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Suggestions for the AIDS Commission

When President Reagan's new AIDS Commission gets down to serious business, it should study an important package of newly-passed state legislation. Illinois lunged to leadership in the what-to-do-about-AIDS dilemma when Governor James Thompson signed several bills that were passed overwhelmingly by the State Legislature.

The centerpiece of the legislative package is a bill to require the teaching of "sexual abstinence until marriage" as part of the Illinois "Comprehensive Health Education Act." The bill's sponsor, Representative John McNamara said, "Abstinence is the safest method of preventing disease, for one thing. And for another, it's just plain common sense."

Another of the bill's supporters, Representative Penny Pullen, added, "I think it is entirely appropriate for students to be taught sexual abstinence, both as a protection against teen pregnancy and as a protection against venereal disease, including AIDS." The Legislature agreed by overwhelming, veto-proof margins: 95 to 5 in the House and 54 to 2 in the Senate.

The other bills signed into law by Governor Thompson were the following:

- * Requiring mandatory pre-marriage blood testing.
- * Requiring that all donated blood be tested for the AIDS virus.
- * Allowing voluntary tracing of victims' sex partners.
- * Allowing health officials to seek court orders quarantining victims whose behavior presents a problem.
- * Providing for strict confidentiality requirements for disclosure of AIDS virus test results. This includes written consent for tests.
- * Allowing testing of convicted sex offenders.
- * Allowing testing of convicted intravenous drug offenders.
- * Requiring that school principals be notified about children with the AIDS virus.
- * Requiring physicians and laboratories to report cases to the state health department.
- * Allowing blood recipients to designate a donor of choice.
- * Requiring "Infection Hazard" labeling for cadavers suspected of having infectious or communicable diseases.

When AIDS-related bills were first introduced into the Illinois Legislature in 1985, their sponsor found himself a lonely and unwelcome prophet. "You couldn't find half a dozen members of the House who were seriously interested," said Rep. Sam Vinson.

By 1986, the liberals in the Illinois Legislature were playing an aggressive political game. They accused conservatives of being "panic peddlers" with a "medieval mentality, trying to frighten the general population into thinking the Black Death of the 14th century was about to attack the suburban middle class."

The American Civil Liberties Union became a major player in the legislative maneuvering when the ACLU's legal director allied himself with the liberal director of Cook County's AIDS treatment center. They argued that most proposed legislation would simply drive AIDS-infected persons "underground."

Supported by the homosexual groups, the liberals made "civil liberties" the linchpin of their political strategy. They argued that mandatory testing and contact tracing reflected a "tyranny of the majority against a minority group."

However, public opinion moved so fast in favor of strong measures to protect the uninfected that seventeen AIDS measures were sent to the Governor's desk. The ACLU lobbyist admitted, "We had a deep underestimation of how strong the folks on the other side would be and how deep seated were the fears of the general population."

One of the liberal lawmakers, Carol Moseley Braun, admitted to the press, "What we forgot was that education is a two-way street. We forgot that, as we continued to be perceived as protecting one group, there was a much larger group that had legitimate fears of catching a deadly disease."

AIDS has reversed customary liberal-conservative roles. This time the conservatives are the ones who argue that the public health and safety require that government take strong measures to protect the general good.

No one seems to know how fast the AIDS epidemic will spread through the general population, but enough has happened to give the general population a healthy fear of infection and lead to a demand for precautions. The new Illinois legislation is a good first step toward addressing this major public health problem.

Bennett's New Booklet on AIDS

For those who have been saying "education is the answer to AIDS," Secretary of Education William Bennett has provided the tool. In order to implement an AIDS curriculum, all the public schools need is Bennett's newly-released 28-page booklet called "AIDS and the Education of Our Children: A Guide for Parents and Teachers."

The booklet doesn't use either scare talk or false assurances. It doesn't engage in so-called "gay-bashing," but neither does it conceal the fact that voluntary homosexual acts are the principal mode of AIDS transmission.

A simple chart in Bennett's book makes this clear: 90 percent got AIDS through either homosexual acts or IV drug use. In addition, 3 percent got AIDS from transfusions of blood that came from AIDS-carrying donors. That leaves 4 percent who got AIDS from heterosexual acts and 3 percent who got AIDS from undetermined causes.

Of those who have contracted AIDS, more than half are now dead and the rest are dying. Their care is very costly, and there is no cure in sight.

The biggest public health problem is the estimated million and a half persons who are infected with the AIDS virus but don't yet show any symptoms; they are just as contagious as though they had full-blown AIDS, and most will develop the disease themselves within the next 10 years. Most of these million and a half AIDS carriers have not been tested and do not know they can transmit the AIDS virus.

Since "most cases of AIDS result from behavior that can be avoided," the first task of preventive medicine should be to prevent the uninfected from engaging in that avoidable behavior with the million and a half persons who are infected.

Adults have the freedom to engage in high-risk activity if they wish. However, society's primary challenge is what to teach minor children in the schools. Secretary of Education Bennett takes his position seriously, and his new booklet addresses this question.

It would seem self-evident that children should, in emphatic terms, be instructed that they should NOT engage in high-risk activities. In other words, they should be taught to "just say NO" to illegal drugs and premarital sex.

There is no proof that schoolchildren reject this message. Nevertheless, this message is being resisted; certain groups of adults are exerting tremendous pressures to try to tell us that it is "impossible" for children to be taught to say "no."

But is it really impossible? Another chart in Secretary Bennett's booklet shows that 55 percent of girls are virgins at age 18; 73 percent are virgins at age 17, and 86 percent are virgins at age 16. The figures for boys are not that high, but they are high enough to give the lie to the notion that they cannot be taught abstinence. At age 18, 36 percent of the boys are virgins; at age 17 the figure is 53 percent, and at age 16 the figure is 72 percent.

It stands to reason that, if the majority of teenagers are sexually abstinent, then sexual abstinence is possible for anyone. It should be a simple matter, using the realistic threat of AIDS and other venereal diseases, plus the problems associated with teenage pregnancies, to install a convincing curriculum that will significantly increase those percentages.

We certainly cannot say that teaching abstinence has been tried and failed because it has never been tried. When sex

education came into the schools about 15 years ago, it came in "value free." Children were just instructed in "animal sex" and how to do it, without being told that it was possible or desirable to exercise self-control.

Secretary Bennett's booklet is so straightforward that it is refreshing. He says that schools should "help children develop clear standards of right and wrong" because that is the most important determinant of children's actions. They should be taught self-discipline, personal responsibility, and accountability for their actions.

Bennett urges parents and teachers to establish clear and specific rules about behavior. They should speak up for the institution of the family, and help children resist peer pressures to engage in dangerous activities.

The Bennett booklet identifies guidelines for selecting teaching materials about AIDS. School materials should "emphasize standards of right and wrong," and "should not be value neutral." Schoolchildren should be taught to abstain from sexual activity until, as adults, they are ready to establish a mutually faithful marriage.

That anyone could consider these guidelines controversial is quite a commentary on how promiscuous our society has become. But controversial or not, they are essential for a healthy society.

Condom-Mania Con Job

Condom-mania has been sweeping the country for the last year. One can hardly turn on television, read a newspaper, or participate in a school curriculum discussion without being battered with the demand that people and pupils be encouraged to use condoms, be taught how to use them, and have them as readily available as the nearest restroom.

Now, this massive marketing campaign is being chilled by the cold air of truth. Articles in the *New York Times* and *Newsweek*, no less, quote authority after authority as warning that, contrary to the advertising promises, condoms are not the key to safe sex, after all.

It is unclear exactly what has triggered these reversals. The quality of the condoms is no different from what it was a year ago. Perhaps it is a sudden awakening to the fear of product liability or malpractice lawsuits that could arise from the demonstrably false assurances made in behalf of a commercial item used in risky behavior.

"The safe sex message just isn't true," now says Dr. Bruce Voeller, who is conducting research on the effectiveness and durability of condoms. He heads the Mariposa Research Foundation, which specializes in the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases. "You just can't tell people it's all right to do whatever you want as long as you wear a condom," says Dr. Harold Jaffe, Chief AIDS epidemiologist for the Centers for Disease Control. "It's too dangerous a disease to do that."

Both these statements are 100% contrary to the prevailing message over the last year given by media, news and talk programs, television ads, and Planned Parenthood-style sex education curriculum.

"Condoms: Experts Fear False Sense of Security" now proclaims the *New York Times*. This article quotes health officials as articulating their worry that the current campaign to promote condom use to curb the spread of AIDS is "creating a false sense of security" among people who

continue to engage in risky behavior.

"We cannot tell people how much protection condoms give," now says Dr. Malcolm Potts, a contraceptive inventor and president of Family Health International, a contraceptive research group in North Carolina.

Dr. Helen Singer Kaplan, director of the Human Sexuality Program at New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center, now says that the publicity blitz promoting condoms has offered false assurances because condoms don't make sex safe at all, they merely reduce the risk of AIDS transmission. She warns that any open sore, even a hangnail, could be an entry port for the virus.

It now appears that the condom-mania campaign swept the country without any factual data on how much protection condoms provide. The *New York Times* admits that "there have been virtually no scientific studies of the devices' efficacy, especially with regard to AIDS transmission."

Condoms have blocked the AIDS virus in laboratory studies, but there is no scientific evidence that they do so during intercourse. *Newsweek* states the growing concern that condom protection "has been exaggerated."

The promoters of condoms have "overstated" the amount of protection they provide, now says Dr. Marcus Conant, chairman of the Task Force on AIDS for the California Department of Health. He adds that condoms could be even less efficient in preventing the spread of AIDS than in preventing pregnancy.

A variety of studies have shown that condoms fail to prevent pregnancy in 10 percent of couples who rely on that method. But the risk of transmitting the AIDS virus is much higher than the risk of pregnancy because (1) the AIDS virus is many times smaller than human sperm, and (2) a woman is fertile only several days a month, whereas the AIDS virus is virulent 365 days a year.

A University of Miami study of AIDS patients who regularly used condoms showed that 2 out of 12 uninfected heterosexual partners became infected. The CDC is planning new studies, but Dr. Jaffe says that unambiguous answers may never be available.

The Food and Drug Administration, which regulates prophylactics as medical devices, has only given manufacturers and distributors permission to advertise that condoms "may prevent" the spread of sexually transmitted diseases including AIDS. The FDA recently required three leading manufacturers to recall 100,000 condoms because a spot check found that too many of them leaked.

Some Reactions to the AIDS Problem

It's been hard to turn on the tube or pick up any newspaper during the past six months without being confronted by news reports calculated to raise our awareness about AIDS, including its devastating effect, its financial cost, and its galloping contagion. But with all the important services that state governments are called on to provide, it's hard to see any justification for diverting \$450,000 of Illinois taxpayers' money into a nebulous new service called "AIDS Awareness."

The Illinois bureaucrats who were assigned the task of spending the \$450,000 must have been hard put to figure out what they could say about AIDS that hasn't already been redundantly said by the media. So they hired a group called

"Local Talent" to write a song called "The Condom Rag" and a series of skits called "Street Talk." The theme was that using condoms is "safe" and "fun," and the vulgarity of this "talent" was exceeded only by its bad grammar.

The lyrics and the dialogue are not suitable for family reading in this report even AFTER the "explicit" references were deleted. Lest you think I am too prudish, even Illinois Governor James R. Thompson said, "It's garbage ... everyone will think we are lunatics." But the Illinois Public Health Department presented the song and skit publicly in a two-hour ceremony on the Old Capitol Plaza in downtown Springfield, Illinois.

Earlier this year, the Missouri Public Health Department tried a similar exotic AIDS awareness ploy. It published a pamphlet called "Condom Sense" that had to be destroyed after state officials called it offensive.

Another straw in the wind of how explosive public reaction can be is the way Children's Medical Center in Dallas was bombarded with telephone calls since it became known that a pediatrician is infected with the AIDS virus. The 44-year-old physician, Dr. Robert H. Huse, lost his 1,000-patient practice within hours after his former male roommate told the press that Huse has AIDS.

Huse was quoted in *U.S.A. Today* on September 28 as saying that his "sexual compulsion" led him to experiment with pickup sex. "It's not unlike alcoholism or other disorders. ... All the education in the world isn't going to change it," he said.

When the Votes Were Counted

The homosexuals put on an impressive street demonstration estimated at 200,000 persons, in Washington, D.C. on October 11. A couple of days later, the events inside the Senate and House chambers were even more dramatic in telling a different story, but somehow that news wasn't given the same level of newspaper and television coverage.

On October 14, the Senate was considering the \$129 billion Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriation Bill for fiscal 1988. In a major expansion of federal concern about AIDS, the bill earmarked more than \$946 million for AIDS research, prevention, information and education.

Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) proposed an amendment which said that taxpayers' money shall not be spent by the Centers for Disease Control "to provide AIDS education, information or prevention materials and activities that promote or encourage, directly or indirectly, homosexual sexual activities." The Helms amendment further stated that education, information and prevention activities and materials paid for with federal funds "shall emphasize abstinence from sexual activity outside a sexually monogamous marriage (including abstinence from homosexual sexual activities) and abstinence from the use of illegal intravenous drugs."

To show the need for his amendment, Helms explained that the Gay Men's Health Crisis, Inc., received \$674,679 this year from the Federal Government to produce educational materials. The application papers for this grant (now made public under a Freedom of Information request) spelled out in detail the specific pro-homosexual educational activities for which the money would be used.

In seeking this large amount of federal funding, the Gay Men's Health Crisis, Inc., stated that it would use this grant to

"generate gay consciousness and a positive sense of gay pride," to combat "homophobia," and to counteract "myths regarding male and female sexuality and gender roles, e.g., heterosexuality is superior to homosexuality."

The grant application stated that "of particular import is how to deal with the denial and fear of AIDS, homophobia and fundamentalist religious belief that AIDS is God's curse." The grant proposal bragged that the organization distributed posters and fliers to protest the Supreme Court decision regarding sodomy laws.

Most of the content of this federally-funded "education" to teach "safe sex" to homosexuals is too indecent, vulgar and explicit to be quoted in this report. The grant application also reveals how this type of federal grant is used by recipients for media promotion of their special-interest cause, political demonstrations, and networking with like-minded groups.

The first time the clerk called the roll in the Senate on the Helms amendment, only five Democrats voted. Most of the Democrats were then seen huddling on their side of the aisle trying to figure out how they could defeat the Helms amendment.

Finally, they decided they did not dare to be tagged as voting to finance homosexual activities and materials, and so the Helms amendment passed 94 to 2. On October 20, the House voted 368 to 47 to duplicate the Senate's action.

On October 15, Congressman William Dannemeyer (R-CA) led a similar battle in the House. The High-Risk Disease Notification Bill was on the floor, a bill that would require employers to notify employees of risks to their health in the workplace.

Dannemeyer proposed an amendment requiring that health care workers and emergency care workers be designated as a "population at risk of occupational exposure to the disease known as Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome." He pointed out that many health care workers have tried in vain to take precautions against infection with the AIDS virus and have been refused permission to do so by their hospital's supervisors.

For example, Mrs. Norma Watson, a nurse at San Francisco General Hospital, has filed a \$100 million lawsuit against her employer because she was not allowed to wear protective garments when caring for AIDS patients. She asserts that this situation caused her to "contract cytomegalovirus (CMV), crossing the placental membrane and causing massive birth defects" in her baby she was then carrying.

After a spirited debate, with Congressmen Trent Lott (R-MS) and Dick Armey (R-TX) supporting the Dannemeyer amendment, and Congressmen Henry Waxman (D-CA), Joseph Gaydos (D-PA), and William Ford (D-MI) speaking in opposition, the Dannemeyer amendment passed 219 to 198, with 16 not voting.

Despite the favored access that the homosexual lobby enjoys in the media, legislators are starting to respond to the demands of larger groups of Americans for reasonable protections against the deadly disease of AIDS.

A Program to Battle AIDS

Congress, the 50 State Legislatures, and the public health departments of the United States as well as of every state should address their attention toward constructive proposals to protect the uninfected from all those infected with the AIDS virus. Since there is no cure for AIDS and none is in sight, our society faces two tasks: care for those who have the

disease, and protection for the uninfected against the infected. Here are some suggestions.

1. Legislation to require blood tests for AIDS before marriage licenses are issued, just like blood tests for other venereal diseases. In addition to other reasons, this is a women's rights issue because most of those with AIDS are men, and every woman should have the right to have the state ascertain that her prospective husband is just as free from AIDS as from syphilis and gonorrhea.

2. All doctors, dentists, nurses and other health personnel should be tested for the AIDS virus so that their patients can be notified whether or not their health care providers are AIDS carriers. "Informed consent" to all medical procedures should include the right to give or withhold consent to treatment by an AIDS carrier.

3. Those admitted to hospitals should be tested for AIDS so that precautions can be taken to protect all health care personnel who serve them, as well as other patients.

4. Infection with the AIDS virus should be made a reportable condition so that health authorities can trace sexual contacts. Current law requires this procedure for syphilis and gonorrhea so that victims can be traced and counseled, and so that they do not unknowingly infect others. AIDS should be treated likewise.

5. It should be made a crime for anyone to donate blood, semen or organs who has engaged in high-risk behavior in the last ten years. High-risk behavior includes homosexual acts, prostitution, or intravenous drug use.

6. It should be made a crime for anyone intentionally to transmit AIDS to another, as is the practice for other venereal diseases.

7. Anyone needing a blood transfusion should have the right to receive the blood of his choice. It is not enough to be able to give your own blood, because this is impossible for emergency surgery.

8. Hospices should be established for AIDS victims so that they may receive compassionate care, yet not be a danger of infection to others who are hospitalized.

9. We should institute mandatory testing for certain groups, including immigrants, prisoners, prostitutes, and persons convicted of intravenous drug use.

10. Legislation should clarify the ways in which persons with contagious or communicable diseases may be covered under the law barring discrimination against the handicapped.

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