

**Natural Living Forum:**

**The Pepper Bill—Down But Not Out?**

By Gary Null

**D**URING THE PAST YEAR the medical moguls have tried to influence Congress into passing legislation which would have effectively eliminated all "New Age" alternative health care. Only after an 11th hour battle did the alternative system awaken to what the legislation would actually do. Supporters, practitioners, and other members of the health movement cried "foul", and due to an overwhelming response against this proposed legislation it was dropped. According to its House sponsor Congressman Claude Pepper, he won't reintroduce it. We hope not. But the Barons of medicine who helped create this *will not stop*. They're

still at it. We've merely won a brief reprieve. The battle will continue. Their forum for stamping out freedom of choice will change but not their overall efforts. Let's review the original Pepper Bill as a case in point.

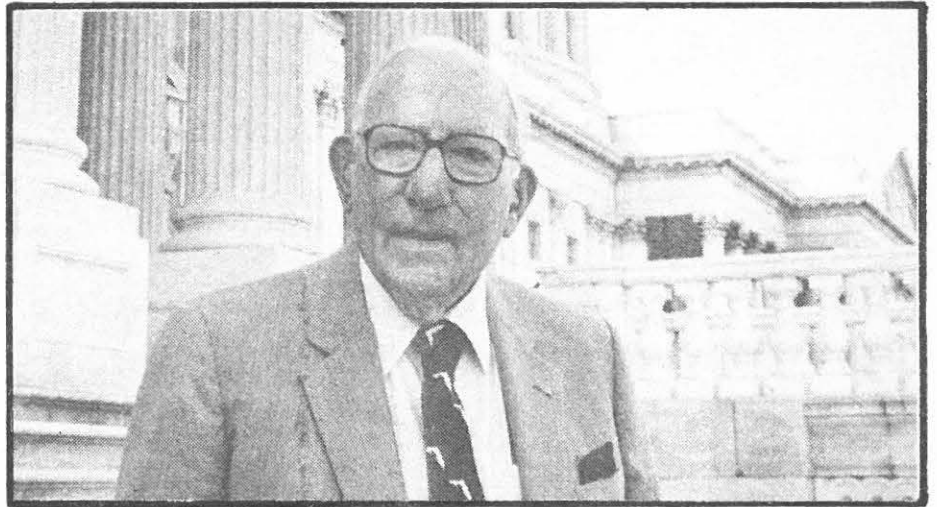
The major confusion and concern about the proposal arose when Pepper and other legislators made claims about what the bill would not do: It would *not* outlaw chiropractic, it would *not* prevent health food stores from being in business, it would *not* stop acupuncture, naturopathy, massage, shiatsu—that is correct. The bill does not say it will outlaw any of those. *But it is what the bill does not say that is dangerous!* As dangerous as what it does say.

As an example, if you look at the history of the AMA (American Medical Association) and the AMA's friends (including the American Cancer Society (ACS), the Arthritis Foundation, the National Cancer Institute (NCI) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH)), one theme becomes very clear. You will see they have had a long history of attacking health food stores, organic produce, vitamins that contain higher potencies than the recommended daily allowances (RDAs), chiropractors, acupuncture, homoeopathy, osteopathy, optometry, and podiatry. In fact, there has been a systematic campaign to discredit all of those in their professional journals, the lay journals and even by two so-called "consumer health fraud" organizations.

Now the very people who helped sponsor and were used in the framing of the Pepper Amendments are the very same people referred to above. They are the ones who lobbied for it; they are the ones who gave expert testimony; they are the ones who supplied information. As a result it would be extraordinarily naive, to presume that once the Pepper Bill became law that these organizations and individuals, working closely with federal regulatory bodies and policing agencies, would not also be called upon to give their "opinions" of the scientific efficacy of any device, therapy, literature, product or service being offered by physicians, lay people or manufacturers from the very field that they have spent 25 to 40 years attacking.

Since this central clearinghouse would be used in effect to review and disseminate that which is considered acceptable and unacceptable, proven and unproven, you would have a *complete monopoly on knowledge*.

Who would determine whether it is proven or unproven? The very same peo-



Sponsor of the controversial "Pepper Bill," Congressman Claude Pepper of Florida.

federal agencies responsible for controlling the sale and promotion of fraudulent health remedies.

Not a single holistic practitioner was invited to testify before Rep. Pepper's committee. The result was a one-sided report confirming the personal beliefs of the committee staff, which had worked with Pepper during his six year investigation ple who for 40 years have been calling alternative therapies quackery!

The competition between orthodox medical practitioners and those who seek a new road to health consciousness threatens a medical industrial complex which last year amassed nearly \$1 billion a day in the U.S. That is more than 11 per cent of our annual gross national product (GNP) and at the current rate of increase it is expected to hit \$1 trillion a year or 20 per cent of the GNP by the year 1993. With nine million people turning to chiropractors last year and thousands more seeking out the services of acupuncturists, naturopaths and herbalists, the American medical establishment has decided to fight back, and, according to consumer advocate and lawyer Michael Evers, is planning to invest huge sums of money to wage the battle.

Claiming that existing laws at both the federal and state levels are inadequate to deal with the supposed problem of health food and product fraud, Congressman Claude Pepper has declared open war on medical quackery. He introduced three bills in the House of Representatives last year which he says are designed to provide a clearinghouse for public information about health remedies, increase the criminal penalties for health fraud, and provide for coordination of efforts of the

into this alleged problem. Using worst-case scenarios and extreme examples to make its point, the committee report identifies obvious health frauds and quack medical devices in order to justify its request for strong legislation.

At no point does the Pepper Bill address, nor do these organizations alluded to previously address the gross negligence of organized medicine and medical practice, the out of control budget for medical care in this country, iatrogenic disease (drug and/or doctor produced), unnecessary surgery and the vast amounts of prescriptive medication and unproven therapies within orthodox medicine ranging from coronary bypass to aspirin therapy.

With legislation such as the Pepper Bill there will be no room for innovations. We would once again allow medicine to be viewed as a virtual religion and anyone choosing to differ from the orthodox perspective as a heretic and blasphemous. Instead of burning them as witches, they would be imprisoned and fined.

If Pepper's bill or any similar legislation does anything, it shows that we are still allowing organizations whose principal notion is one of control and power to maintain the status quo. This is why we are offended by Pepper's bill and those who support it. ■

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**Letters**

**Our Pleasure**

Dear WLT,

Thanks for compiling a restaurant guide. I am making a gradual transition to a vegetarian diet (I hope) and think sampling restaurant menus is a great way to be introduced to vegetarianism. I ate in *Angolica Kitchen* and found it to be all you said it

would be. Service was unrushed, the food fresh and delicious—and the dessert, peach pie with strawberry topping, a delight. It is also located in one of the more interesting sections of the city. Thanks for your suggestion.

—Mildred Nuytkens,  
Brooklyn, NY

Dear WLT,

Eating out has become a major problem for me—so when I read about your restaurant listing I was delighted. Thank you for this information.

—Susan Samuels  
Suffern, NY