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6/24/75

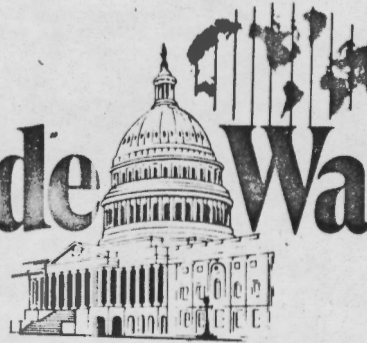
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THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN....

# Inside Washington



THIS WEEK'S NEWS FROM

Dr. David Mathews

## Have Conservatives OKed Liberal for HEW?

President Ford has selected a political riddle wrapped in a philosophical mystery to head up the biggest spending agency in the U.S. government, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Currently captained by Caspar Weinberger, who has long indicated he wants to return to California, HEW is now getting braced for a new leader, Dr. David Mathews, president of the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa.

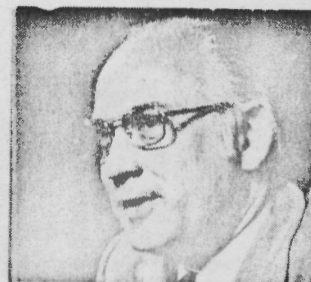
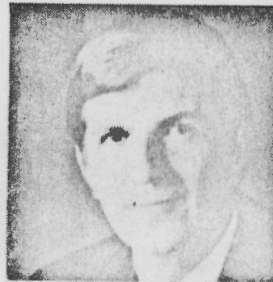
The 39-year-old Mathews, a one-time boy wonder who took the top position at the university when he was 33, is a Phi Beta Kappa from the university he now heads, has a bachelor's in history and classical Greek and earned a Ph.D. in the history of American education from Columbia University in 1965. He is considered an able administrator, a phenomenal fundraiser, and has been praised by both liberals and conservatives.

President Ford, who reportedly picked Dr. Mathews for the HEW job because he was personally impressed with him rather than because of any advice from his aides, got to know the university president when he became a member of the Bicentennial Commission. Anne Armstrong, a counsellor to the President until her resignation last year helped bring

enthusiastic than the GOP trio about buying a "pig in a poke," as one observer phrased it.

The next HEW chieftain, these lawmakers say, should not be selected on the basis of friendship, but on some solid knowledge of the man's capabilities and his philosophical attitude toward large-scale domestic spending.

The secretary of HEW, it is noted, has one of the most powerful jobs in government. He controls a



*The confirmation of David Mathews (above left) as HEW secretary is being backed by Alabama lawmakers Edwards (above right), Dickinson (below left) and Buchanan (below right).*



Reporters in the Cotton State who have covered Mathews for several years say nice things about the University of Alabama's president, but they can't tell you what he thinks on vital issues of the day. A spokeswoman for the National Education Association in Washington, the powerful liberal teachers' lobby which has been delving deeply into Mathews' background, told HUMAN EVENTS last week that her organization had not yet come across material reflecting his specific opinions, even on important educational subjects.

The assistant director of university relations at the University of Alabama, Joseph Perkins, concedes that Dr. Mathews has deliberately avoided making policy recommendations because, he says, Alabama is a "politically volatile state."

After researching Dr. Mathews' remarks over the past several years, Perkins, who also helps prepare some of Dr. Mathews' speeches, said he couldn't find a single statement by the university president on programs and subjects that he will be compelled to deal with at HEW. Perkins said Dr. Mathews had even managed to avoid making a statement on busing, despite the fact that the Cotton State has been embroiled in this dispute for at least two decades.

Dr. Mathews has not only avoided addressing himself to topics of national concern during his reign as President of Alabama University, but, says Perkins, he has also kept to himself his political choices for President as well.

Dr. Mathews to Ford's attention because, as she says, he is "forceful, attractive and articulate."

Despite his meteoric career and many extra-curricular activities, Dr. Mathews remains a political and philosophical enigma. With consummate care, he has assiduously avoided taking stands on virtually all national issues. Indeed, it is astonishing to find how few public utterances he has made concerning the major matters he will be dealing with as HEW's key decision-maker.

Yet even more surprising is that each of Alabama's conservative Republican lawmakers—Representatives Jack Edwards, Bill Dickinson and John Buchanan—gave his wholehearted endorsement of the Mathews selection without any knowledge of his positions on such burning subjects as national health insurance, federal aid to education or welfare reform.

Rep. Edwards, one of the most solid conservative lawmakers in the House, told HUMAN EVENTS that after President Ford's top assistant, Donald Rumsfeld, contacted him six weeks ago on Mathews' possible appointment, he gave the university president a high recommendation. When HUMAN EVENTS asked Edwards whether he knew how Mathews stood on any domestic issue likely to confront an HEW secretary, Edwards frankly conceded he didn't. He had based his recommendation, he said, on his "knowledge of the man personally." "He's a solid individual," said Edwards. "I know his family."

Both Buchanan and Dickinson also gave Mathews high marks for the White House, even though neither of them knew a single, relevant opinion of the man nominated to head the hugest department in government.

The blind endorsement of Mathews by the Alabama Republicans attests to the personal magnetism of the university educator and the fierce pull of state ties. But a number of conservative lawmakers are less

department that spends close to \$120 billion annually—\$25 billion more than the Defense Department—and has 125,000 employees under his command. The next HEW head, moreover, can heavily influence the direction of the Ford Administration in several important respects. The people he hires can have a decisive impact on policy. His power to hand down hundreds of regulations governing such mammoth spending programs as Social Security and welfare can literally save or waste billions of dollars. Furthermore, the HEW secretary can significantly influence the President's decision to propose or veto critical legislation.

With federal HEW spending growing at an alarming rate, there are many informed people who believe that the HEW post is the most important Cabinet job in Washington and that the man who fills it actually has the power to reverse or greatly accelerate America's headlong rush toward a full-blown welfare state. But the Ford Administration is now seeking to fill this critical government slot with a man who has so deliberately obscured his beliefs that it is presently impossible to judge with great precision just what direction he plans to take us.

Neither acquaintances nor those who work with him closely will tell you where he stands. Though she recommended him for the Bicentennial Commission, Anne Armstrong says she has no idea about Dr. Mathews' views on education and welfare, and doesn't even know "if he's a Democrat or a Republican." Dr. Max Rafferty, the conservative columnist and educator who now teaches at Troy University in Alabama, says Mathews is young, good-looking, and personable, but that he doesn't know his positions on critical national topics. Dr. Mathews, he says, "is not known as a conservative or a liberal."

Despite Mathews' remarkably successful efforts at camouflaging his opinions, there are many who believe that he is essentially a "trendy liberal," although even this proposition is debatable. A Birmingham *News* reporter, who has known Dr. Mathews for several years, believes he favors "massive" federal aid to education, though she had no concrete information to support her thesis. Under his leadership at the university, student radicals were also given a freer hand.

He permitted such New Left activists as William Kunstler, Jerry Rubin and Jane Fonda to obtain platforms on campus for their revolutionary harangues and allowed Madalyn Murray O'Hair, the professional atheist, to speak on campus as well. He even permitted the chartering of a gay liberation chapter. But those who argue in his defense point out he also barred Abbie Hoffman and refused to close down the campus, as did some educators, during the Cambodian incursion.

Mathews has appeared to favor greater federal spending in the domestic areas at times, but in a series of speeches this past year he pelted centralized government and bureaucracy—without getting into specifics.

Dr. Mathews still has to face hearings before the Senate Finance Committee and be approved by the full Senate before he is allowed to take the HEW post, but with his warm endorsements from Alabama's conservative Republicans he should have little trouble in getting his nomination approved.

Thus, unless the conservatives on Finance work him over with tough questions in committee, it is quite possible that Dr. Mathews will become the HEW chieftain without anyone's knowing where he stands on any issue involving health, education and welfare. And that, as the saying goes, hardly seems the way to run a railroad—or a \$120-billion-a-year department.

