to stick with Foster because not to do so would make the president look inconstant, as he has on other nominations, while alienating the powerful pro-choice wing of his coalition.

But the Republicans have their own contradictions to deal with. The Republicans talk a good communitarian game when they are giving sermons about "values," but their individualism trumps those values whenever they conflict with free market economics. The family is a wonderful institution, they say, but most Republicans fought against giving the mothers of newborns 12 weeks of unpaid leave. Motherhood is fine as long as it doesn't interfere with the prerogatives of employers. It's also fine, as Hyde implicitly notes, unless it interferes with efforts to cut welfare.

On abortion, the Republicans have won loyal support from right-to-lifers for years, but party strategists constantly speak of the need to play the issue down, lest pro-choice Republicans and independents be "alienated." Many Republicans seem to want pro-life votes without having to do anything of substance to earn them.

There ought to be no pretending. These are difficult issues. It's easy to see how people of various philosophical orientations can think their way to either side of the abortion question — or, as Krauthammer notes, to both sides at once. But please, dear politicians, the next time you want to preach about the joys of community and the urgency of "good values," how about being a trifle explicit about the terrible choices that underlie the soothing words? Don't ask of Foster at his hearings what you're not willing to ask of yourselves.

WASHINGTON — Most politicians hate the issue. Most voters don't like to think about it. Yet the matter of abortion just keeps coming back, gnawing in quite different ways at the consciences of both political parties. The most obvious manifestation of the power of the issue is the controversy surrounding Dr. Henry Foster, President Clinton's choice to be surgeon general. The fact that Foster performed abortions made him instantly unacceptable to the right-to-life movement.

The fact that the administration and the doctor seemed to miscount exactly how many abortions he had performed moved the fight toward matters with which Washington is more comfortable — "credibility," "bungled nominations," "poor staff work" etc. But none of this would have mattered if the miscounted procedure had involved, say, appendectomies. The issue here is abortion.

Abortion has also arisen as a concern in the welfare reform debate. Some very conservative Republicans, notably Rep. Henry Hyde, are dead set against a Republican proposal to eliminate welfare assistance to mothers who have children before their 18th year. Hyde and the right-to-life movement worry, reasonably, that government will thereby hugely increase the pressure for abortion.

Then, at a recent meeting of the Conservative Political Action Conference, Ralph Reed, the executive director of the Christian Coalition, warned that evangelical Christians and antiabortion Catholics would abandon the Republicans if the party nominated a supporter of abortion rights for either president or vice president.

Reed's statement was significant because for the past two years, he has played down abortion and stressed concerns — school vouchers, low taxes, balanced budgets — that appeal across much of the Republican spectrum.

Indeed, in an editorial-page article in *The Wall Street Journal* — printed after he issued his warning — Reed was anomalously arguing that all was well between social and economic conservatives inside the Republican Party and that Republicans could remain "civil" in disagreeing about "issues like abortion."

One of two things is true: (1) Reed regards threats to bolt his party as lying within his definition of "civility," or more likely, (2) Reed knows how strongly many evangelicals feel against abortion and he has to pursue a two-step on the issue (sometimes playing it down, sometimes playing it up) so he can try to broker peace in his party without looking like a sellout to his followers.

Abortion creates all these contortions partly because it's a hard issue. As Charles Krauthammer pointed out recently, majorities of Americans think simultaneously that abortion should remain legal and that it is wrong. But abortion is also difficult because it raises questions that go directly to the contradictions in what both Republicans and Democrats claim they stand for. Both parties love to invoke "community" as an ideal. But neither party is willing to pay much of a price on behalf of "community" when its imperatives come into conflict with other aspects of party doctrine.

In nominating Foster, the Clinton administration thought it had found someone whose story and record matched the country's desire to temper the rights acquired over the past two decades (on abortion, for example) with a sense of responsibility rooted in old-fashioned virtues.

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Dionne is a member of The Washington Post editorial-page staff.

COMMENTARY

Why I Want To Be Surgeon General

By Henry Foster

Just a little over two weeks ago, few people outside Nashville, Tenn., knew anything about me. But after President Bill Clinton announced his intention to nominate Dr. Henry Foster for surgeon general on Feb. 2, it seems as though everybody thinks they know everything about me.

Two weeks ago, no one, not even my wife, St. Clair, my daughter, Myrna, and my son, Wendell — as devoted as they are — followed my every move and every word with rapt attention. Now, when I wake up in the morning and look out my window, the press is out there waiting and watching.

When I go to my office, they follow me into the elevator. And walking down the street, I have been punched in the face, inadvertently, I think, with one of those huge microphones you see on TV. I have never seen anything like it.

I have even picked up a new lexicon. Words that matter in Washington are not in dictionaries in the rest of America. They certainly never taught me these words in medical school or the delivery room: Sound bites. Boom mikes. Stake-outs. Live shots. Talking heads. On-air analysis. All dissecting me over and over again. And all before I've uttered one word at my confirmation hearings before the Senate.

People who have never met me analyze my character and my life's work. They attack me personally before they ever give me a chance to introduce myself or tell my story.

But those attacks do not define me. I know who I am and what I stand for. I also know that I am a symbol in a larger debate that has polarized this country for many years. But the attacks do hurt.

I cannot say that my work as a doctor entirely prepared me for these two turbulent weeks. But I have learned a few things during my 38 years as a doctor, a teacher and a crusader against teen pregnancy that have prepared me to be a good surgeon general.

I have been face to face with real life-

and-death challenges. When you see low-birth-weight babies born to mothers not yet old enough to drive a car, you have an appreciation of what trauma really means.

When you visit the homes of families living in grinding poverty and feel the palpable sense of hopelessness in their lives, you begin to understand what it is to be up against the odds.

Compared to that, shouted questions and overheated rhetoric may be uncivil, but I can handle them. When people ask me why I want to be surgeon general, I know the answer.

When you've had the good fortune to

I will be giving my greatest attention to what the president has called "our most serious social problem," the epidemic of teen pregnancy in this country.

participate in the miracle of birth as many times as I have, it is difficult to stand on the sidelines and watch so many people wasting the precious gift of life.

It is difficult to look around America today and see so much needless suffering. Too many children suffer, because their parents have not been taught the value of prevention. Too many people don't have access to quality health care.

And too many of us have turned away from those basic American values that can prevent violence or abuse of any kind from taking root.

But all is not lost. America is moving forward to confront both our health-care crisis and the crisis of values that has led to far too much irresponsible behavior.

As your surgeon general, I believe I can turn the small ripples of success that we have produced into great waves of progress. I believe that I can draw attention and help develop lasting solutions to

the tragic public health problems confronting us — from the epidemic of violence to the spread of AIDS to the terrible problem of substance abuse.

But I will be giving my greatest attention to what the president has called "our most serious social problem," the epidemic of teen pregnancy in this country.

It's ironic that my work fighting teen pregnancy has been overshadowed by my opponents' talk about abortion. I do believe in the right of a woman to choose. And I also support the president's belief that abortions should be safe, legal and rare. But my life's work has been dedicated to making sure that young people don't have to face the choice of having abortions.

I have some ideas about how young people can avoid that difficult choice. We are reducing teen pregnancy in the Nashville housing projects through "I Have a Future" — a program we started at Meharry Medical College back in 1987.

Our approach is to expand adolescent health-care programs beyond the schools and bring them to the community, where they can become a part of the fabric of everyday life. Encouraging abstinence and involving the entire community, we have begun to replace a culture of hopelessness with one that gives young people clear pathways to healthy futures.

In my work with young people in Nashville, there is one lesson I stress above all others. To break the cycle of despair, you must learn that there is a reward for sacrifice. And earning that reward has a fringe benefit. It allows you to give something back. That is a hard lesson to learn, but it is one that has kept me going through these difficult weeks.

Having President Clinton place his faith in me is something I could never have imagined as a young boy growing up in the segregated South. Now, I want to give something back to a country that has rewarded my work and sacrifice, and God willing, I'll have that opportunity.

Henry Foster is the nominee for U.S. surgeon general.

The Washington Post

Henry FOSTER

Des Moines Register; 2-16-95

Why he wants surgeon general job



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GARY VISKUPIC/LOS ANGELES TIMES SYGMA

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When you've had the good fortune to participate in the miracle of birth as many times as I have, it is difficult to stand on the sidelines and watch so many people wasting the precious gift of life.

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value of prevention. Too many people don't have access to quality health care. And too many of us have turned away from those basic American values that can prevent violence or abuse of any kind from taking root.

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HENRY FOSTER is the nominee for U.S. surgeon general. This was written for *The Washington Post*.



By Web Bryant, USA TODAY

USA Today; 2-16-95

'Roe vs. Wade' dead? Foster debate says so

Battle for abortion rights has been won in the courts but lost in the streets.

LOS ANGELES — If Dr. Henry Foster cannot serve as surgeon general because he performed 39 abortions, then *Roe vs. Wade* is dead regardless of what the Supreme Court says.

The battle for abortion rights has been won in the courts and lost in the streets. Two decades after *Roe*, access to abortion is increasingly difficult and dangerous.

Last year, 20,000 medical students received a mailing that asked: What would you do if you found yourself in a room with Hitler, Mussolini and an abortionist, and you had a gun with two bullets?

Answer: Shoot the abortionist twice.

A week later, a doctor was killed in Florida.

In 1976, over a quarter of the residency programs in gynecology required that doctors learn to perform abortions; another 66% at least offered it as an option. By 1992, the number requiring training had dropped to 12%; in nearly one-third of the programs, it no longer is offered even as an option.

No doctor should be required to perform abortions if doing so conflicts with his or her moral beliefs. But you shouldn't have to risk your life to practice gynecology. And you shouldn't have to

give up on public service because you help women exercise their constitutional rights.

Over one-fourth of all abortion clinics reported death threats last year. The Massachusetts clinics where two receptionists were killed had been targets of daily picketing for over a year. Many clinics routinely issue bullet-proof vests to doctors who perform abortions. Some fly

doctors in from out of state because no one locally will do the procedures. In much of the country, there are no clinics and no hospitals where abortions are performed.

What message does it send to young doctors if 39 abortions cost Dr. Henry Foster his chance to serve his country? Here is a man whose program to reduce teen-age pregnancy was one of George Bush's points of light, who has done more to reduce the need for abortions than most of his critics combined. If he is vulnerable, so is every doctor once he performs his first abortion.

And what message does it send to the women Foster helped, many of them victims of rape and incest? Did he do the wrong thing? Was respecting their choice a mistake? If not, why is he being punished?

Access to abortion

► In five states and the District of Columbia, the number of abortion providers increased between 1982 and 1992. The states: Delaware, Hawaii, Nebraska, Rhode Island and South Carolina.

► The other 45 states saw a decrease.

► Nationwide, the number of abortion providers decreased 18% during that period.

► Eighty-four percent of counties have no provider.

Source: National Abortion Rights Action League

No one likes abortion, least of all the women who make the difficult choice to terminate a pregnancy. Most Americans, like Foster, believe abortion should be safe, legal and rare. But most don't participate as actively in politics as do the minority who oppose abortion rights does.

The religious right may not control the Republican Party. But it wields enormous power within it, power with a clearly religious objective.

In 1994, one-third of the electorate identified themselves as white, evangelical born-again; 69% of them voted Republican. Religious con-

servatives claim they made the difference in 25 House races and at least six Senate campaigns. The Christian Coalition distributed 33 million voter guides to churches. It ran a massive Election Day operation.

It'll do even more in 1996. Presidential politics rewards intensity. In each party, activists tend to dominate the nomination process. Who else goes to caucuses? Who else works in primaries? That's why the coalition's demand that the GOP presidential and vice presidential nominees both be anti-abortion carries so much weight.

Religious conservatives have every right to participate in the political process. The challenge they pose is not to the system but to the rest of us.

COUNTERPOINTS' four columnists provide diverse perspectives on today's issues. **Mondays:** Tony Snow. **Tuesdays:** Michael Gartner. **Wednesdays:** Linda Chavez. **Thursdays:** Susan Estrich.



COUNTERPOINTS
By Susan Estrich

Hear Dr. Foster out at Senate hearing

At issue

► The nomination of Dr. Henry W. Foster Jr. to become the nation's 16th surgeon general faces a tough battle in the Senate because of controversy over his performing abortions, even though they are legal medical procedures.



Dr. Henry W. Foster Jr.

► Foster, who says he wants the job to "draw attention and help develop lasting solutions to the tragic public health problems confronting us, from the epidemic of violence to the spread of AIDS to the terrible problem of substance abuse," deserves to defend his reputation and his career.

► The administration should stand by the nominee, and the process should go forward.

tion: "They should have taken the finest doctor they could find in the country, someone near retirement without any controversy. It's not like this is the only doctor in the world."

Is that the criterion for a surgeon general, especially in a nation where there is universal agreement that teen pregnancy is at a crisis point? With a Congress hammering out welfare reform that will penalize unwed teen mothers while doing little to prevent teen pregnancy in the first place?

It will be about six weeks before the Foster nomination is expected to come before the Senate. Let the debate between now and then focus on his credentials. Then, at the confirmation hearing, let Americans not only hear Foster out — let them hear what their senators have to say.

Dr. Henry W. Foster Jr., President Clinton's choice for surgeon general, deserves his day in court, in this case a confirmation hearing before the Senate, if only to address several vital points. Among them: validating what is supposed to be a democratic process in this country — not a witch hunt — and affirming that abortion is a legal procedure in this country that physicians' careers should not rise and fall on.

Yes, the hearing also would likely air why the White House and Foster himself fumbled in earlier accounts of the number of abortions he performed — 39 instead of 12. Far more importantly, however, that misstep would finally be put in perspective against Foster's 38-year career of delivering more than 10,000 babies and making strides with successful teen pregnancy prevention programs.

Not only does Foster deserve that opportunity — future nominees and other physicians in this country would be assured that those who support Roe vs. Wade will not be abandoned in the face of guerrilla warfare that tries to intimidate and humiliate those who would perform a legal procedure.

After a history of regularly bailing out on its so-called "troubled" nominees, the Clinton administration this time has decided to be aggressive in standing by the Foster nomination, with Vice President Al Gore, for one, repudiating efforts to trounce the nomination before it ever gets to the Senate.

"There are people in this country who want to criminalize a woman's right to choose, and they are trying to make Dr. Foster a victim... in order to make an ideological political point and win on behalf of the extremists," Gore said this week. "We are not going to let the extremists defeat this man."

The Foster nomination will be a very tough fight, particularly in the face of sentiments like those of Sen. Joseph R. Biden Jr., D-Del. The former chairman of the Judiciary Committee has said of the nomina-

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Why this prolife physician sympathizes with Foster

By Steve Calvin

If the performance of abortions is a disqualification for government service, then I am excluded along with Dr. Henry Foster. The separate question of whether his career abortion total is one, 12, 39 or 700 is important because it raises concern about his candor.

However, the controversy over his nomination is more fundamental: whether the American people really support an unrestricted right to abortion. To abortion rights supporters, what initially seemed to be the perfect nomination has led to a national debate that is shedding unwelcome light on reproductive options that will become increasingly difficult to defend.

Like President Clinton, Foster has stated that abortion should be safe, legal and rare. Although he is not one of the small number of physicians who perform most of the more than 1 million elective abortions each year, he is a supporter of the unrestricted right to abortion. In light of the legislative gains made by prolife forces in the November election, this certainly weakens the chances for Foster's confirmation. Nevertheless, President Clinton has voiced strong support and has shown no inclination to abort Foster's nomination. There is encouraging recent historical precedent.

In 1981 the prolife views of C. Everett Koop jeopardized his confirmation to the same position. He faced a level of intense opposition that we are bound to see again this time around, with the voices coming from the other side. Koop served admirably in a maddeningly independent fashion. Fos-

ter could do the same, but he will certainly have to answer some tough questions about the role of abortion in our society. The Senate hearings themselves will be a tremendously helpful exercise in our ongoing process of national education about abortion.

The most important questions should probe what Foster and Clinton really mean by safe, legal and rare. Though at the moment abortion is legal, how can something be rare when it is allowable in any and all circumstances? Is repetitive elective abortion so safe that it never affects the ability to carry a future pregnancy to term? Is it just to provide abortion for Down's syndrome and other nonlethal genetic abnormalities? These are legitimate concerns that have particular relevance in Minnesota, where the question of Medicaid funding for elective abortions currently rests with the state Supreme Court.

My own career includes a small number of abortions performed when pregnancy was a clear threat to the mother's life or when the fetus had fatal uncorrectable abnormalities. Most of these medically indicated abortions were done in teaching institutions. The physicians in training who assisted me benefited by seeing the awful surgical finality of those procedures. Since limiting my practice to high-risk pregnancy care, I have often attended the delivery of previable fetuses when treatment for preterm labor was unsuccessful. Helplessly watching these desperately desired children die has strengthened my opposition to the 100,000 midtrimester abortions performed each year in the United States.

I sympathize with Foster's abortion predic-

ament, though I have arrived at a vastly different conclusion. My willingness to oppose the injustice of unrestricted abortion at any gestational age has pitted me against many of my colleagues. But we have been civil in our disagreement. On the other hand, my support for the use of abortion for rare, legitimate medical reasons usually makes me suspect to those of a more partisan prolife persuasion. This points out the societal uncertainty about abortion. I am convinced that as the terms of this public debate are more clearly defined, opinion will continue to swing back toward respect for fetal life.

As a fellow specialist in obstetrics and gynecology, I strongly disagree with Foster. However, even prolife senators have stated that his position on abortion does not automatically disqualify him for service as our next surgeon general. The nation has an array of important public health matters that need immediate attention. If the Senate decides to confirm Foster, abortion advocacy should not be on his list of priorities.

It is increasingly apparent that when the discussion turns specific, some reproductive options cannot withstand public scrutiny. Ultimately the abortion question will not be resolved by judicial fiat or by violence. Until a majority of Americans reach consensus on the appropriate use of abortion, the loud discord will continue. A great deal of time and energy will be consumed in the process. The controversy over Foster's nomination is just another necessary step on the road to that consensus.

Steve Calvin, of Minneapolis, is a physician.



RHETA GRIMSLEY JOHNSON

Don't let bully intimidate you

The bully is stalking the national playground once again, sending decent but cowardly folk into hiding, sometimes rendering the majority speechless.

It is a pathetic sight to watch as Dr. Henry Foster Jr. — whom peers describe as a distinguished, seasoned and even selfless healer — takes public abuse for performing what the U.S. Supreme Court decided decades ago was a legal and ethical medical procedure. Often a life-saving procedure.

The court based its decision on the U.S. Constitution. And — though it is neither here nor there, nor proof of any right or wrong — the majority of citizens happen to agree with that ruling and depend on its authority.

So why the ruckus about Foster, who acknowledges that during the 38 years of his obstetrician-gynecologist practice he sometimes aborted babies? He far more often delivered or doctored them. Why the scattering of political support that he badly needs to become the new surgeon general since the old one was driven from office for candor?

Would the same shrill critics be questioning the behavior of a nominee if he were a veteran defense lawyer who had represented murderers? A dentist who had done root canals? Has the Contract With America become a higher document in this land than the Constitution?

The anti-abortion fanatics oppose educating our children about birth control. They oppose distributing birth control devices. They oppose ending unwanted pregnancies, no matter the circumstance, no matter the law.

Then some have the unmitigated gall to oppose helping the children of poverty once they are here amongst us. Out of the womb, on your own.

The numbers in endless polls from opposite political camps show that the American public by and large believes in a woman's choice. But politicians have a hard time reacting to anything but the squeakiest wheel, or hearing above the din of a talk radio blunderbuss. (Moreover, it must be hard for them to ignore the image of abortion doctors being gunned down on their way into the clinics. With spineless politicians, intimidation works.)

Abortion is not the only issue that refuses to be melded by public opinion or law or fact. It has been truly amazing, for instance, to watch Bill Clinton's presidency come unhinged by taunts from the right about his opposition to the Vietnam War. Never mind that, by its end, the majority opposed it, too.

The death last week of former U.S. Sen. J. William Fulbright was a poignant reminder, for those who seem to have forgotten, that Vietnam was a war that divided the nation, with the opponents finally outnumbering the supporters. And opponents were not only the young, targeted for cannon fodder. Older, cooler heads as well saw the folly for what it was.

Where, then, are those like-minded people when Bill Clinton is portrayed as a coward and a traitor? Where are the pro-choice voices now to remind Congress that abortion is a settled issue? Are we so intimidated that we've become a nation of toadies, hoping the bully won't look our way?

There may be a good reason to defeat the nomination of Foster. His legal, ethical practice of medicine is not it.

Editorial

CHICAGO DEFENDER - Wednesday, February 15, 1995 11

Stop using Foster as political football

It's time for Congress to judge Dr. Henry Foster Jr. on what he has done and what its value is to the American public, not on how his past actions fit into the conservatives', liberals' or moderates' political agendas.

The surgeon general is the chief medical officer of the federal government — not just of the Democrats, Republicans, other political parties or any sector of their organizations — but of the *whole* national government.

Congress is currently wrestling with the exact number of abortions Dr. Foster

made and some senators and representatives are using the issue to stonewall his being considered for the position. As a result, the whole situation is being kicked around like the proverbial political football. This is doing a great disservice to the American people.

Dr. Foster has already received the endorsement of the American Medical Association, one of the country's most prestigious health organizations. He has a remarkable history in that he is a former acting president of Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tenn., one of the

four historically Black medical schools in America and, while there, founded the "I Have a Future" program. It reportedly has a very successful record of limiting teen pregnancies by urging youngsters to delay sexual activities, develop employment skills and build self-esteem.

He has said that he wants to make a campaign against teen pregnancies a central point of his tenure as surgeon general. That credible goal is definitely in the best interest of all Americans.

As the nation's main health advisor, the surgeon general is expected to pro-

tect Americans' health, spearhead research on major health concerns, issue warnings to the public on dangers to health and direct the U.S. Public Health Service (a division of the Dept. of Health and Human Services). These are things that Dr. Foster seems to have the abilities, history and demeanor to perform in an excellent manner.

America needs a qualified surgeon general. Dr. Foster seems to fit the bill. That being the case, it's time to stop the political gamesmanship and get the confirmation hearings started.

San Francisco Chronicle; 2-15-95

Specter's Profile in Courage

WHILE MOST congressional Republicans are cowering in fear before the anti-abortion lobby, Senator Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania deserves great credit for political courage in taking a tough stand on the nomination of Dr. Henry Foster to be U.S. surgeon general.

"I don't like seeing a person railroaded before the person has a chance to express himself," Specter

Foster's foes have engaged in a deplorable form of New McCarthyism

told New Hampshire voters at a forum for GOP presidential hopefuls on Monday night. "I am prepared to go to the mat on the Foster nomination on the issue that no one ought to be disqualified from being surgeon gener-

al of the United States for performing abortions, which is a medical procedure legal under the U.S. Constitution."

With that clear and candid comment, Specter has precisely framed the issue at stake in the Foster nomination. And while he may alienate many of the right-wing

activists who dominate GOP primary politics, Specter also captured the beliefs of a majority of Americans who, whatever their personal feelings about abortion, believe in a woman's legal right to choose to have one.

Foes of President Clinton's nomination of Dr. Foster have engaged in a deplorable form of New McCarthyism, in which for days they have dragged his honorable reputation through the mud by seeking to compile a body count of how many abortions he has "committed" in his career. They smear Foster as "an abortionist" who "is not morally qualified to stand in the bully pulpit as surgeon general," in the words of Patrick Buchanan, chief hatchet man of the Religious Right.

Shame on them. Dr. Foster is a distinguished obstetrician, who has devoted his life to the care of pregnant women, delivering 10,000 babies and performing abortions when called for — according to his professional judgment and the personal, private decision of his patients. Despite the tirades of the Buchanan ilk, abortion is not a political crime, but a legal, safe and constitutionally protected medical procedure. Specter deserves credit for having the guts to remind his GOP colleagues of that simple fact.

HENRY FOSTER

The writer is the nominee for U.S. surgeon general.

'Why I Want to Be Surgeon General'

Just a little over a week ago, few people outside Nashville knew anything about me. But after President Clinton announced his intention to nominate Dr. Henry Foster for surgeon general on Feb. 2, it seems like everybody thinks he knows everything about me.

Two weeks ago, no one, not even my wife, St. Clair, my daughter, Myrna, and my son, Wendell — as devoted as they are — followed my every move and every word with rapt attention. Now, when I wake up in the morning and look out my window, the press is out there waiting and watching. When I go to my office, they follow me into the elevator. And walking down the street, I have been punched in the face, inadvertently, I think, with one of those huge microphones you see on TV. I have never seen anything else like it.

I have even picked up a new lexicon. Words that matter in Washington are not in dictionaries in the rest of America. They certainly never taught me these words in medical school or the delivery room: Sound bites. Boom mikes. Stakeouts. Live shots. Talking heads. On-air analysis. All dissecting me over and over again. And all before I've uttered one word at my confirmation hearings before the Senate.

People who have never met me analyze my character and my life's work. They attack me personally before they ever give me a chance to introduce myself or tell my story. But those attacks do not define me. I know who I am and what I stand for. I also know that I am a symbol in a larger debate that has polarized this country for many years. But the attacks do hurt.

I cannot say that my work as a doctor entirely prepared me for these two turbulent weeks. But I have learned a few things during my 38 years as a

doctor, a teacher and a crusader against teen pregnancy that have prepared me to be a good surgeon general.

I have been face to face with real life-and-death challenges. When you see low birth-weight babies born to mothers not yet old enough to drive a car, you have an appreciation of what trauma really means. When you visit the homes of families living in grinding poverty and feel the palpable sense of hopelessness in their lives, you begin to understand what it is to be up against the odds. Compared to that, shouted questions and overheated rhetoric may be uncivil, but I can handle them. When people ask me why I want to be surgeon general, I know the answer.

When you've had the good fortune to participate in the miracle of birth as many times as I have, it is difficult to stand on the sidelines and watch so many people wasting the precious gift of life.

It is difficult to look around America today and see so much needless suffering. Too many children suffer, because their parents have not been taught the value of prevention. Too many people don't have access to quality health care. And too many of us have turned away from those basic American values that can prevent violence or abuse of any kind from taking root.

But all is not lost. America is moving forward to confront both our health care crisis and the crisis of values that has led to far too much irresponsible behavior. As your surgeon general, I believe I can turn the small ripples of success that we have produced into great waves of progress. I believe that I can draw attention and help develop lasting solutions to the tragic public health problems confronting us — from the epidemic of violence to the spread of AIDS to the terrible problem of substance abuse. But I will be giving my

greatest attention to what the president has called "our most serious social problem," the epidemic of teen pregnancy in this country.

It's ironic that my work fighting teen pregnancy has been overshadowed by my opponents' talk about abortion. I do believe in the right of a woman to choose. And I also support the president's belief that abortions should be safe, legal and rare. But my life's work has been dedicated to making sure that young people don't have to face the choice of having abortions.

I have some ideas about how young people can avoid that difficult choice. We are reducing teen pregnancy in the Nashville housing projects through "I Have a Future" — a program we started at Meharry Medical College back in 1987. Our approach is to expand adolescent health care programs beyond the schools and bring them to the community, where they can become a part of the fabric of everyday life. Encouraging abstinence and involving the entire community, we have begun to replace a culture of hopelessness with one that gives young people clear pathways to healthy futures.

In my work with young people in Nashville, there is one lesson I stress above all others. To break the cycle of despair, you must learn that there is a reward for sacrifice. And earning that reward has a fringe benefit. It allows you to give something back. That is a hard lesson to learn, but it is one that has kept me going through these difficult weeks. Having President Clinton place his faith in me is something I could never have imagined as a young boy growing up in the segregated South. Now, I want to give something back to a country that has rewarded my work and sacrifice, and God willing, I'll have that opportunity.

NORMAN MINDREBO

The writer, of Omaha, is an orthopedic surgeon.

How to Get Consensus for Nominee

Why is it that the country is in an uproar over the nomination of Dr. Henry Foster Jr. for surgeon general? Is it simply a ploy of the pro-life lobbyists to denigrate the career of a physician who was once one of President George Bush's "points of light"? Or is it something more deeply seated in the hearts and minds of most Americans about what it means to be the representative physician for our great land?

Dr. C. Everett Koop, surgeon general under Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush, quotes the Rev. Jesse Jackson from a speech Jackson gave in 1977:

"What happens to the mind of a person and the moral fabric of a nation that accepts the abortion of the life of a baby without a pang of conscience? What kind of a person and what kind of a society will we have 20 years hence if life can be taken so casually? It is that question, the question of our attitude, our value system and our mind-set with regard to the nature and worth of life itself that is the central question confronting mankind. Failure to answer the question affirmatively may leave us with a hell right here on Earth."

In my conversations with patients, colleagues and other health care professionals, there is a consensus that the country has gone to hell morally, and we are suffering the medical consequences of our sin. Yes, I said sin.

Absentee fathers, drive-by shootings, drugs, teen-age pregnancy and promiscuity, all shout at us in politically incorrect ways. Broken and shattered lives end up at the doors of our health care institutions wanting a quick fix, and we as health care providers have violated a sacred trust and have given that quick fix to people.

In another time and another place, a small group of physicians was fed up with the way other health care providers were hastening the deaths of their patients, were sleeping with the patients and were doing slipshod work. They wanted to make a difference. They wanted to restore trust in the healing arts. And so, in 600 B.C., these ancient Greek physicians gave us the Hippocratic Oath, an oath that became the moral bedrock of modern Western medicine. People know what to expect from their physician because of this oath:

With Purity and with Holiness I will pass my life and practice my art. . . . I will give no deadly medicine to anyone if asked nor suggest any such counsel; furthermore, I will not give to a woman an instrument to produce abortion. . . . Into whatever houses I enter I will go into them for the benefit of the sick and will abstain from every voluntary act of mischief and corruption, and further, from the seduction of females or males, bond or free. . . . While I continue to keep this oath unviolated, may it be

granted to me to enjoy life and the practice of the art, respected by all men at all times, but should I trespass and violate this oath, may the reverse be my lot.

Give this nation a man or woman physician who still abides by these timeless truths, and you will see a groundswell of support for that candidate. And perhaps that candidate can then get on with the job of prescribing that bitter pill this nation hungers for.

EDITORIAL BRIEF

Journal of Commerce

■ The Energy Department, already billions of dollars over budget in its effort to site a high-level nuclear waste dump in Nevada, now wants more money for the job.

Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary has asked Congress for a change in budget rules to improve the department's access to a fund paid by utility company rate-payers.

Not a chance, said Senate Budget Committee Chairman Pete Domenici, and rightly so.

More than 12 years into its costly program to find a safe and permanent storage site for nuclear waste, the Energy Department is no closer to an answer. It's time for nuclear-powered electric utilities to take over the job and figure out for themselves how to bury their radioactive waste.

The Wrong Target

SAN FRANCISCO

For the first couple of days, the issue seemed quite clear — and the adversary.

The anti-abortion movement is using all its power to kill the nomination as Surgeon General of a respected physician because he has carried out a medical procedure not only legal but constitutionally upheld by the Supreme Court.

So I reacted simply against the anti-abortionists for using their political clout to block Dr. Henry W. Foster Jr. Where would it leave us if a nominee were blocked for acting completely within the law?

My mind was poised for the key-board when it struck me that I had the wrong target.

Like most Americans I'm not "pro-abortion" but I am pro the right of women to make their own decisions, whether or not the reason or the social esthetic coincides with my tastes.

The unrelenting pressure by the pro-life movement disgusts me. I do not mean only the murders at clinics. I think they come from a fringe for whom the only answer is life imprisonment, at least.

But blocking access to the clinics, thrusting disgusting posters, shouting threats and hounding clinic employees — that is a deliberate tactic of the anti-abortion movement itself.

Have we forgotten when blockade, vilification and harassment were the weapons of the left, particularly in the universities? They brought the same results the pro-lifers now bestow upon the country — contempt for law, hatred as a substitute for civil discourse and ugliness, mean indelible ugliness.

But thinking through the Foster case I realized that like pro-life Americans there are acts and beliefs, however legal, that would make me oppose a nominee and fight his election or confirmation.

I would fight anybody with a Fascist, Stalinist or racist record. And I suggested the ouster of Dr. Joycelyn Elders as Surgeon General because I thought she was helping open the door to drug legalization.

To the pro-life movement the act of abortion itself, not just the Supreme Court's opinion, touches passions. Anti-abortionists are no more likely to change than I am to support a PAC for Louis Farrakhan.

So the target of those who support Dr. Foster — particularly in the White House — should be not just the unconvertible pro-life movement but

members of Congress who were pro-choice when they contemplated the women's vote at election time but now edge away from Dr. Foster because the anti-abortionists are showing how hard they will fight.

There is nervous hoo-ha among some pro-choice people about how many abortions Dr. Foster performed and whether he gave an accurate accounting in the beginning.

The only worthwhile answer is that he performed as many as he thought he had to. But the goal of his professional life was getting young

Fighting for Dr. Foster.

women to understand the theory, once grasped in this country, that for youngsters the way to avoid pregnancies is not to have sexual intercourse. Failing that — condoms.

The remarkable thing is not his own teaching on abstinence but that he got many young women to agree. He should get a medal for that silly Surgeon General's uniform.

Dr. Foster denies he said he performed only one abortion but that he remembers one most — for a woman with AIDS. Of course he does. One day I walked through a pediatrics ward in a New York hospital and saw two babies, brother and sister about a year apart. Both were dying of AIDS. I think still about the mother and wonder if by now she had a third AIDS baby, as the ward pediatrician thought she would.

So let the hearings decide whether he should be Surgeon General or that an abortion audit is more important than his life's work.

Let's hope Dr. Foster has the courage to refuse any suggestions that may come from the Administration or elsewhere that he should withdraw before or during the hearings.

President Clinton has promised to stick by him. Mr. Clinton has several times failed to stay the route on issues ranging from nominations to human rights. So he has to pay the reasonable price of lingering skepticism about his promises.

The hearings are as much about the constancy of pro-choice politicians, including the President of the United States, as about Dr. Henry W. Foster Jr. — more. □

OUR PERSPECTIVE

Surgeon general

Playing a numbers game with Foster

Quick: How many times in the last decade have you been in a doctor's office? Perhaps you think the number is around 40. But after a few days' reflection, you might admit that an accurate count would be closer to 80; all those ear checks during the preschool years do tend to add up. It might be amusing, but certainly not embarrassing, if an official tally revealed an even higher count: After all, there's nothing criminal about seeking medical services — and nothing underhanded about underestimating. And since the number is irrelevant anyway, what's the point in fretting over it in the first place?

There's no more point, really, than in playing a similar numbers game with the new nominee for surgeon general. When Dr. Henry Foster was first asked how many abortions he'd performed in three decades of gynecological practice, he put the number at "fewer than a dozen." The next week, Foster said a review of hospital records indicated the correct count was 39. Now he's being pilloried as a liar and a sneak — all because of a miscalculation so trivial it can't even be called a mistake. Republican critics are clucking about Foster's "credibility problem," insisting that his nomination is dead. Even Sen. Joseph Biden momentarily joined the lynch mob — recanting his nasty cracks only after the damage was done.

But why the clucking and the cracks?

Where's the credibility problem? As a horde of physicians have argued in Foster's defense, any doctor asked to pinpoint the number of times he'd performed a particular procedure — especially over a 30-year period — would probably guess wrong. Of course, no one would object if Foster had underestimated the number of laparoscopic exams he'd performed or babies he'd delivered. Abortion is just as legal — and, to many women, just as indispensable — as other medical services.

Which brings us to the bitter truth about the sabotage attempt now underway. The people firing spitballs at Dr. Foster are doing so not because his memory is imperfect, but simply because he's a gynecologist and has offered the services gynecologists typically offer. Any such specialist who'd performed abortions would fail the spitballers' test. And because they're not sure they can sink Foster on that issue alone, they're searching for other millstones to throw around his neck. So far, they've had little luck.

Give President Clinton credit for shunning the extremists and standing behind Foster. His firmness disputes the obstructionists' insinuation that there's something disgraceful in supporting abortion rights or performing abortions. Practicing medicine should never be a reason to disqualify a surgeon general nominee.

Put an end to drive-by smearers

As in Foster, Rutgers president cases, we go after careers with impunity.

AMES, Iowa — By all accounts, Francis Lawrence has had a distinguished academic career and has been a fine president at Rutgers University.

By all accounts, Henry Foster has had a distinguished career as an obstetrician and a medical administrator in Nashville.

Yet Lawrence is in danger of being fired by Rutgers, and Foster is likely to be rejected by the Senate for a job he is well-suited for.

It's all because of sound bites and instant analysis.



COUNTERPOINTS
By Michael Gartner

Not sound bites on TV, which at least knows the ethics of sound bites. Not instant analysis by anchor-men, who at least know how to analyze instantly.

No, these are the sound bites of gossip, the instant analyses of placards. They are the quotes, misquotes and twistquotes passed along by those unyielding in their cause or unforgiving in their person.

It is unfair, and it has gotten out of hand.

If you read everything Lawrence said that day in November and if you look at his accomplishments in

bringing minorities to Rutgers, you will see he is a champion of equality. He is not a racist. He has said one dumb thing, and he has apologized.

If we are to debate whether he is suited to run Rutgers, should we not debate his full record?

But a debate carried on by placards and demonstrations and quotes out of context doesn't allow for that. It is not a debate; it is an inquisition.

If you look at the record of Foster, you will say this is a man who cares about the health of America, who wants young mothers to thrive and their babies to survive. If you look at his record over three decades, you will say this is a man who has made a difference.

You will also say this is a doctor who performed 39 abortions — operations that are legal, that have been performed by thousands of doctors more than 1 million times a year for the past 20 years.



USA TODAY



AP

FOSTER

LAWRENCE

Yet the debate is not whether Foster would be a good surgeon general, not whether he would help nurture and nourish the men and women and children of America, not whether he is a good administrator or a good doctor or a good man. If you're just tuning in, you'd think Foster was some back-alley operator who did nothing but abortions all his life.

That's the way this debate is being framed — it's about Henry Foster, abortionist, not about Dr. Foster, intellect and innovator and caregiver.

We've become a nation of drive-by smearers — going after reputations and careers with the recklessness and randomness with which we shoot people on freeways. The media may be abetting — or, depending on your outlook, simply reporting — but it's not the media stirring the pot.

In the case of President Lawrence, it's the young who know no better. In the case of Dr. Foster, it's the Christian right, which should know better.

This piling-on is out of hand. Now is the time to stop it. The Rutgers board must explain to the young that no one is perfect. That they, too, will make mistakes as they grow older. But that a life cannot be judged by a sound bite. And the board must stand by its man.

The president, too, must stand by his man. He must explain that this is not a one-issue country, that there are good and decent people on all sides of debates.

At Rutgers the young must learn, in Washington the right must learn, and across the nation we all must learn: There's a difference between democracy and mobocracy.

COUNTERPOINTS' four columnists provide views from diverse perspectives on today's issues. **Wednesday:** Linda Chavez on another affirmative-action debacle. **Thursdays:** Susan Estrich. **Mondays:** Tony Snow. **Tuesdays:** Michael Gartner.

► Foster nomination, 12A



Keep an open mind on Foster nomination

CONGRESS and the nation deserve to hear from Dr. Henry Foster Jr. before any decision is made on the future of his nomination as surgeon general.

Certainly, the White House fumbled the nomination with fuzzy reports on how many abortions Foster performed. The obstetrician/gynecologist, in the national spotlight for the first time, offered an off-the-cuff estimate without checking the numbers — a failure Foster acknowledges. Those shortcomings, however, have angered even Democratic supporters who wonder if this isn't another case of a misguided White House appointment.

To make matters worse, the nomination faced well-organized, shrill opponents in the anti-abortion forces determined to defeat Foster for no other reason than that he has performed legal abortions. Now, many senators, especially those who oppose abortion, are being asked to judge Foster's long and distinguished career solely on the basis of those procedures.

Those senators should have traveled to Nashville Monday with Vice President Al Gore to see the "I Have a Future" pro-

gram, started by Foster in Nashville's public housing projects. The visit not only underscored the White House's commitment to the nomination but gave this city a chance to show off a model program that is giving inner-city children a chance to shun the violence and teen pregnancies that destroy too many young lives.

Let the Senate and the nation hear the story about "I Have a Future" from the youngsters who do have a future thanks to Henry Foster. Let them learn about a program that preaches against drugs and for abstinence, that builds self-esteem and condemns violence.

And let them hear the remarkable story of Foster, the only black in his class at the University of Arkansas medical school who graduated with top honors.

Let them learn about Foster's career at Tuskegee University where he started a health service for poor mothers and infants that's been widely imitated.

Let the Senate hear about his service at Meharry where he served as dean of the medical school and later as acting president.

After hearings, senators can decide for themselves

Let them hear from the young doctors Foster recruited to help bring the historic merger of Meharry and Nashville General hospital about. Let them hear from his medical colleagues in this region who've been inspired by Foster's contribution to the medical profession in Nashville. Let them hear from national medical associations that enthusiastically back Foster's nomination.

This newspaper has known Foster for many years. It knows that he is an honorable man, a distinguished physician and an excellent nominee for surgeon general.

Many members of the Senate, however, don't know him. Some are understandably confused over what they read and what they hear about his work.

For those senators, as well as for the nominee himself, Foster deserves a fair hearing. The Senate and the nation deserve the chance to hear Foster speak himself about his career and his philosophy.

And at the very least, the members of the U.S. Senate should keep an open mind on Foster's nomination until they hear him personally. Those who refuse to listen cannot judge his worth. And those who cannot judge his worth for themselves are shirking their duties as senators. ■

Sacramento Bee; 2-14-95

Sticking with Foster

It's hard to imagine how the Clinton administration could have handled anything more poorly than it has the nomination of Dr. Henry Foster, an obstetrician/gynecologist, to the post of surgeon general. His specialty, and the political sensitivity of many of the tasks that ob/gyns perform, was bound to render him controversial.

Yet where it should have been up-front about Foster's record, the White House twice misstated the number of abortions he had performed — first it was one, then no more than a dozen, now it's 39 — and behaved as though it wanted to hide the facts of a career about which the doctor has no reason to be ashamed, making him an easy target in a pointless numbers game. If having performed abortions over the course of one's medical career renders a doctor unsuited to be surgeon general, then the Clinton administration, or any other, may as well forget about ever trying to name an ob/gyn to the post.

Most ob/gyn's of Foster's generation were trained to perform abortions. That Foster

performed 39, or that in the 1970's he performed a handful of hysterectomies on profoundly retarded women, or that he supervised trials of an abortion-inducing drug should not earn him the scarlet letter that many Republicans, and some Democrats, seem determined to pin on him.

Now the controversy generated by the mishandling of the nomination threatens to obscure the useful qualifications he could bring to the post: years of experience trying to reduce infant mortality, teenage pregnancy and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, counseling young people to delay sexual activity and dispensing sensible advice about birth control.

Those are complex issues in a country where opinions differ so widely on how to address teen sexuality. But surely there's no sense in jettisoning a nominee who has spent a 38-year career examining them. If it stands for anything, the administration should stick with him now.

Wash. Times; 2-14-95

Pastor praises Foster's postnatal priorities

While political pundits took to the airwaves Sunday to vilify the Clinton administration's nomination of Dr. Henry W. Foster Jr. for surgeon general, the Rev. Wallace Smith, pastor of the Shiloh Baptist Church in the District, took to the pulpit to vindicate his long-time friend's reputation.

"Dr. Foster is an honorable guy who's been dealt an unconscionable blow by the religious right," said Mr. Smith, adding that the embattled doctor is "one of the finest Christians I've ever known."

Mr. Smith developed a friendship with the "warm, tender, soft-spoken" physician and "well-known civic leader" when he was the minister of the First Baptist Church Capitol Hill in Nashville for six years before coming to Washington two years ago.

An angered Mr. Smith told his parishioners the Foster nomination is being cloaked in a debate by the religious right, which is using "abortion as a smokescreen" to "spearhead a movement to undermine African-American leadership."

"Unless you are a narrow-minded Uncle-Tom-type who



speaks the narrow-minded, fundamentalist language they approve of, you will be discredited," Mr. Smith said. "The African-American community is shocked by the meanness of the crowd in Washington now."

"We don't have to fear a lynch mob coming to pull us out of our houses in the middle of the night," Mr. Smith said, "But there are other kinds of mobs."

Dr. Foster is not known as "anybody who is pro-abortion," he said. Neither the minister nor the doctor support abortion on demand but recognize "there can be limited, extenuating circumstances" where it is acceptable, he said.

"I'm pro-life," said Mr. Smith. "I believe in celebrating life from beginning to end, not just when it's a fetus and then forget about it once it's born. I have

yet to see the right come up with a strategy for what to do with a life once it's here."

Mr. Smith will encourage Dr. Foster to continue to seek the post as the nation's public-health advocate. As part of an effort to mobilize support for Dr. Foster, he asked his congregation to participate in a letter-writing campaign to support the nomination. The Progressive National Baptist Convention, which represents 2.5 million people, including those at Shiloh Baptist, has already prepared a letter to be sent to the White House.

Mr. Smith is also organizing a coalition of Protestants, Catholics and Jews to counter Dr. Foster's critics and "to demonstrate that the religious right does not speak for all Christendom."

Mr. Smith, whose inner-city

church provides a variety of community-oriented programs at its Shiloh Family Life Center, said that when he learned of Dr. Foster's nomination he was "generally enthusiastic and giddy at the possibilities" of working with him on local problems.

While in Nashville, Mr. Smith remembered how church members wanted to assist a recently-separated woman with six children. Unbeknownst to them, Dr. Foster voluntarily started mentoring her teen son, who was beginning to misbehave. The doctor, a Tuskegee Airman, got the 13-year-old interested in flying.

Mr. Smith is correct about one thing: Dr. Foster is the latest sacrificial lamb in the never-ending abortion debate. This nomination is no longer about this physician or his qualifications to serve as the nation's health-care advocate beyond a single issue. Nor is it about one man's attempts to make a positive difference in the lives and futures of young people who face incredible odds.

Who cares if the waffling President Clinton and his minions lose another political vic-

tory?

What about troubled teenagers who need an experienced and empathetic adult to champion their cause and address their needs? Who cares about the proliferation of AIDS and the rise of teen pregnancy, drug use and violent deaths among youth? Apparently, Dr. Foster cares, with his "I Have A Future" program that's helped countless teens and their families in the Nashville housing projects.

Which brings us to the larger issue: When are we going to invest as much time and energy in the thousands of children who are literally dying daily as they attempt to survive in sub-human conditions, as we invest in the unborn?

While this political furor over the Foster nomination and abortion rages on, community workers like Vera Johnson-Bowling, associate director of the Sasha Bruce Youthworks Inc., must struggle with massive cutbacks in programs such as the discontinued Turning Points project.

"We are in a state of emergency as it applies to kids," she said. "We need to deal with the children who are alive."

EDITORIALS

Foster

■ Let's attack the problem rather than the surgeon-general nominee

REPUBLICANS should see to it that Dr. Henry W. Foster Jr., President Clinton's nominee for surgeon general, is given a warm welcome and a respectful hearing on Capitol Hill.

Americans don't have much tolerance for petty, partisan game-playing on the subject of teen-age pregnancy. The problem is too serious for that.

Between 1940 and 1956, only about 4 percent of American children were born out of wedlock. Now about 30 percent of American children are born to single mothers.

Out-of-wedlock births have risen by more than 70 percent in a decade. Should that trend continue, single moms will account for more than half the births in the nation by the year 2003.

The link with poverty is inescapable. Only one child in 10 from two-parent families lives below the poverty line. An astonishing 66 percent of the children of never-married moms live below the poverty line.

The nation is spending \$34 billion a year trying to patch up the problems created by teen-age pregnancy.

Dr. Foster has dealt with these problems for decades, and he has tried to do something about them. In rural southeast Alabama, he was the only obstetrician for women in at least five counties. In Nashville, he helped start the "I Have a Future" program, which pushes abstinence, responsibility and self-control first — and condoms and birth control pills second.

In his years of practice, Foster has performed a few dozen abortions. He also sterilized some severely retarded women.

But his position on abortion should encourage pro-life groups, not alienate them. He thinks abortion should be "safe, legal and rare." That phrase puts him squarely on record against a number of horrors.

Most Americans don't want women to bleed to death or die from infections as a result of back-alley abortions.

Most Americans don't want the government making family planning decisions for women — or making human tragedies a criminal matter as well.

Most Americans do want women to exercise their right to choose a lot earlier in the reproductive process than millions are doing now.

This is the centrist position. Republicans in Congress ought to stand up and insist that it get a fair hearing. Most Americans would rather attack the problem than the nominee.

The Topeka Capital-Journal, Tuesday, February 14, 1995 7-A

Let senators know the right choice is to vote to confirm Foster

More than one-third of American children are born to single mothers. Among black mothers the number exceeds three in five; among whites it is nearing 30 percent.



Dr. Bill Roy

Commentary

As a group these new families are poor to begin with, and they stay poor. The mothers are less educated and their children will be less educated.

As the number of single-parent families goes up, our society becomes less and less like we want it to be, and more and more an unskilled, dependent society. None of this is news.

Everyone should contribute to solving this problem; both private and public sector should be involved. But one person has a unique responsibility: the surgeon general. An ideal surgeon general should

have a track record of addressing the problem of unwed motherhood. He or she should be highly respected among colleagues. Because it is a big job, proven administrative experience is highly desirable.

It helps if the surgeon general has first hand experience with individual patients, so he knows something of the myriad of circumstances which lead to unwanted pregnancies and single mothers who want to bear children out of wedlock.

President Clinton has identified such a person and sent his name to the Senate for confirmation. Dr. Henry W. Foster Jr. has headed a program that has decreased teen-age pregnancies and births to unwed mothers. He has administered a medical school, Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tenn. He has done clinical research. And he has provided full spectrum reproductive care to thousands of women, including 10,000 deliveries.

Foster is focused on one of the most important issues facing America: out of wedlock births. By any logical reasoning he should get 100 votes in the U.S. Senate.

But Dr. Foster has done abortions — lawful, voluntary abortions.

If Foster is the compassionate, conscientious physician his colleagues at the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists believe him to be, he has spent hours urging patients to seek alternatives to termination of their pregnancies. He has referred them to others who might help with support and/or adoption. But there are many pregnant women whom no parent, no doctor, no priest can dissuade from abortion.

Today women seek legal medical care rather than resorting to coat hangers, potassium permanganate or other life-endangering procedures. Because of harassment and fear, few physicians are available to perform abortions today. But nearly all physicians refer desperate woman to doctors brave enough to risk their lives to protect women from the risk of back-alley abortions.

Since Roe vs. Wade was decided in January 1973, there are Americans who in good conscience will not vote for a political candidate who does

not at least give lip service to making abortions illegal.

A few senators are morally opposed to abortions. Others simply see votes they cannot lose. Either way, they stand between Foster and confirmation. This is the time for

concerned, compassionate Kansans to write their senators. To do less is to permit a small number of determined voters to thwart the national will and the nation's best interest.

It makes a lot more sense to avoid

unwanted pregnancies and unwanted births than to punish the children and their mothers by punitively denying them welfare and medical care after they are born. Sens. Bob Dole and Nancy Kassebaum know this. Help them do the right thing.

Henry Foster
Wash. Post; 2-13-95

Why I Want to Be Surgeon General

Just a little over a week ago, few people outside Nashville knew anything about me. But after President Clinton announced his intention to nominate Dr. Henry Foster for surgeon general on Feb. 2, it seems like everybody thinks they know everything about me.

Two weeks ago, no one, not even my wife, St. Clair, my daughter, Myrna, and my son, Wendell—as devoted as they are—followed my every move and every word with rapt attention. Now, when I wake up in the morning and look out my window, the press is out there waiting and watching. When I go to my office, they follow me into the elevator. And walking down the street, I have been punched in the face, inadvertently, I think, with one of those huge microphones you see on TV. I have never seen anything like it.

I have even picked up a new lexicon. Words that matter in Washington are not in dictionaries in the rest of America. They certainly never taught me these words in medical school or the delivery room: Sound bites. Boom mikes. Stake-outs. Live shots. Talking heads. On-air analysis. All dissecting me over and over again. And all before I've uttered one word at my confirmation hearings before the Senate.

People who have never met me analyze my character and my life's work. They attack me personally before they ever give me a chance to introduce myself or tell my story. But those attacks do not define me. I know who I am and what I stand for. I also know that I am a symbol in a larger debate that has polarized this country for many years. But the attacks do hurt.

I cannot say that my work as a doctor entirely prepared me for these two turbulent weeks. But I have learned a few things during my 38 years as a doctor, a teacher and a crusader against teen pregnancy that have prepared me to be a good surgeon general.

I have been face to face with real life-and-death challenges. When you see low birth-weight babies born to mothers not yet old enough to drive a car, you have an appreciation

of what trauma really means. When you visit the homes of families living in grinding poverty and feel the palpable sense of hopelessness in their lives, you begin to understand what it is to be up against the odds. Compared to that, shouted questions and overheated rhetoric may be uncivil, but I can handle them. When people ask me why I want to be surgeon general, I know the answer.

When you've had the good fortune to participate in the miracle of birth as many times as I have, it is difficult to stand on the sidelines and watch so many people wasting the precious gift of life.

It is difficult to look around America today and see so much needless suffering. Too many children suffer, because their parents have not been taught the value of prevention. Too many people don't have access to quality health care. And too many of us have turned away from those basic American values that can prevent violence or abuse of any kind from taking root.

But all is not lost. America is moving forward to confront both our health care crisis and the crisis of values that has led to far too much irresponsible behavior. As your surgeon general, I believe I can turn the small ripples of success that we have produced into great waves of progress. I believe that I can draw attention and help develop lasting solutions to the tragic public health problems confronting us—from the epidemic of violence to the spread of AIDS to the terrible problem of substance abuse. But I will be giving my greatest attention to what the president has called "our most serious social problem," the epidemic of teen pregnancy in this country.

It's ironic that my work fighting teen pregnancy has been overshadowed by my opponents' talk about abortion. I do believe in the right of a woman to choose. And I also support the president's belief that abortions should be safe, legal and rare. But my life's work has been dedicated to making sure that young people don't have to face the choice of having abortions.

I have some ideas about how young people can avoid that difficult choice. We are reducing



teen pregnancy in the Nashville housing projects through "I Have a Future"—a program we started at Meharry Medical College back in 1987. Our approach is to expand adolescent health care programs beyond the schools and bring them to the community, where they can become a part of the fabric of everyday life. Encouraging abstinence and involving the entire community, we have begun to replace a culture of hopelessness with one that gives young people clear pathways to healthy futures.

In my work with young people in Nashville, there is one lesson I stress above all others. To break the cycle of despair, you must learn that

there is a reward for sacrifice. And earning that reward has a fringe benefit. It allows you to give something back. That is a hard lesson to learn, but it is one that has kept me going through these difficult weeks. Having President Clinton place his faith in me is something I could never have imagined as a young boy growing up in the segregated South. Now, I want to give something back to a country that has rewarded my work and sacrifice, and God willing, I'll have that opportunity.

The writer is a nominee for U.S. surgeon general.

San Francisco Examiner; 2-12-95

Don't dump Dr. Foster

By performing abortions, Clinton's nominee for surgeon general has committed no crime, despite his McCarthyesque critics

JOSEPH MCCARTHY is risen from the grave. "Are you now, or have you ever been, a doctor who performs abortions?" This is the unspoken test that's being applied to the candidacy of Dr. Henry Foster to be U.S. surgeon general.

His nomination is an unfortunate battleground on which to re-fight the right to abortion, which was established 22 years ago in *Roe vs. Wade* and reaffirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court in June 1992. But the fanatic right has infected the confirmation debate, and, to their shame, moderates are wavering. Even Democratic Sen. Joe Biden and The New York Times have felt compelled to speak out against Foster.

President Clinton shouldn't listen. He must continue to stand up for Foster.

Whether Foster performed one abortion, fewer than a dozen, 39 or hundreds is irrelevant. Perhaps White House staff is guilty of felony stupidity, but in this country, it is no crime for a doctor to perform an abortion.

Yet, the witch hunt continues. A news report says, "Dr. Foster now admits to performing 39 abortions." — as if evidence of his guilt were mounting daily.

As an obstetrician, Foster has delivered 10,000 babies. It would be remarkable if he had never performed an abortion. In his 38 years of practice, he has averaged one abortion a year. As the respected acting director of Nashville's Meharry Medical College, Foster has worked hard to prevent teenagers from becoming pregnant.

"I believe in the right of a woman to choose," Foster told medical students at George Washington University on Friday. "And I also support the president's belief that abortions should be safe, legal and rare. The irony of the debate is my life's work has been dedicated to making sure that young people don't have to face the choice of abortions."

Rep. Dan Coats, R-Ind., says the litmus test isn't abortion but the truth. Well, Foster has gone to great lengths to tell the truth, researching thousands of hospital records to get an exact count of abortions he performed. He also acknowledged presiding over a study of an experimental drug that induced abortions in 55 of 60 women.

This numbers game wouldn't be necessary except some extremists still want to convince us that abortion is the new communism. Hardly. It's a right protected by the Constitution.

OPINION

**Rekha
BASU**

Insidious attack on Foster

By now we've seen enough higher appointments be cynically torpedoed that the siege upon Henry Foster should come as little surprise. Yet the attempts to demonize President Clinton's newest surgeon general nominee, merely for practicing his profession, tests even the most hardened skeptic's sense of political fairness. It just doesn't get much more insidious than this.

Twenty-two years ago the U. S. Supreme Court ruled that women have a constitutionally guaranteed right to end unwanted pregnancies. That right has withstood harassment, intimidation and the murders of doctors. It has weathered gag rules, parental-notification laws and clinic blockades.

Globally, it has endured despite attempts to export U. S. hypocrisy by withdrawing funds to family-planning programs. Locally, it has survived a corporate divestiture of funds from women's health clinics where abortion wasn't even an issue.

It has also — so far — survived Republican administration attempts to pack the Supreme Court with ideologues who would rescind that right. Yet in flagrant contempt of that time-tested law, members of Congress last week were piling on in a frenzied attempt to sully the reputation of an eminent medical school dean and president, obstetrician and gynecologist because, in the course of an outstanding medical career, he performed abortions, amniocentesis and clinical trials on abortion drugs.

Although Foster did them in accordance with the laws and code of his profession, his opponents have managed to make an issue out of *how many* abortions he performed, as if they had an acceptable number in mind.

Never mind that Foster, who has received a string of excellence awards, in 1991 was designated as one of President Bush's Thousand Points of Light. Never mind that he has been one of the leading authorities on reducing infant mortality, preventing teen pregnancy and drug abuse, and promoting abstinence — all benchmarks of a conservative agenda. The sharks are now circling to get Foster disqualified.

It's one thing for newly emboldened conservatives in the new Congress to try to make Foster their first target. But even pro-choice moderates are said to be wavering in their support for him. On the air last week, the Christian Coalition's Ralph Reed was boasting of making political deals with economic conservatives for whom abortion isn't even an issue.

What's more, some liberals who should be rallying to Foster's side are said to be afraid of being abandoned by a president who has proved to be easily swayed into selling out his nominees. Even if he stands by Foster, Clinton has so undermined his own authority when it comes to making and sticking by appointments that the damage may be irreversible.

Let's not forget why we need a new surgeon general in the first place: Because the last one, answering a question in the context of teen abstinence and pregnancy and disease prevention, had the temerity to suggest discussing masturbation in school sex-education classes. Lani Guinier got torpedoed for attorney general because opponents distorted her views on the Voting Rights Act; Kimba Woods because she legally employed someone who had been an illegal immigrant. Paradoxically, though the whole nation heard testimony accusing Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas of illegal sexual harassment while he presided over a federal agency for equal opportunities, that wasn't, in the end, deemed serious enough grounds to reconsider him.

Thoughtful people can disagree ad infinitum over when life begins, but the right to abortion remains the law. Would it be appropriate for those of us who are morally opposed to the death penalty to try to disqualify from higher office every judge and juror who ever imposed it in a death-penalty state?

Why stop there? Perhaps Congress should also have called for Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun's resignation, before his retirement last year, for authoring *Roe vs. Wade*?

"President Clinton is once again showing America that he has nothing but contempt for America's children and families . . ." said a press release put out by Iowans for LIFE the day after Henry Foster's nomination. "Now he has the gall to nominate a man who killed preborn children for a living to the nation's top medical post! When will he stop?"

Some of us are wondering when the witch-hunts and the bullying and the harassment will stop.

We are waiting for this "moral" crusade to show some moral authority in its tactics.

REKHA BASU is a Register columnist.

Chgo. Trib.; 2-12-95

Conservatives out to stigmatize M.D.'s

No matter how much Capitol Hill conservatives try to sugarcoat it, their attempts to block President Clinton's nominee for surgeon general amount to a dangerous stigmatization of every doctor who has ever performed an abortion.

Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Texas), a possible presidential candidate, was pretty upfront about why he didn't like Henry W. Foster Jr. He said he does "not believe a doctor who has performed abortions as a matter of routine practice could bring Americans together" on issues of medical policy. Oh? He could hardly do worse than Sen. Gramm.

Since when is a surgeon general supposed to be free of controversy? Reagan's quite popular surgeon general, C. Everett Koop, shocked fellow conservatives with some of his views about sex education for children, yet, most people appreciated his candor.

Foster is being criticized for his alleged lack of candor in disclosing how many abortions he has performed during almost 40 years of medical practice. At first he said fewer than a dozen, but, after checking his records, revised the number to 39. Organized anti-abortion activists alleged he performed many more. Is one enough? Is 500 too many? Even if Foster's original estimate had been correct, it would not have silenced the rage from the radical right, or calmed Clinton's nervousness.

Others claim the question is "credibility" or "morality." Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, says the nation doesn't want a surgeon general who advocates "permissiveness." Yet, Foster received a "Point of Light" award from President Bush for his "I Have A Future" youth program, which innovatively and effectively encouraged young people to postpone sex until they have taken care of life's more important steps, like career and marriage.

Hatch does not care for Foster's advocacy of condom distribution in school-based clinics, but Foster has more agreement in the medical community and, as near as I can tell, in mainstream America on this issue than Hatch does.

Much has been made of how Clinton's staff members stumbled, and they have apologized. But what about the bigger question: Why should Foster's having performed abortions be an issue at all?

Clinton ran as a pro-choice candidate in a pro-choice party in a year when moderate Republican leaders tried unsuccessfully to prevent their own extremists from pushing an anti-abortion plank so Draconian that it allowed for no exceptions, even for rape and incest.

Clarence Page

Capitol Hill Republicans would prefer that Americans not think too much about that. Most Americans tell pollsters they do not like abortion (Who would?) but they also do not want to see it made illegal again. We abhor it, yet we want it.

We would also like young people to practice abstinence outside marriage. But, as one Atlanta mother said on CNN, "If it was your kid who came down with AIDS, wouldn't you wish they had used a condom?"

Let's hear it for good ol' American common sense.

We Americans are like Bill Clinton. We want to have the tough questions both ways. We want life and we also want choice. We want freedom and we also want control. We look to Washington for leadership and guidance and, instead, see politicians of both parties running to hide in the tall grass of political rhetoric.

On this issue, they can run, but they can't hide. If Clinton caves in to pressure from the anti-abortion anti-condom extremists, he will only enhance their credibility and discredit those who hoped his administration would represent a reasonable middle ground.

Worse, the Foster flap stigmatizes a man of high character and a long record of impeccable public service simply because he performed some abortions. That is not a pleasant thought, but, there are a lot of procedures doctors perform that are not pleasant to talk about at the dinner table.

A decent society will always feel a certain moral discomfort with abortion. But it should also feel considerable discomfort about driving those women and, in too many cases, girls who are going to be seeking abortions anyway, into the hands of back-alley abortionists.

A decent society should also feel considerable discomfort about stigmatizing a doctor simply because he or she has performed abortions. That's just a short step away from stigmatizing all doctors who perform abortions, which, when you think about it, is just a "lite," clean-hands version of the criminal logic that drives certain self-appointed baby-savers to shoot abortion doctors and clinic workers.

Most of Foster's tormentors will deny they would have anything to do with outlaw violence. That's basically true. They only help provide the atmosphere for it.

Henry Foster owes no apology

In an address to medical students Friday, Dr. Henry Foster Jr., President Clinton's nominee for surgeon general, ably defended his 38 years of medical practice. While his performance was reassuring, it was a defense that should never have been necessary. There is nothing in Foster's record that suggests he should have any explaining to do.

The White House showed its penchant for fouling up even relatively simple appointments when it allowed itself to get caught up in a numbers game with rabid anti-abortionists over how many of the procedures Foster has performed. The numbers do not matter. Foster, an obstetrician-gynecologist, has done nothing illegal or immoral. Abortion is the law of the land and an accepted part of mainstream medical practice.

President Clinton can still act to shore up Foster's nomination. To do so, the president must stand firmly — and publicly — behind the nominee. The president and his aides can also stop attempting to answer questions about the number of abortions Foster has performed.

Equally important, White House aides must stop acting as though Foster somehow misled them when he initially told White House interviewers that he performed a dozen or so

abortions. In nearly four decades of practice in which he delivered more than 10,000 babies, Foster could hardly be expected to remember off the top of his head how many of his medical procedures had been abortions.

Medical experts point out that it is not at all unusual that an obstetrician-gynecologist of Foster's age would have performed abortions;

those experts estimate that about half of those of Foster's age have. Particularly in the years immediately after abortion became legal, most were performed in physicians' offices instead of abortion clinics.

The controversy incited by rabid anti-abortionists has not changed three factors fundamental to Foster's nomination. He continues to enjoy the support of the American Medical Association and the American College of Obste-

tricians and Gynecologists. He remains an expert in preventing teen pregnancy, which is one of the things that attracted President Clinton to him in the first place. And the majority of Americans still support legal abortions.

President Clinton, whom many Americans perceive to be weak, ought to welcome the opportunity to stand up to the Republican Party in support of a nominee like Henry Foster.

*It doesn't matter
how many abortions
were performed by
President Clinton's
surgeon general
nominee. Foster has
done nothing illegal
or immoral.*



Another fiasco from an inept White House

Foster's abortion record bound to cause an uproar

Sometimes one is tempted to wonder if the staffers in the White House would be capable of organizing a one-car funeral procession.

In the Henry Foster nomination for surgeon general, for example, consider the White House mistakes, the flip-flops, the rearranged facts, the miscalculations and the astonishing misreading of the potential firestorm that would be caused by Foster's record of having performed who-knows-how-many abortions.



EDITORIAL
PAGE EDITOR

Many people of high moral character and high professional qualifications insist that Foster could make an outstanding surgeon general. At least parts of his professional record suggest they are correct. His emphasis on preventing teen-age

pregnancy, for example, is sensible, well-directed and much needed in society. His professional qualifications as a medical educator appear exemplary.

Unlike Jocelyn Elders, the woman he seeks to succeed, he has had the good sense thus far not to engage in unstoppable diarrhea of the mouth concerning his views and beliefs. If he ever gets to sit in the surgeon general's office, he could not

possibly do a worse job than Elders, who had absolutely no grasp of proper decorum or common sense.

But Foster may never get that far. If he doesn't, his failure to advance will be far more the result of slipshod White House screening efforts and severe miscalculation than of any inherent fault in the obstetrician and gynecologist from Tennessee.

The first mistake the White House made was in assuming that by nominating a physician less vocal and strident than Elders, almost nothing else would matter. The second mistake was in failing to take into account the polarizing effects abortion could have on the nomination. Clinton clearly believes that a woman has the right to choose an abortion. Elders believed that, and Foster believes that. So do many other physicians in many areas of specialty. But it was an automatic alarm for anti-abortion critics when the president nominated a doctor who has performed abortions himself.

The White House displays no sign that it perceived the abortion issue would ignite such a firestorm. It's inconceivable that this issue was not figured into the equation on how difficult Foster's confirmation would be.

There is growing evidence that the White House was so blind to this potential problem that it did not fully question Foster about this area of his medical practice. Had the correct questions been

See **HOOD, J-5**, Col. 1

HOOD

Continued from J-1

asked, a series of other mistakes and misstatements of fact could have been avoided.

For example, the White House would have known better than to advise Sen. Nancy Kassebaum of Kansas, chairwoman of the committee that must approve Foster's confirmation, that Foster had performed only one therapeutic abortion. In fact, it's clear the White House knew at the time that the number of abortions Foster had performed was higher than that, but Kassebaum was misinformed anyway. To put it

bluntly, that was absolutely stupid.

Kassebaum was a potential ally for the White House. Now the White House has angered someone whose support was desperately needed.

White House spokesmen insist that because abortion is legal, it should not be an issue here. The president and his staff may truly believe that, but abortion is an issue for many, and it was foolish and short-sighted of the White House not to take that into consideration in this nomination.

The White House made its nomination before Foster's FBI background check was complete and before staffers had carefully screened all of the doctor's back-

ground. Only now is a thorough examination of Foster's professional record being completed. That's far too late. By mid-week even strongly pro-choice forces were urging the White House to withdraw the nomination because it had been bungled so badly.

Again, as in far too many cases before, the White House has been caught engaging in amateur hour. This at a time when it was essential to select and nominate a physician who would make the country quickly forget the embarrassment Elders had been to herself and to the president.

No, calling this amateur hour is too kind. This White House staff isn't ready yet to work up to amateur standing.

Mary Schmich



CHICAGO TRIBUNE (ILL):

February 10, 1995

Surgeon general dispute delivers D.C. doublespeak

Way out here in the boondocks, light years from the alien planet called Washington, D.C., a whole lot of us are having a hard time understanding the Henry Foster fuss.

We are not an organized group. We do not have a lobbying office. We have no phone banks or spokespersons or consultants.

We are so removed from Washington that we can never remember whether to use a comma between Washington and D.C.

We are so far outside the Beltway that we assume Beltway is a department store that specializes in discount belts.

We think a pundit is a scrawny bird best roasted on the spit and served with wild rice.

We are just ordinary people sitting out here in the boondocks sadly marveling that once again the rulers of the most powerful nation in the world are engaged in a cockfight.

You know the way they talk:

Did Bill Clinton's staff properly "vet" the nominee for surgeon general?

**In the roar they
have drowned
out the
essential
question. Would
Henry Foster be
a good surgeon
general?**

Will Bill Clinton's failure to properly vet the nominee doom his re-election chances?

Will abandoning the nominee doom his re-election chances?

Why did Clinton nominate an obstetrician, knowing that in this "political climate" a doctor who had done

even one abortion had done one too many?

Once again, they have reduced the debate to a feud. Not a feud over substance. A feud over political process.

And in the roar they have drowned out the essential question. Would Henry Foster be a good surgeon general?

Out here in the boondocks, we didn't used to spend much time thinking about the surgeon general.

Then C. Everett Koop's anti-smoking crusade made him as famous as a rock star. Joycelyn Elders perked up our ears with Latin words like "masturbate."

So now we notice surgeons general. And just last week, Henry Foster looked like he'd be a good one. Even many Republicans thought so.

Any good surgeon general is a bully, a bully on behalf of the nation's health. The most urgent health issues in this country right now involve young people and sex.

A lot of people have platitudes on these issues. Foster has programs and plans.

In 37 years as an obstetrician and gynecologist, he has fought to reduce teen pregnancy, infant mortality, sexually transmitted diseases and drug abuse. He has delivered more than 10,000 babies.

And in this long career, he has, by his count, performed 39 abortions.

After abortion was legalized but before the proliferation of abortion clinics, an obstetrician was likely to perform some abortions. It was considered, in the words of the president of the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, "part of your responsibility to your patients unless you had moral or religious objections."

Ideally, Foster would not initially have claimed to have performed fewer than a dozen. But the discrepancy is a peripheral issue. The heart of the matter is Foster's work to improve the lives of families.

Yet even before they knew Foster had performed abortions, the anti-abortion groups had their arrows aimed. "Elders Lite!" one group screamed.

Now they have been allowed to hijack Foster's nomination. They should not be blamed for that. They are doing what they believe in.

The blame falls on the politicians who have handed control over to a group that represents a minority of Americans. With a helpless shrug, they have turned over the bank keys to the bandits.

Sen. Nancy Kassebaum, the Republican from Kansas, admitted abortion shouldn't be the "litmus test" in Foster's nomination. "But," she added, "whether the White House or myself or anyone else believes it should be, it is."

It is only because the politicians in Washington allow it to be.

As the debate continues, two things should be remembered. One: Abortion is legal. Two: Most Americans want it that way.

Most Americans also wish fewer women had abortions. They wish fewer young people had sex outside marriage, wish fewer teenagers got pregnant, wish more could envision a future in which getting a job seemed as possible as having a baby.

In other words, most of us out here in the boondocks think like Henry Foster.

The Seattle Times

February 10, 1995

EDITORIALS

Defending Dr. Foster, women's privacy rights

THE anti-abortion forces attacking Dr. Henry Foster, President Clinton's nominee to be surgeon general, are attempting to turn the confirmation process into an assault on abortion rights.

If they succeed, they will have demonized a well-qualified physician because he has performed a common, legal medical procedure in caring for his patients. Under their litmus test, most doctors who specialize in women's health automatically would be disqualified from the post.

The White House has been blamed for not releasing sufficient details about Foster's abortion record. But the attack on Foster is not about untimely disclosures, it's about the fact that Foster, an obstetrician-gynecologist, has conducted any abortions at all.

In Foster's 38-year career, he has delivered 10,000 babies and carried out, he says, 39 abortions. He has been a leader in the field of teen pregnancy prevention, emphasizing the importance of abstinence and contraception. He was named a "Point of Light" in 1991 by President Bush for contributions to his community.

These facts don't matter to those who want to end legal abortion in this country. Since the Supreme Court has declared that abortion is a privacy right protected by the Constitution, anti-abortion groups have taken to ostracizing and humiliating — if not threatening — the doctors and the women.

The response of pro-choice Republicans has been disappointing. Sen. Nancy Kassebaum, chairperson of the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, supports abortion rights. Yet, instead of countering the attack from anti-choice groups, she is criticizing the White House for mishandling the nomination. Likewise, Sen. Arlen Specter, who is pro-choice, says that Foster may be disqualified if he misrepresented his record. But it is the anti-abortion organizations who have distorted the debate by focusing on one aspect of Foster's career.

More is at stake here than Foster's future in public service. The opponents want to impose their values on a public that supports the right to choose. The attack on Foster is part of the escalating war on women's privacy rights, and it is time the White House and the Senate stood up to those forces.

February 10, 1995

Foster is right for the job

Surgeon-general nominee should be judged on his whole career; Foster's mainstream record on abortion shouldn't disqualify him

As the debate rages over Henry Foster Jr., President Clinton's nominee for surgeon general, it will be easy to get caught up in a numbers game. Did he perform one abortion? A dozen? Thirty-nine?

But the relevant question here is whether performing even one legal abortion should disqualify a distinguished doctor from serving as surgeon general of the United States.

It should not.

Concentrating on the abortions Foster performed focuses attention on one small piece of his background while ignoring the sum total of his long medical career. He won recognition from former President George Bush for his work to prevent teen-age pregnancies. He has specialized in the prevention of infant mortality. His peers describe him as a brilliant and caring doctor who walks "with both feet on the ground." He has the support of the American Medical Association and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

Foster's detractors would like people to believe that his record on abortion puts him on the fringe. In fact, it does not. The head of the ob-gyn national association says a typical doctor in a 30-year practice might perform 60 to 100 abortions. Foster fits easily into that "typical" category.

He is in the mainstream in another way. He accepts that abortion should be available, but wants to see fewer performed. Speaking on "Nightline" recently, he said, "I abhor abortions. I abhor war. To me abortion is failure."

Keeping abortion legal but making it rare represents for most Americans the right answer on the abortion debate. The way to do that is to work hard to reduce unwanted pregnancies, not to ostracize doctors who perform abortions.

Not everything about Foster's nomination has been perfect. President Clinton has demonstrated yet again a failure to do his background work adequately, make an informed choice and be willing to defend it with the strength of his conviction and the power of his office.

But whether Clinton did his homework on Foster is a side issue. There are two central issues here:

1. Should a doctor who performs a legal procedure — one that most Americans agree should be available to women — be disqualified from public office?

2. Will the politicization of public health turn the surgeon general's bully pulpit into a useless echo chamber?

Foster deserves to be confirmed as surgeon general because his experience makes him ideally suited to speak with authority and compassion on teen-age pregnancies, AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases — many of the pressing health concerns facing this nation.

Foster might not be in tune with a Congress bent on reighting the abortion war or with an indecisive president. But he is in tune with Americans who understand fully the difficult choices presented by unwanted pregnancies and abortion and do not rest easy with any of them.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 1995

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH.

GREGORY FREEMAN URBAN VIEW

Foster Exposes Big-Tent Myth

SOMETHING SINISTER is going on in Washington.

That in itself is probably not surprising. Seems something sinister's always going on in Washington.

But this seems more sinister than most. It looks as if a perfectly fine nominee for surgeon general is about to get the shaft because of the efforts of some right-wing zealots.

By all accounts, Dr. Henry Foster Jr. would seem to be a good choice for surgeon general. He has a wealth of experience.



He's a former dean and acting president of Meharry Medical College in Nashville. He founded Meharry's "I Have a Future" program. It's designed to delay sexual activity among teen-agers by building their self-esteem, developing job skills, teaching sexual responsibility, self-control and abstinence. The program was named a "Point of Light" by President George Bush. Presi-

dent Bill Clinton has said that he wants Foster to lead a campaign to sharply reduce teen pregnancies.

Foster has 38 years of practice under his belt. His nomination has been praised by the American Medical Association, Planned Parenthood and Dr. Louis Sullivan, director of Health and Human Services under President George Bush. He's also received the backing of Tennessee Republican Sen. Bill Frist, though Frist has been wavering in that support in recent days.

That sort of backing would seem to say a great deal about Foster. But it's not enough — or perhaps too much — for the zealots. His support by Planned Parenthood makes some anti-abortionists see red. And instead of looking at his nomination rationally, some are actually dismissing Foster as "Elders lite," a reference to the recently ousted and controversial surgeon general, Joycelyn Elders.

In revised numbers, Foster says that he performed 39 abortions in his career. Most of those, he said, were performed in cases of rape or incest or to save the life of the mother. "I abhor abortions . . . To me, abortion is failure; I don't like failure," Foster said in an

interview on ABC's "Nightline" this week.

That seems to make no difference to the zealots, who seem to care only that he performed abortions. I wonder how many Americans would be willing to have a baby who was the result of a rape.

A major smear campaign is being put on by the zealots to defeat Foster's nomination. The spokesman for one conservative, anti-abortion group went on the radio the other day and, in an effort to draw parallels between Foster and Elders, said that Foster encouraged masturbation as part of his "I Have a Future" program. A check with that program indicated that nothing could be further from the truth.

Stampedes of ignorance such as this, filled with suggestions, innuendoes and downright lies, will make fewer and fewer good people willing to consider government appointments.

When he nominated Foster, the president said, "I'm confident that thoughtful conservatives will have the same view of Dr. Foster as Senator Frist does when they have the same opportunity to review his whole record."

That doesn't seem to be the case. Republicans in Washington seem to be leaning against Foster, largely because of the cries of the zealots.

It would be funny if it weren't so tragic. This is the Republican Party that's boasted of having a big tent, a willingness to include people of different points of view. Yet it's considering the rejection of a man who has performed abortions legally, who professes a dislike for abortion and who seems to be more than qualified for the post. That, to me, says volumes about how open the GOP really is.

I'm hopeful — though not optimistic — that Republicans will look at Foster overall and see that he is a good candidate for surgeon general. Just as it's not wise for the electorate to vote for candidates for office based on just one issue, neither is it wise for Congress to confirm or reject a nominee on just one issue.

Congress should confirm Foster, regardless of his position on abortion. That should not be a litmus test on whether he would be a good surgeon general.

After all, the surgeon general's job is not about abortion; it's about improving the health of Americans. The zealots need to stand aside, allow Foster to be confirmed and let him do the job the president wants him to do.

Ellen GOODMAN



This safe choice has become another target in the abortion war zone.

Why Foster is right for surgeon general

In the scheme of things, Dr. Henry Foster is lucky. It's his nomination that's in jeopardy, not his life.

Foster doesn't need a security guard — yet — to go about his daily practice. No one is picketing his house or targeting his family. It's only his chance to become surgeon general that's under attack. The weapons this time are the fax and the phone. The assault is merely political.

A few years ago, Foster was one of George Bush's thousand points of light. A few days ago, he became Bill Clinton's cautious pick for the bully pulpit from which Joycelyn Elders was so unceremoniously evicted.

Now it appears that this obstetrician-gynecologist — a man who delivered 10,000 babies, a former dean of a medical school and the force behind a teen-age pregnancy prevention program — also performed abortions in his 30-year practice. This safe choice has become another target in the abortion war zone.

Suddenly, Senator Bob Dole doesn't "like what I hear, what I read." Senator Orrin Hatch said there are "some very troubling things concerning his nomination." Now the pro-life movement, on the basis of a dubious transcript, claims he performed 700 abortions. The president has added an "if" to his support for the Tennesseean: "if

the facts are as I understand them to be."

Foster is losing his hold on this job. He is sliding down the verbal slippery slope that is greased so regularly by extremists in the pro-life movement.

On their slope, doctors who perform abortions are "abortion doctors" as if they were a species beyond the medical pale. "Abortion docs" are further marginalized as "abortionists" with the M. D. excised altogether. Finally they are branded as "murderers."

Through this subtle process a doctor is turned into a demon. At the very end of this slope, the bodies of Drs. David Gunn and John Britton are found in Pensacola, Fla., and two women are assassinated in Brookline, Mass.

Others doctors go to work wearing bulletproof vests and go to sleep with rifles by their beds. Many are simply scared off.

But no one has yet called Foster a "murderer." At least not in public. Nor has his name been added to the hit list of the "Deadly Dozen" distributed last month — complete with names and addresses — by the American Coalition of Life Activists.

But the push to disqualify this man from public service because he performed abortions is another attempt to make doctors outcasts. It's part of the effort to make abortion a pariah medi-

cal service, illegitimate if not illegal. It's part of the plan by opponents to target what they see as the "weak link" in abortion rights — the 3,000 or so doctors who perform most of the 1.5 million abortions a year.

If Foster is banned because he performed a legal medical procedure, then what about the others? The doctors, the nurses, the counselors, the clinic workers, indeed, the women who have had abortions? They would all, as pro-choice leader Kate Michelman said, be branded with the same scarlet "A."

I am uncomfortable with those who defend Foster because he only performed a few abortions or because he did them for the "right" reasons — for the health of the mother, for rape or incest. But if he has become a target, it does show the narrowness of this litmus test, the extremism of opponents. What would you think of an ob-gyn who had refused to save the life of the pregnant woman?

As head of the public-health service, the surgeon general is in the business of prevention. Public-health workers aren't satisfied patching and mending; they are the ones who go to the source of the problem.

In this case the source of the problem is unwanted pregnancy, especially teen-age pregnancy. The campaign he's been assigned to wage by the pres-

ident is against teen-age pregnancy. It's where Foster has spent his energy, in a program called appropriately "I Have a Future."

Doctors of Foster's generation are old enough to remember when women died from illegal abortions. They are old enough to have seen both the need for this choice and the sorrow of facing such a choice.

It's not a cliché, but a lifetime of experience, that prompts such a man to say of abortion: "My wish is that it be safe, legal and rare." It's what most Americans wish.

We live in an era when doctors are being threatened and killed. Their names are on wanted posters. Their clinics are on terrorists' maps. Yet politicians still believe they can appease the people in this increasingly radical movement.

Now Foster, a "safe choice," a man who made his mark working to reduce teen-age pregnancies, is under attack. And now we will find out which politicians have the courage to defend one doctor from the folks who make up the hit lists.

ELLEN GOODMAN writes for *The Boston Globe*. Her column is distributed by the *Washington Post Writers Group*.

If Foster's appointment hinges on the right number of abortions or the right kind of abortions, it is still a litmus test on the right to perform abortions.

Boston Globe; 2-9-95

The demonization of a doctor

ELLEN GOODMAN

In the scheme of things, Dr. Henry Foster is lucky. It's his nomination that's in jeopardy, not his life.

Foster doesn't need a security guard - yet - to go about his daily practice. No one is picketing his house or targeting his family. It's only his chance to become surgeon general that's under attack. The weapons this time are the fax and the phone, the press release and the media. The assault is political.

A few years ago Foster was one of George Bush's thousand points of light. A few days ago he became Bill Clinton's cautious pick for the bully pulpit from which Joycelyn Elders was so unceremoniously evicted.

Now it appears that this ob-gyn, a man who delivered 10,000 babies, a former dean of a medical school and the force behind a teen-age pregnancy prevention program, also performed abortions in his 30-year practice. This safe choice has become another target in the abortion war zone.

Suddenly Sen. Bob Dole doesn't "like what I hear, what I read." Sen. Orrin Hatch says there are "some very troubling things concerning his nomination." Sen. Trent Lott thinks "it is in serious trouble." Now the anti-abortion movement, on the basis of a dubious transcript, claims he performed 700 abortions. The president has added an "if" to his support for the Tennesseean: "if the facts are as I understand them to be."

Foster is losing his footing, his hold on this job. He is sliding down the verbal slippery slope that is greased so regularly by extremists in the antiabortion movement.

On their slope, doctors who perform abortions are labeled "abortion doctors" as if they were a species beyond the medical pale. "Abortion docs" are further marginalized as "abortionists" with the MD excised altogether. Finally they are branded as "murderers."

Through this subtle process a doctor is turned into a demon. At the very bottom of the slope are found the bodies of two doctors in Pensacola, Fla., and two clinic workers in Brookline, Mass. Now, other doctors go to work wearing bulletproof vests and go to sleep with rifles by their beds. Many are simply scared off.

No one has yet called the dignified 61-year-old Foster a "murderer." At least not in public. Nor has his name been added to the hit list of the "Deadly Dozen" doctors distributed just last month - complete with names and addresses - by the American Coalition of Life Activists.

But the push to disqualify this man from public service because he performed abortions is another way to make doctors outcasts. It's part of the effort to make abortion a pariah medical service - illegitimate if not illegal. It's part of the plan by opponents to win by intimidation. To target what they see as the "weak link" in abortion rights - the 8,000 or so doctors who perform most of the 1.5 million abortions a year.

If Foster is banned from public office because he performed a legal medical procedure, then what about the others? The doctors, the nurses, the counselors, the clinic workers, indeed, the women who have had abortions? They would all, as prochoice leader Kate Michelman said, be branded with the same scarlet "A."

I am uncomfortable with those who defend Foster on the grounds that he only performed a few abortions or that he did them for good reasons - for the health of the mother, for rape or incest. If his appointment hinges on the right number of abortions or the right kind of abortions, it is still a litmus test on the right to perform abortions.

As head of the Public Health Service, the surgeon general is in the business of prevention. Public health workers are the medical people who go to the source of the problem.

In this case the source of the problem at



DOROTHY AHLE ILLUSTRATION

the front of national consciousness is unwed teen-age pregnancy. This is where Foster has spent his energy, in a program called, appropriately, "I Have a Future." It's the campaign he's been assigned to wage by the president.

Doctors of Foster's generation are old enough to remember when women died from illegal abortions. They are old enough to have seen the need for this choice and old enough to have seen the sorrow of facing such a choice. It's not a cliché, but a lifetime of experience, that prompts such a man to say of abortion: "My wish is that it be safe, legal and rare."

This is what most Americans wish. How, then, did Foster become such a tempting target?

We live in an era when doctors are being threatened and killed. Their names are on wanted posters. Their clinics are on terrorists' maps. Yet politicians still believe they can appease the people in this increasingly radical movement.

Now Henry Foster, a "safe choice," a man who made his mark working to reduce teen-age pregnancies, is under attack. And now too we will find out which politicians have the courage to defend one doctor from the folks who make up the hit lists.

Ellen Goodman is a Globe columnist.

Clinton should stand by Foster

Abortion should not be the litmus test for picking the country's next surgeon general.

Critics are circling around surgeon general-nominee Dr. Henry Foster picking over the number of and reasons for the abortions he has performed. Foster initially said the number was less than a dozen, though Wednesday night he said he had performed 39.

But according to recent "revelations" (code word for the rope that may hang him) Foster supervised a test of an abortion-inducing drug in 1981 at Meharry Medical College.

This feverish scrutiny of Foster's career obscures an important point: None of his professional actions was criminal. He is not a bootlegger, a drug runner or an arms smuggler. He's an obstetrician. According to the College of Obstetricians, the majority of ob/gyn practitioners have performed abortions. Using this as a standard to select a surgeon general would mean that almost no obstetrician could get the job.

As for the drug test, it does not make Foster a mad scientist who advocates abortion. Colleges and universities test a wide variety of drugs all the time. Specific doctors test drugs in their area of expertise.

This helps the pharmaceutical companies assess a drug's safety, and it generates revenues for the schools conducting the tests.

The question to ask about Foster is whether he can be the kind of surgeon general that the country needs. Can he get a handle on American public health? Can he talk about tough issues without triggering indignant cries for his resignation? How good is his "I Have a Future" program, and what can it offer on a national level?

One person who can steer the focus back to these issues is President Clinton. Foster's candidacy is a chance for the president to explain why the nation needs a top-notch surgeon general and why Foster is that person. Whatever the nomination's fate, it should have Clinton's continuous, and aggressive support.

Foster is a medical professional who has worked extremely hard to prevent the need for abortion. He has striven to provide comprehensive medical services, reduce teen-age pregnancy, cut the infant mortality rate and promote prenatal care. Implying anything to the contrary would not only be politically manipulative, it would be a lie.

Clarion Ledger Jackson, MS 2/09/95

Foster

Nominee should be judged fairly

The protest against President Clinton's selection of Henry Foster Jr. as U.S. surgeon general because he performed some abortions plays to the politics of the matter. He also has delivered some 10,000 babies.

The fact of the matter is, as a working physician, teacher and administrator, Foster is well rounded and can speak with experience on a variety of health topics.

His confirmation should hinge on other criteria than political posturing to vocal anti-abortion groups.

Clinton should stand behind Foster's nomination

The Denver Post 2-9-96

Some anti-abortion groups are mounting a campaign against President Bill Clinton's nominee for U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. Henry Foster Jr., because he has failed their single-issue test. But Clinton should stand behind what seems like a well-qualified candidate.

Foster is no apologist for teenage sex, as his predecessor, Dr. Joycelyn Elders, was sometimes accused of being. Indeed, he has effectively preached sexual abstinence as by far the wisest and safest choice for teenagers.

But the Tennessee gynecologist and obstetrician is also realistic enough to know that not all young people will heed that advice and has also supported making information about contraceptives available to fight teen pregnancy and disease.

Foster has thus doubly shown that he understands that the best way to reduce the need for abortion is to prevent unwanted pregnancies in the first place. Indeed, Foster's work to curb teenage pregnancies caused him to be honored as a "Point of Light" by former president George Bush.

Foster, 61, has shown his own dedication to the "right to life" by delivering 10,000 babies. Along the way, he has performed — by his own account — about a dozen abortions, or about one abortion for every 800 pregnancies he supervised.

Some of those cases, according to Foster, were necessary to save the life of the mother. The others involved rape or incest. Those are exceptions permitted by even the most restrictive anti-abortion policies — such as the Hyde amendment, which bars the use of federal funds to pay for abortion except in cases of rape, incest or where the life of the mother would be endangered by carrying the fetus to term.

House Republicans, knowing a political minefield when they see it, wisely left the abortion issue out of their highly publicized "Contract with America." Senate Republicans — who must decide whether to confirm Foster — would be equally

wise to judge him on his professional qualifications rather by an anti-abortion litmus test. But do they really want to put their party on record as wishing to outlaw abortion even when it is necessary to save the life of the mother? Does the GOP really plan to argue that even victims of rape and incest should be required to bear the fruit of such brutal attacks to term?

The charges raised against Foster to date do not seem to be convincing. Anti-abortion groups have circulated a transcript from a 1978 meeting of an ethics advisory board to the former U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare quoting him as saying, "I have done a lot of amniocentesis and therapeutic abortions, probably near 700."

Foster, while admittedly present at the meeting, denies having said that and suggests the statement may have been made by another participant. But even if he had made such a statement 15 years ago, it would not necessarily refute his own account that he has performed abortions only in the most extreme cases. Amniocentesis is merely a routine procedure to see if a fetus is developing normally. Even if he had supervised 700 such diagnostic tests, it would be quite possible that only a handful of them preceded an actual abortion that he performed.

Likewise, charges by anti-abortion groups that Foster led a study in the early 1980s to test do-it-yourself abortion drugs are not disturbing. He was chairman of the Obstetrics and Gynecology Department at Meharry Medical College in Nashville at the time the college was chosen to supervise the study, which was financed by the Upjohn Co. Far from trying to hide his role in that research, he published articles detailing the study findings in professional journals.

Unless it can be shown that Foster has misrepresented his record in a major way, he seems well qualified by training, experience and temperament to serve as Surgeon General.

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IN OUR OPINION**SURGEON GENERAL***Don't allow anti-abortionists undue influence*

The nomination of Henry Foster Jr. as U.S. Surgeon General isn't really in trouble because he has equivocated about how many abortions he has performed in his 30-year career. Nor is it jeopardized by legitimate doubts about his character.

Rather, Dr. Foster's nomination is in trouble because the fundamentalist Right and its allies in the Republican-majority Congress seek once again to force their agenda on the rest of the country — and to force a Democratic president to cede his authority to fill a high-ranking position.

Anti-abortion activists cite documents purportedly showing that Dr. Foster directed a study in the 1980s of drugs that would let women induce their own abortions. The evidence of the extent of his participation isn't as clear as these opponents claim, but the point remains: Abortion may be controversial in this country, but it is not illegal, nor should it be.

So far, President Bill Clinton has stood

by his nominee. He should continue to do so, even if he ultimately loses the nomination battle. Public support for Dr. Foster now would put activists on the Right on notice that the president of the United States won't roll over every time they frown. If, though, the president does plan to waffle, he might as well cut Dr. Foster loose now and spare him further embarrassment.

When President Clinton nominated Dr. Foster to replace Joycelyn Elders — who was shoved aside herself for being too controversial — he selected a candidate with a distinguished record of public service. Senate Republican Leader Bob Dole acknowledges that Dr. Foster has "done a lot of good things," including strenuous efforts to deal with teen pregnancy.

It would be a serious mistake to blow Dr. Foster's nomination out of the water now, because of an over-hyped, over-politicized issue that does not truly reflect on his abilities, his character or his qualifications to become Surgeon General.

Painful process for Foster

IT is flatly agonizing to see one of Nashville's most respected professionals and community leaders, Dr. Henry Foster, become the victim of character assassination.

The day after President Clinton named Foster as his nominee for surgeon general, some anti-abortion groups began picking him apart.

One group said that Foster had performed "nearly 700 amniocentesis and therapeutic abortions." Another said that Foster had been involved with an experimental self-abortion study in the early 1980s.

The White House has maintained that Foster has performed about a dozen abortions in the span of his career, and that most of those pregnancies were the result of rape or incest, or threatened the life of the woman.

Worse yet, the vastly different characterizations of Foster's career have led to questions about this man's veracity and his honor.

Those in Washington and throughout the nation who hear the reports — both pro and con — on Foster may not know whom to believe. There should be no doubt in this state. And there should be no doubt in Tennessee's congressional delegation.

Fred Thompson said this week that he had not met Foster. That's too bad for both of them.

Still, Thompson and the nominee are bound to have scores of mutual friends, people throughout this community who have worked with Foster, who can vouch for his high personal and professional standards.

And Bill Frist, as a fellow physician, has known Foster for years. He is certainly well aware of Foster's contributions to Meharry Medical College, to

Frist, Thompson can play crucial role

health care, and to this community.

These two Tennessee senators have a responsibility to assure their colleagues in the Senate that Foster is an honest man, whose character and integrity are beyond reproach.

Frist could play a particularly crucial role. He now sits on the Senate's Labor and Human Resource Committee — the committee that will hold hearings on the Foster nomination. And as the Senate's only physician, any comments that he might make about the practice of an obstetrician/gynecologist, and the likelihood of an ob/gyn having to terminate a pregnancy would be especially important.

All of the questions about Foster's medical practice should be answered in the Senate committee hearing. But those questions can be asked and answered without impugning the character of this distinguished, gracious and caring man.

Tennessee's two senators can help their colleagues explore Foster's background without subjecting him to ridicule. If they accomplish that, they will have done this entire nation a great service. ■

OUR OPINION

Don't judge Foster on one issue

Social conservatives who are rushing to judgment on President Clinton's nomination of Dr. Henry Foster Jr. to succeed Dr. Joycelyn Elders would do well to pause, take a deep breath and recall a name from the not-so-distant past — Robert Bork.

When he was nominated to the U.S. Supreme Court in 1987, Bork was savaged by liberals who focused on a few of his most controversial legal decisions and writings while ignoring the bulk of what was a distinguished judicial record. His nomination was defeated by a Democratic-controlled Senate that expanded its confirmation role beyond what was intended by the Constitution by rejecting an otherwise qualified nominee on narrow philosophical grounds.

Today, the shoe is on the other foot. There's a Democrat in the White House and the Senate is controlled by Republicans, many of whom seem fixated on the fact that Dr. Foster has performed a number of abortions over 35 years of practicing medicine.

While Dr. Foster's unclear record on abortion is a part of the confirmation equation, it is only a small part. The Senate's 45-member anti-abortion bloc would be better served to look at the totality of Dr. Foster's record and perhaps even celebrate the fact that Clinton is replacing the unfocused, rambling and generally missionless



Foster

Elders with a doctor who actually recognizes a national health problem when he sees one.

Dr. Foster, the acting director of Meharry Medical College in Nashville, has spent a good portion of his career in the trenches of the war against teen-age pregnancy. He is best known for Meharry's successful "I Have a Future" program, which teaches teen-agers in two Nashville housing projects to delay sex and childbearing. President Clinton has asked Dr. Foster to lead the administration's campaign against teen pregnancy.

After two years of Dr. Elders careening from one issue to the next, and all of them being basically inconsequential to the health of most Americans, it would be refreshing to see a Surgeon General who has some credibility on a topic of national importance. There are few problems more vexing than the epidemic of teen pregnancy, which is related to other social problems such as juvenile crime, welfare reform and high-school dropout rates. (See related editorial and Tim Giago's column on this page.)

Not everyone will agree with all of Dr. Foster's stands on abortion, contraceptives or sex education. But at least he would come to the office with a specific mission and credentials to match.

Dr. Foster deserves to be judged on the totality of his medical experience and the strength of his commitment to public health. If that totality is weak, so be it. But don't "Bork" a nominee on a single issue.

Good medicine from Dr. Foster

The antiabortion movement is working to have the nomination of Dr. Henry W. Foster as surgeon general "shot down," an unfortunate term in an era when doctors are being murdered for performing a constitutionally protected medical procedure.

As an obstetrician-gynecologist for 30 years in Nashville, Foster delivered more than 10,000 babies and performed an unspecified number of abortions. He has been active in Planned Parenthood. That's enough to get Gary Bauer of the Christian Right's Family Research Council to call him "Elders Light," after his deposed predecessor, Joycelyn Elders, and to urge Republicans to "go to the mat" to oppose him.

Foster says he wants to use the surgeon general's office as a bully pulpit on the importance of preventing teen-age pregnancies. With all of the bleating from conservatives about unwed teen mothers, the Senate Republicans charged with confirming his nomination should be cheering that idea. Foster's "I have a Future" program in Nashville encourages young people to practice abstinence,

develop job skills and gain some self-respect, but to use a condom if they do become sexually active. These are common-sense alternatives to the unwanted pregnancies that abortion opponents say they want to avoid.

It matters little how many abortions Foster has performed. The current press obsession with the numbers - reports have ranged from one to less than a dozen to perhaps hundreds - is being fanned by opponents who want to trip him up. In a pattern of feeding frenzies we've seen - from whether Bill Clinton inhaled to whether George Bush was "out of the loop" on Iran-Contra - the sin becomes not the action itself but whether the public figure has been "forthcoming" about it.

The Clinton administration is said to be wary about turning the Foster nomination into a "litmus test" on abortion. Why not allow Foster's opponents a chance to stand foursquare against a woman's right to choose? A confirmation battle on those grounds would not place them in the mainstream of American opinion.

TIMES PICAYUNE (LA) 2-8-95

Dr. Foster and teen pregnancies

It is encouraging that President Clinton's nominee to succeed the fired Dr. Joycelyn Elders as surgeon general is an obstetrician-gynecologist who has been in the forefront of the nation's fight against teen pregnancies.

In tapping the 61-year-old Dr. Henry Foster Jr., who has been dean and acting president of Meharry Medical College, Mr. Clinton has served notice that a national campaign to combat teen pregnancies, which he mentioned in the State of the Union message, will be one of the appointee's top concerns.

But the nomination is already embroiled in controversy because the White House waited until a day after last Thursday's announcement to reveal that Dr. Foster performed fewer than a dozen hospital abortions, mostly to save the mother's life or in cases of rape or incest. An unspecified number apparently were elective abortions. The White House Tuesday said Dr. Foster was going over his records to provide precise information.

And opponents of his nomination revealed Tuesday that Dr. Foster headed research in the early 1980s on a drug to induce early abortions.

The White House said it was aware when it nominated Foster of his abortion-related work. Yet withholding its knowledge of that work was another example of bad judgment by the Clinton administration. With egg on its face, the White House sought to offset criticism from conservatives by focusing on the 10,000 babies Dr. Foster delivered during a career of nearly 30 years and his work to promote abstinence among teen-agers. But anti-abortion groups and their supporters in Congress mounted a campaign against Dr. Foster.

In the unfolding debate it is important to keep in mind that the main reason he was nominated was the program he founded to fight teen-age pregnancy in the housing developments of Nashville, Tenn. At the heart of his "I Have a Future" program is getting

across to kids that it is in their best interest to delay sexual activity.

The Nashville effort focuses on building self-esteem, developing job skills, learning self-control and dealing with conflicts in relationships. Twice a week, children also can get physical exams, screening for sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy tests and contraceptives.

Another aspect of Dr. Foster's career being targeted by conservatives is his long ties to the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, which provides abortion counseling. Gary Bauer, president of the conservative Family Research Council, called Dr. Foster "Elders Lite" and said he hoped senators would "go to the mat" in opposing his nomination.

But Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, while criticizing the White House's handling of the nomination, which he feels is in jeopardy, said Dr. Foster has "done a lot of good things" on teen-age pregnancy and should be given a fair hearing.

In the forefront of those strongly supportive of Dr. Foster are the American Medical Association, Dr. Louis Sullivan, secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services under President Bush, and Sen. Bill Frist, R-Tenn., a Nashville transplant surgeon.

Dr. Foster brings to the high-profile but minor federal post experience in dealing with the problems of pregnant teen-agers in their surroundings. The purpose of the neighborhood clinics he founded in Nashville is to prevent pregnancies by making abstinence the central message.

In the Senate's nomination hearings, such questions as the abortions performed by Dr. Foster and his association with Planned Parenthood must be weighed fairly in the perspective of a medical career marked by decades of community leadership.

2/8/95 Times Picayune

FOSTER NOMINATION

St. Paul Pioneer Press, 2/8/95

Defy the extremists; stand by nominee

The social ultraconservatives assailing Dr. Henry Foster's nomination as surgeon general demonstrate a commitment to the extremism of anti-abortion politics. Common decency, be hanged.

The White House must stand up to this assault and allow the nomination to be considered on Foster's merits to serve the president as a physician, administrator and leader on public health policy.

For its part, the White House could have helped itself and Foster's prospects by talking through his background in absolutely forthright terms with Senate leaders. The White House should have known that Foster, an obstetrician-gynecologist, would draw immediate fire because in the course of his practice he has performed abortions. Once again, the White House underestimated the fervor of its opposition.

Never mind that Foster is noted for working with pregnancy prevention programs or has delivered 10,000 babies during a 30-year medical career. The far right was bound to zero in, demonizing Foster in order to advance a narrow ideological agenda against sexuality education, birth control and abortion for any reason.

In the twisted ways of Washington, the central issue here is something other than Foster or his qualifications to be surgeon general. The issue is whether the hard right will score a guerrilla war victory over mainstream governance. That can be accomplished by continuing to terrorize the administration until it withdraws the Foster nomination before confirmation hearings. Or the extortion plot can play out in the Senate, where other Clinton nominees were chopped to pieces even under Democratic rule.

The Clinton administration must not cut and run this time. It has a basic obligation to govern, an obligation being challenged by the extremists targeting the Foster nomination as surgeon general.

**White House
must stand
up to assault,
allow
nomination to
be considered
on merits.**

Balt. Sun; 2-8-95

Winning by Intimidation

By ELLEN GOODMAN

Boston.

In the scheme of things, Dr. Henry Foster is lucky. It's his nomination that's in jeopardy, not his life. Dr. Foster doesn't need a security guard — yet — to go about his daily practice. No one is picketing his house or targeting his family. It's only his chance to become surgeon general that's under attack. The weapons this time are the fax and the phone, the press release and the media. The assault is political.

A few years ago, Dr. Foster was one of George Bush's thousand points of light. A few days ago, he became Bill Clinton's cautious pick for the bully pulpit from which Joycelyn Elders was so unceremoniously evicted. Now it appears that this ob-gyn, a man who delivered 10,000 babies, a former dean of a medical school and the force behind a teenage pregnancy prevention program, also performed abortions in his 30-year practice. This safe choice has become another target in the abortion war zone.

Suddenly, Sen. Bob Dole doesn't "like what I hear, what I read." Sen. Orrin Hatch says there are "some very troubling things concerning his nomination." Sen. Trent Lott thinks "it is in serious trouble." Now the pro-life movement, on the basis of a dubious transcript claims he performed 700 abortions. The president has added an "if" to his support for the Tennessean: "if the facts are as I understand them to be."

Dr. Foster is losing his footing. He is sliding down the verbal slippery slope that is greased so regularly by extremists in the pro-life movement.

On their slope, doctors who perform abortions are labeled "abortion doctors" as if they were a species beyond the medical pale. "Abortion

docs" are further marginalized as "abortionists" with the M.D. excised altogether. Finally they are branded as "murderers." Thus a doctor is turned into a demon. At the bottom of the slope lie the bodies of two doctors in Pensacola, Florida, and two clinic workers in Brookline, Massachusetts. Now, other doctors go to work wearing bulletproof vests and go to sleep with rifles by their beds. Many are simply scared off.

No one has yet called the dignified 61-year-old Dr. Foster a "murderer." At least not in public. Nor has his name been added to the hit list of the "Deadly Dozen" doctors distributed just last month — complete with names and addresses — by the American Coalition of Life Activists.

But the push to disqualify this man from public service because he performed abortions is another way to make doctors outcasts. It's part of the effort to make abortion a pariah medical service — illegitimate if not illegal. It's part of the plan by opponents to win by intimidation. To target what they see as the "weak link" in abortion rights — the 3,000 or so doctors who perform most of the 1.5 million abortions a year.

If Dr. Foster is banned from public office because he performed a legal medical procedure, then what about the others? The doctors, the nurses, the counselors, the clinic workers, indeed, the women who have had abortions? They would all, as pro-choice leader Kate Michelman said, be branded with the same scarlet "A."

I am uncomfortable with those who defend Dr. Foster on the grounds that he only performed a few abortions or that he did them for good reasons — for the health of the mother, for rape or incest. If his ap-

pointment hinges on the right number of abortions or the right kind of abortions, it is still a litmus test on the right to perform abortions.

As head of the public health service, the surgeon general is in the business of prevention. Public-health workers are the medical people who go to the source of the problem. In this case the source of the problem at the front of national consciousness is unwed teen-age pregnancy. This is where Dr. Foster has spent his energy, in a program called appropriately, "I Have a Future." It's the campaign he's been assigned to wage by the president.

Doctors of his generation are old enough to remember when women died from illegal abortions. They are old enough to have seen the need for this choice and old enough to have seen the sorrow of facing such a choice. It's not a cliché, but a lifetime of experience, that prompts such a man to say of abortion: "My wish is that it be safe, legal and rare."

This is what most Americans wish. How then did Dr. Foster become such a tempting target?

We live in an era when doctors are being threatened and killed. Their names are on Wanted Posters. Their clinics are on terrorists' maps. Yet politicians still believe they can appease the people in this increasingly radical movement.

Now Henry Foster, a "safe choice," a man who made his mark working to reduce teen-age pregnancies, is under attack. And now too we will find out which politicians have the courage to defend one doctor from the folks who make up the hit lists.

Ellen Goodman is a syndicated columnist.

Seattle Post-Intelligencer

February 8, 1995

Foster merits confirmation

Republicans in Congress are raising an unnecessary and distracting fuss over the fact that President Clinton's nominee to be the next surgeon general has performed some abortions — said to be about a dozen — during his 30-year career as a physician.

Dr. Henry Foster, 61, acting director of Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tenn., is an obstetrician whose practice has been widely recognized for his successful work to curb teen-age pregnancies. For this Foster earned a "Point of Light" award from the program founded by former President George Bush.

Foster's work with Planned Parenthood and the fact that he performed some abortions is drawing fire from religious ideologues and members of the right-to-life movement who vow to defeat his nomination. The White House may have enflamed the opposition by not disclosing up-front that Foster had performed legal abortions. Yet it is as sure as God made green apples that the anti-abortion forces would have rallied to fight the Foster appointment anyway.

It would be naive to assert that the post of surgeon general of the United States is not a political one and therefore politics and ideology have no place in the selection and confirmation process for people nominated for the job. So politics

and ideology, however misguided, do bear upon this and all presidential appointments. But Foster appears to be well qualified and well suited for the job.

His program in Nashville directed at teen-agers is named "I Have a Future." It operates in two housing projects and advocates delaying sex and childbearing as important to the development of successful lives. There have been few pregnancies among the teens in the program, which began in 1987, and many have finished high school and gone on to higher education.

With teen-age pregnancy among the nation's most serious problems, Foster's leadership in this troublesome area would be welcome indeed.

That he has performed abortions hardly seems a disqualification. They were performed to save the lives of mothers, he claims, or involved cases of rape or incest. Over the course of his medical career he has delivered more than 10,000 babies.

Given the overwhelming support of Americans for a woman's right to decide for herself whether to undergo an abortion, Foster's limited performance of the procedure cannot be held to be outside the mainstream. The abortion issue, therefore, is not a legitimate reason for rejecting Foster's nomination.

Clinton must stand by his choice

The White House ought to be ashamed for fumbling yet another high-profile appointment. Just the same, President Clinton has no reason to be ashamed of his selection of Dr. Henry Foster Jr. to be surgeon general.

Any connection with abortion is bound to attract controversy these days. Clinton's aides should have been sufficiently sensitive to that political fact of life to try to make certain how many times and under what circumstances Foster performed the procedure — so as to avoid any impression they were trying to mislead Congress or the public.

It should have come as no surprise that Foster performed an occasional abortion during his 30-year career of delivering babies. Many obstetricians do.

But White House aides mistakenly told Sen. Nancy Kassebaum (R-Kan.), chairwoman of a committee that will consider Foster's appointment, that he had performed only one abortion.

In fact, when Foster checked his files, he found the correct number was nearly a dozen,

all of them perfectly legal and most of them therapeutic. His record in that regard is no more a disqualification for surgeon general than a lawyer's representation of controversial clients would rule him or her out to be attorney general.

Ultimately, what matters is the totality of Foster's medical practice and his service to his community. From all accounts, he has been a conscientious physician, a respected educator and the originator of an admired program to reduce teen pregnancies in Nashville. The American Medical Association and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists support his nomination.

A medical professional with Foster's credentials deserves a fair confirmation hearing, not a witch hunt arranged by abortion

foes. He also deserves the unstinting support of the White House, which is notorious for abandoning potentially difficult nominees. Clinton, who campaigned for the presidency as a supporter of women's rights to choose, dares not back away from that principle now.



Associated Press

Henry Foster and President Clinton

EDITORIALS

Message to Clinton: Stand By Your Man

MUCH AS Dr. C. Everett Koop led a highly visible national campaign against smoking, Dr. Henry Foster Jr. could effectively wage a battle against teenage pregnancy — if given the chance.

But anti-abortion forces are seeking to reduce President Clinton's laudable nomination of Foster as surgeon general to the single issue of how many pregnancies the physician has terminated.

***Abortion
foes have
reduced the
surgeon
general
nomination
to a single
issue***

They ignore that in an illustrious 30-year career he was the respected dean of Meharry Medical College in Nashville. They ignore that he is one of the nation's leading authorities on reducing infant mortality and teenage drug abuse.

They ignore that he delivered 10,000 babies. They ignore that he spearheaded a model program to deal with the national crisis of teen pregnancy.

The 61-year-old obstetrician and gynecologist has derisively been called "Elders Lite" by Gary Bauer, president of the Family Research Council, a conservative think tank. Bauer referred to Dr. Joycelyn Elders, the ousted surgeon general whose tenure was marked by controversial statements on legalizing drugs, abortion and, finally, masturbation.

Conservative commentator Patrick Bu-

chanan called Foster "a part-time abortionist" who is "de facto, unqualified to ascend the bully pulpit of surgeon general and lecture as a moral teacher."

Buchanan ignores the fact that far from committing a crime, Foster performed a procedure that most Americans believe should be available and that is a protected, constitutional right. Whether he supervised a dozen abortions, as he says, or more, as right-to-lifers claim, abortions were a minuscule, but highly proper, part of his practice.

Although the Clinton administration has handled some aspects of Foster's nomination with characteristic clumsiness, White House staff blunders should not be used to defeat a man of distinction. Foster could serve the country well, especially in employing the surgeon general's office to speak against teenage pregnancy and in replicating the "I Have a Future" program he founded in two Nashville public housing developments. The program, which now serves about 150 teenagers a week, attempts to stem teenage pregnancies by stressing abstinence, responsibility, conflict resolution and job skills.

In Clintonesque fashion, the president in recent days has shown signs of wavering. But, both in terms of policy and of politics, it would be disastrous for him to wilt before the high-pressure tactics of right-wingers and loudmouth talk-show hosts. Dr. Foster is an esteemed physician accused of nothing more than carrying out one of the duties of his profession. If Clinton folds, both he and the country will be the losers.

CONGRESS AND HENRY FOSTER

Cowardice at his convictions

WHAT do you want in a public servant? Someone who is intelligent enough to have strong convictions and courageous enough to act according to those beliefs?

If that sounds good, you had better tell Congress because something is replacing those obvious attributes when it comes to filling high-profile public jobs.

The main requirement for winning Senate confirmation these days is that a person has never said or done anything that might have upset a special interest group. Inoffensiveness is an asset.

Not inoffensiveness in the sense of being able to disagree without being disagreeable. No. The object is to have lived a low-profile, no-paper-trail life. The goal is to have lived without doing, writing or saying anything — ever — that might ruffle the feathers of some politically active group.

Possessing a resume of J.Q. Milquet is particularly important when the word "abortion" blazes onto the scene.

As evidence we offer Dr. Henry Foster Jr.

President Clinton's nominee for the post of surgeon general was widely praised last week. If the endorsements of the American Medical Association and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists weren't enough, he also had the tacit smile of the Bush administration, which had named him one of a "1,000 Points of Light."

Foster was best known for a teen-pregnancy prevention program called "I Have a Future." The unassailable logic and morality behind the idea was that kids

should be taught to delay teen-age sex and child-rearing for their own good. Foster says his first priority in counseling teen-agers is to stress abstinence.

That is undeniably a message America needs to hear.

But America may not get that lesson from Dr. Foster. The reason is that during a career in which he delivered more than 10,000 babies, Foster also terminated fewer than a dozen pregnancies. One could argue that the numbers are in line with the nation's attitude toward abortion: that it should be legally available, but rare.

His actions also reflect the actions of a man who was more concerned with providing his patients with complete medical services than in remaining uncontroversial enough to someday be confirmed to a government post. A post, ironically, from which he could preach a message that would decrease the demand for abortions.

Now that the facts have hit the news, Foster is sinking fast. Senators are falling all over themselves trying to back away from a nominee who shows more integrity than they can stomach. Excuses fly like confetti: The Clinton administration should have told us, they say. We should have been warned that we might be asked to take a difficult position.

But that isn't really the point.

Foster's problem is that he did something out of conscience and conviction that some people disagree with.

He no longer fits the narrow definition of what one must be to pass the scrutiny of the pressure groups that make Congress cower.

Judge Foster on Qualifications

If the Senate rejects President Clinton's choice for U.S. surgeon general, it should do so on merit—not for the lame excuse that the nominee has performed abortions.

Yet that is the reason for mounting conservative opposition to Dr. Henry Foster Jr., whom Clinton has asked to lead a national campaign against teen pregnancy.

Foster, acting director of the Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tenn., has delivered about 10,000 babies during a 30-year career as an obstetrician-gynecologist. He also performed "fewer than 12" abortions, mostly on victims of rape or incest, and when the mother's life was in danger.

Anti-abortion forces are rallying opposition to Foster for performing abortions, and for serving on the board of Planned Parenthood. As a result, Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole (R-Kan.) now says Foster will face "some difficulty."

Too bad. Instead of narrowly focusing on a single issue, Foster's detractors ought to consider his many qualifications. Foster is widely known for his "I Have a Future" program to reduce pregnancy among teens in public housing in Nashville. Preventing teen pregnancy, research shows, is critical to help reduce associated problems, including welfare dependency, child abuse and neglect.

We urge President Clinton to hang tough on Foster's nomination. Whatever one may think about abortion, fact is it's legal. A qualified professional ought not be rejected for public service simply because he provided a legal medical procedure.

Good choice for surgeon general

BY ANY reasonable yardstick, Henry Foster is amply qualified to become the nation's next surgeon general. He deserves to be judged on his merits as a physician and educator. Congressional Republicans trying to turn his nomination into a litmus test on abortion do the cause of public health no favor.

Foster's merits appear to be considerable. He's head of Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tenn.; has been an obstetrician and gynecologist for 30 years; and developed a widely admired program aimed at teaching inner-city teenagers to postpone sex and childbearing.

He has, in short, just the mix of academic credentials and real-world experience needed for this bully pulpit role. Unless some hitherto unknown blot on his record turns up, the Senate ought to confirm him as President Clinton's choice to succeed the controversial Joycelyn Elders.

Some GOP congressional leaders think they have found that blot in reports that Foster performed

abortions. But Foster estimates the number at "fewer than a dozen," compared to the 10,000 babies he has delivered. And those abortions, he says, were primarily in cases of rape or incest or to save the mother's life — the three circumstances for which even the majority of abortion foes usually make allowances.

Perhaps the president can be faulted for not conveying that information to Congress beforehand; where abortion is concerned, nothing is simple. But this seems to be a forgivable omission. Moreover, it is not as if Foster has been engaged in illegal activity; abortion has been recognized as a constitutionally protected right since 1973. And much of the nominee's public health advocacy work has focused on preventing the need for abortions in the first place.

Clinton, who has an unfortunate history of backing away from nominees when the going gets rough, should stand his ground, lest he once again look as if he lacks the courage of his convictions.



HENRY FOSTER

Foster shares goals of many of his critics

MEMBERS of Congress who might be reluctant about Dr. Henry Foster's nomination as surgeon general should recognize that their goals and his are the same.

Foster was an inspired choice of President Clinton to replace the controversial Joycelyn Elders as the nation's most visible health advocate. Foster's record of service strikes at the very heart of what many members of the new Congress, including conservative Republicans, have been advocating.

His "I Have a Future" program, aimed at curbing teen pregnancy, has targeted at-risk young people, instilling in them a sense of responsibility. The program was hailed by the Bush administration as one of its 1,000 Points of Light.

Meanwhile, Foster established a highly respected reputation as an administrator, serving at one time as acting president of Meharry Medical College.

As an obstetrician/gynecologist, Foster's profession is helping to give life. He estimates he has delivered about 10,000 babies.

Soon after he was nominated by Mr. Clinton, however, some critics focused on the fact that Foster has performed a dozen or so abortions in his career. According to the White House, the pregnancies in most of those cases had been caused by rape or incest, or has threatened the life of the woman.

Some strong anti-abortion activists seem to want to use those dozen abortions to portray Foster as an abortionist. He is not.

His anti-pregnancy program for teens teaches self-esteem. It also happens to offer contraceptives to young people who are determined to be sexually active. But to hear his detractors, one would think the program is nothing but a condom-distribution agency. It isn't.

Foster has a long-standing association with the Planned Parenthood program, serving as a board member. But to hear his opponents, one would think Planned Parenthood is nothing but an abortion factory. It isn't. It is a health service agency.

Doctor's efforts fight teen pregnancy, welfare

Abortion opponents are expected to lobby Congress about Foster's nomination, which is certainly their right. But before lawmakers make up their minds about Foster, they need to examine all of the doctor's lengthy resume — in context — not just the footnotes.

After they do, they will find that this nation has few physicians who have waged the kind of successful war against teen pregnancy that Foster has waged.

Lawmakers, no doubt, will be bombarded with information from Foster's supporters as well as his critics. But if they want to learn about Foster's impact, they should simply ask the kids who have benefited from Foster's program.

Plenty of those young people can be found here in Nashville.

A great deal of the conservative pitch in the past several months has been to get families off public assistance. Here's a man who has been active in trying to realize that very goal. One of the surest, shortest roads to welfare dependency today is through a teen pregnancy.

Prevent the pregnancy — and at the same time, underscore the need for responsible choices — and welfare can be avoided.

The White House could have given its nominee more backing by being more precise with the information about the abortions that Foster had performed. Surely White House officials realized that by nominating an ob/gyn, the issue of abortion would arise. No one should hide from the facts.

But to oppose Foster without taking a close look at what he has done, and what he stands for, would be a disservice. If he is rejected, it would not only be a loss for Foster and the White House. It would be a loss for a nation that could use the talent, energy and the personal skills of such a devoted man. ■

Star Trib.; 2-7-95

Surgeon general

The sound selection of Henry Foster Jr.

Faced with a firestorm over his choice for surgeon general, President Clinton kept his cool. He needs to maintain that admirable attitude, as he did Sunday and Monday in statements reaffirming support for his nominee.

Opposition to Dr. Henry Foster Jr. was inevitable. Foster's superior qualifications did nothing to lessen the ardor of critics who immediately lashed out at his failure to conform to their particular definitions of family values. When it was later noted that Foster had performed several abortions, opposition grew. The result is that the nomination is in trouble, for no legitimate reason.

In contrast, there are sound reasons to endorse Clinton's selection. Among them is Foster's success in combatting teenage pregnancy in Tennessee. His means to that end is an after-school program that combines medical services and family-life classes with tutoring and job training. The emphasis is on teenage sexual abstinence, but youngsters unwilling to practice it are given contraceptives. By all accounts, the program has been a success.

Applause for Foster's nomination from the likes of Louis Sullivan, secretary of Health and Human Services under President Bush, is therefore as unsurprising as the criticism. Foster's career includes service as president of a pre-

dominantly black medical college and as a member of a Planned Parenthood advisory board, to say nothing of his successful practice of medicine.

Perversely, Foster's distinguished 30-year record in medicine provokes the most virulent of the overheated opposition. Critics seem as appalled that a gynecologist-obstetrician has performed a few of the medically routine, legal procedures called abortion as they would if he had never delivered babies. Foster says he has performed about a dozen abortions and perhaps 10,000 deliveries. If his abortion record has any relevance at all to his appointment, it is in a proportion no greater than that same 12-to-10,000 ratio.

The real relevance is the ability Foster would display as surgeon general, who in Clinton's sensible view should lead the campaign against teen pregnancy. Foster's ability appears impressive. Perhaps confirmation hearings will show unsuspected flaws, but nothing yet known would justify rejecting the nominee or withdrawing his name.

Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole differs with Foster's philosophy but praises his accomplishments. Moreover, "... we shouldn't shoot down somebody before they've even had a hearing," he said. His colleagues should follow Dole's advice.

Let the good doctor be heard

If Dr. Henry W. Foster Jr. had made a career as an abortion clinic operator, the rush to criticize his selection as the next surgeon general would not seem out of the ordinary.

If he were prominent at one end of the abortion-debate spectrum, President Clinton would be taking the heat he'd asked for by forwarding such a vulnerable nominee to a Republican-controlled Senate quite respectful of the fact that abortion remains anathema to many Americans.

In fact, however, the Tennessee obstetrician-gynecologist, whom President Clinton picked last week to replace Dr. Joycelyn Elders, made a name for himself by delivering babies—thousands and thousands of them—and by preaching abstinence to teenagers in two Nashville housing projects.

By all accounts, he is pretty far from a specialist in abortions, having performed, in his words, "fewer than a dozen" in a 30-year career.

Yet it is the abortions and the fact Foster serves on the board of Planned Parenthood of Tennessee that have inflamed anti-abortion groups and a number of Republican lawmakers altogether too eager to rush to judgment on the surgeon general nominee.

Sen. Dan Coats of Indiana, for one, called Foster "a former abortionist" and predicted a battle over his confirmation. Sen. Trent Lott of Mississippi said, "I

do think it is in serious trouble."

Wait a minute here, senators. Let the good doctor have his day in the legislative hearing room first.

And in keeping with custom on such nominations, let the president have the surgeon general of his choice unless strong evidence emerges to show that he is unqualified.

That Foster performed abortions—most of them, he said, in cases involving rape or incest or danger to the mother's life—ought not automatically disqualify him.

Abortion is a legal medical procedure, after all, despite its opponents' ardent wishes to the contrary. It would be unusual for a veteran physician to be free of any experience with it.

Members of the Senate, where the Foster nomination will survive or die, ought to withhold judgment until after hearings. They should weigh the doctor's total record, too, including the I Have a Future program he started in Nashville to urge teenagers to delay sexual relations and childbearing.

"My view is we shouldn't shoot down somebody before he's even had a hearing," Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole said.

Quite right. If they want to do the fair, responsible thing, critics of Dr. Foster who have zeroed in on his "fewer than a dozen" abortions will hold their fire.

INDIANAPOLIS STAR (IN); FEBRUARY 7, 1995

DR. FOSTER

Two intransigent forces target a worthy nominee

Two elements are at play in the argument over Dr. Henry Foster's nomination as U.S. surgeon general: whether anyone who supports a woman's right to choose abortion can serve the government, and whether the president's nominees for any job can survive the assaults launched on them.

Anti-abortion forces are masterful at setting a tone that implies abortion is a crime. It is not. Still, their shrillness makes lawmakers — even pro-choice ones — run for cover, which they've found in Dr. Foster's initial difficulty at estimating how many abortions he has performed.

Senators hide behind claims that Dr. Foster jeopardized his "credibility." But why did he even have to count the abortions he'd done? At what number would he be an abortionist rather than an obstetrician-gynecologist who offers a range of services to women? And if, by any standard, he were an abortionist, why would performing a legal procedure disqualify him?



Dr. Henry Foster

The country demands government action against unwed pregnancy, especially among teenagers. Dr. Foster seems perfectly positioned to understand the spectrum of issues involved. But Americans and their lawmakers still seem to want to believe that the stickiest issues facing teenagers are whether they'll make the homecoming court or the football team.

The broader question is whether Bill Clinton's nominees — and the president himself — can survive the attacks. The White House staff takes repeated flak for poor advance scrutiny of nominees such as Dr. Foster, but you have to wonder whether anyone could run the gauntlet of litmus tests devised by one special-interest group after another.

The heat on Dr. Foster's credibility is only to keep the light away from the real travesties: that abortion opponents are seizing veto power over more and more aspects of government, and that the president's foes want him stymied at every turn.

Don't rush to judgment

As soon as President Clinton nominated him to succeed Dr. Joycelyn Elders as surgeon general, obstetrician Dr. Henry W. Foster Jr., acting director of Meharry Medical College in Nashville, was under attack for having performed therapeutic abortions. Thirty-five years of practicing medicine seem to count for naught among the Senate's new 45-member, narrowly focused, anti-abortion bloc.

That is a chilling message. It says, in effect, that the national interest in women's health begins and ends with their wombs and that the value of women's lives and health is subordinate to the value of fetal life and health.

Yet by most accounts, Dr. Foster is well qualified to become surgeon general. He is best known for Meharry's successful "I Have a Future" program, which teaches teenagers in two Nashville housing projects to delay sex and

ON SURGEON GENERAL
Nominee Dr. Henry Foster Jr. should be judged on his overall career and thoughts, not just on a few abortions.

childbearing. President Clinton has asked Dr. Foster to lead the campaign against teen pregnancy.

Therein lies the real controversy — the extent to which contraception becomes a part of sex education. In truth, there has been

much more talk about distributing condoms in public schools than there have been programs to distribute them — or even information about contraception. Talk is about all Dr. Foster, or any other surgeon general, can contribute, when — across America — it is local school boards that decide how to deal with sex education.

Dr. Foster deserves to be judged on the totality of his medical experience and the strength of his commitment to public health. He has viewed his women patients as whole human beings, not just a collection of child-bearing organs. That ought to be a testament in his favor.

Naming a new surgeon general

The increasing number of out-of-wedlock teenage pregnancies is one of this country's most disturbing trends. President Clinton's decision to nominate as surgeon general a physician who knows the problem, and has years of experience trying to combat it, therefore, makes perfectly good sense.

The nominee, Dr. Henry W. Foster Jr., a practicing obstetrician/gynecologist and acting president of Meharry Medical College in Nashville, is perhaps best known for a program he developed called "I Have a Future," which stresses abstinence and has successfully steered at-risk teens away from harmful behavior. A member of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences, he is one of the nation's leading authorities on reducing infant mortality and teen drug abuse.

The fact that Foster has performed a handful of abortions over the course of a 30-year career shouldn't surprise anybody. According to the White House, he performed "less than a dozen," primarily in cases of rape, incest or where the woman's life was

endangered, and always in hospital settings. But even if it were a hundred – abortion, after all, is a legal procedure – it ought not be a barrier to the appointment.

What is surprising is how clumsily the White House handled the issue. Knowing, as it surely did, especially after the dismissal of Dr. Joycelyn Elders, that some politicians would try to make an issue of it, the administration should have provided full information from the start. Instead, it seemed almost to be hiding it. Not surprisingly, that alienated the very Republican senators, those who support abortion rights, that the White House needs on its side. Sen. Nancy Kassebaum, who chairs the committee that will consider the nomination, was told by a Clinton aide that Foster had performed only one abortion. How dumb.

Foster deserved better; he has a distinguished record as a physician, as a medical administrator and as the creator of a successful community program. And he deserves better now, both from the Senate and the president.

FIRST AND FOREMOST

He's no Joycelyn Elders

HENRY Foster Jr., the nominee for surgeon general, has a fierce commitment to teen-age pregnancy prevention — just like Joycelyn Elders, the fired surgeon general.

He approves distributing contraception to youths and he supports abortion rights, just like Joycelyn Elders.

He is an Arkansas native, just like Joycelyn Elders.

Although the Family Research Council was quick to tag Dr. Foster "Elders Lite," he is no Joycelyn Elders. That's a distinction that will prove to be more important than the similarities.

Early indications of Foster's philosophy suggest mainstream America will have less difficulty identifying with his message than it did with the combative Elders.

Elders was right to train her sights on the social and public health dilemmas of unintended pregnancy, particularly among juveniles. Problems arose when her Gatling-gun mouth too often shot wide of the target. Public disapproval fired back at her and the Clinton White House, which gave Elders her walking papers in December.

In Foster, there appears to be an opportunity to refocus national attention on the problem, not the individual

championing the cause.

Rather than a point of contention, the obstetrician-gynecologist from Tennessee is the brilliance behind one of President Bush's "Thousand Points of Light" — a values-based teen-age pregnancy program for low-income children that stresses abstinence, promotes self-esteem and teaches job skills. The "I Have a Future" program offers contraception, but no abortion counseling.

Foster, a longtime medical educator, is going to need all the charm and persuasive powers he can muster to spearhead a national teen-age pregnancy prevention campaign that will get no new federal dollars. He will have to use the bully pulpit of the Surgeon General's Office to convince the private sector to zero in on a teen-age pregnancy crisis that President Clinton called in his State of the Union address "our most serious social problem."

Because of his bombastic predecessor, he likely will have to bowl over senators at his confirmation hearing.

Foster deserves a chance to offer in detail his own views on abortion and pregnancy prevention programs before he gets smeared with the same brush that defined the Elders' legacy.

San Jose Mercury News; 2-6-95

Surgical decision

Clinton's nominee for surgeon general is a good one

HENRY W. Foster Jr., the president's nominee for surgeon general, is admirably suited to carry out Clinton's top social priority: leading a national campaign to reduce teen pregnancy.

But first he's got to get past the contraception question.

Foster, 61, is an obstetrician-gynecologist on sabbatical from Meharry Medical College, where was medical school dean and acting president. He directed Meharry's "I Have a Future Program" — one of George Bush's official "points of light" — which works with children 10 to 17 in Nashville public housing projects, helping them develop job skills, learn about family responsibilities and avoid drugs, alcohol and premature parenting. One study of the program showed dramatic success in reducing pregnancy.

Foster's other priorities are reducing the incidence of low-birth-weight babies, illicit drug use, AIDS and smoking.

But some conservatives aren't willing to accept any surgeon general who advocates anything other than cold showers and long walks. "I Have A Future"

counselors teach "sexual responsibility" — condoms and contraceptives — as well as abstinence.

Furthermore, Foster serves on Planned Parenthood boards, supports abortion rights, and performed "fewer than a dozen" abortions in 30 years of practice.

In announcing Foster's nomination, Clinton tried to defuse the condom conundrum, saying that "there is no national policy" on contraception use; all that should be decided locally.

Foster's already been called "Elders Lite," but his views are mainstream in the medical community. And unlike the terminally truthful Joycelyn Elders, ousted for saying masturbation doesn't lead to hairy palms, Foster is capable of "no comment."

At this point, the Condoms of Doom crowd wouldn't reappoint C. Everett Koop as surgeon general. He advocated the use of condoms to prevent the spread of AIDS.

It's up to rational members of Congress to seize control of the discussion about Foster's qualifications. So far, he looks like a good fit for the job of fighting the teen pregnancy epidemic.

Hartford Courant; 2-6-95

Dr. Foster is eminently suitable for the job

President Clinton, by nominating Dr. Henry W. Foster Jr. for the post of surgeon general, intends to keep the public health spotlight on preventing teenage pregnancies. The rapid increase of out-of-wedlock births to young mothers has been a major contributor to social problems.

The president has picked someone who has run a highly successful program for teenagers in Nashville, Tenn. Dr. Foster's "I Have a Future" project has dramatically decreased the number of teenage pregnancies while increasing job skills, sexual responsibility and peaceful conflict resolution.

His nomination has raised an instant stir, however. He is being attacked for having performed legal abortions, for his membership on the board of directors of Planned Parenthood of Tennessee. He is being criticized for his program offering free physical exams, screening for sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy tests and contraceptives at two Nashville housing projects.

The morality police have pledged to wage a

fierce fight against Dr. Foster's confirmation in the Senate.

The Republican majority surely understands that a president is entitled to nominate a surgeon general he agrees with. If the nominee were grossly unsuitable, Senate rejection would be understandable. But Dr. Foster is eminently suitable for the job.

The surgeon general has few direct powers but can use the office as a bully pulpit. The government's campaign against cigarette smoking was launched in 1964 by Surgeon General Luther L. Terry and carried on with vigor and success by Dr. C. Everett Koop, who served under President Ronald Reagan.

Mr. Clinton's first surgeon general, Dr. Joycelyn Elders, offended many people by being strident. Dr. Foster is said to have the diplomatic skill to speak his mind while staying in the mainstream. Those who want to reduce teenage pregnancy and violence should not hesitate to support this nominee.

Assurances Needed From Clinton Nominee

Henry Foster Jr., the doctor whom President Clinton nominated to succeed Dr. Joycelyn Elders as U.S. surgeon general, has been described as a mild-mannered consensus-builder. He also has a background in education and public health. Those qualifications should serve him if he is confirmed for his new position.

Dr. Foster said one of his goals would be to promote sexual abstinence and sexual responsibility among teen-agers. He is the originator of the "I Have a Future" program, founded in 1987 in Nashville's subsidized public housing projects. The program is designed to help teen-agers make wise choices, avoiding pregnancy and continuing their education. It teaches them to believe in themselves and to behave responsibly. It also helps them acquire job skills. It provides tutoring, family life classes and medical services, including the distribution of contraceptives in some circumstances.

Dr. Foster has been a chairman, a dean and an acting president at Meharry Medical College in Nashville. He said that in addition to attacking the epidemic of adolescent pregnancies, his priorities would include assuring "healthier starts for our children," AIDS prevention and discouraging tobacco use, particularly in young people.

Dr. Foster's appointment is being opposed by some conservative groups that don't like his work with Planned Parenthood of America and his support of individual choice on abortion, as well as the contraceptive element of the "I Have a Future" program. Complaints have come from some Republicans in Congress that the White House mishandled the nomination by not immediately disclosing details about abortions that Dr.

Foster had performed. Dr. Foster said Friday that in addition to delivering 10,000 babies over three decades, he performed fewer than a dozen abortions, mostly to save the woman's life or to end a pregnancy caused by rape or incest.

Mainstream medical groups, including the American Medical Association, have praised his selection.

The surgeon general should be a person with a strong commitment to public health and a broad knowledge of the nation's health problems. Dr. Foster shouldn't be condemned for his efforts to reduce teen-age pregnancies nor disqualified for performing a few abortions over a long career. If he can convince the Senate that he understands the major public health issues and is capable of working hard to deal with the health problems of the whole population, his nomination should be looked at favorably.

Medical chief

In recent years, the nation's surgeons general have emphasized preventive health care strategies, from castigating cigarette smoking to halting the epidemic of teen-age pregnancies. It appears Dr. Henry W. Foster Jr., President Clinton's choice to be the new surgeon general, would continue the effort.

When the surgeon general speaks, he or she has a national stage. He or she can set an agenda. It's encouraging that the nominee wants to continue to focus on the tragedy of the nation's teen-age pregnancy rate and related infant mortality. So did Joycelyn Elders, the former surgeon general, who was fired last month after her remarks about teaching children masturbation. Elders' comments were just the latest in a long line of intemperate and confrontational remarks which revealed more about her

lack of political sophistication than her medical expertise.

Foster, 61, will have to display more discipline as he is questioned for confirmation. He will need to convince senators that his already demonstrated strengths can help the country tackle national health issues.

An obstetrician-gynecologist, Foster is acting director of Meharry Medical College in Nashville. He founded the institution's "I Have a Future" program that tries to delay teen-agers' sexual activity and childbearing by teaching them self-control, self-esteem, good relationships and by developing job skills. The program, which is being copied elsewhere, has resulted in fewer pregnancies and more youths continuing their education.