

AIDS hearings: Crisis management won't work

Activities at the first day of hearings of the Presidential Commission on the Human Immunodeficiency Virus Epidemic on Sept. 9 in Washington, D.C. exemplify the problem of the present "crisis management" approach to this disease. The tone was set by a noisy demonstration of homosexuals outside the National Press Club, some of whom rushed up to commission member John Cardinal O'Connor and thrust their bleeding sores at him, while screaming "bigot!" and other derogatory terms.

The insanity continued as Surgeon General C. Everett Koop denounced doctors and other health workers who refuse to treat AIDS patients as a "fearful and irrational" minority, who are guilty of "unprofessional conduct." Koop called the conduct of such health workers "extremely serious," saying "it threatens the very fabric of health care in this country," which assumes that "everyone will be cared for and no one will be turned away." He warned the commission that, "In some ways the purely scientific issues pale in comparison to the highly sensitive issues of law, ethics, economics, morality and social cohesion that are beginning to surface."

Koop told the commission that it had to give precedence to these "highly sensitive issues of law, of ethics, economics, morality, and social cohesion" over the scientific issues of curing and preventing the spread of AIDS. He then presented a series of "ethical conundrums," shaped in such a way as to argue against public health measures against the virus, and, in fact enforce a fascist "let them die" policy towards AIDS victims. Koop concluded with a plea for funding WHO's AIDS program, and forecast a

rapid spread of the disease.

Following testimony by a number of public health bureaucrats and researchers, there was a "panel discussion with interest groups." The general tenor of this was reflected in the plea of Commission chairman, Dr. Eugene Mayberry, for testimony which did not simply consist of attacks on the commission.

Things took a more serious turn in the press conference in the afternoon. After several questions from various media, a "journalist" stepped to the microphone, announced that he had AIDS, and began ranting at the commission. In the course of his tirade, he bit a press club security man on the hand and drew blood. He then left, while the freaked-out security man was assured that everything was okay!

Throughout the press conference, and the hearings, there was loud hissing and booing anytime anyone raised any serious suggestion for doing anything to stop the spread of the disease which might inconvenience members of the homosexual community, who formed a preponderance of those in the audience. The repeated attacks on the bias of the commission were greeted with thundering applause, the whole scene reminiscent of the Tom Wolfe book, *Radical Chic and Mau Mauing the Flak Catchers*.

Following this, a Public Comment session was held, in which members of the general public could make five minute presentations to the Commission. The first speaker, a leader of one of the homosexual AIDS groups, denounced the slowness of the drug testing program and accused Dr. Robert Gallo and Dr. Anthony Fauci of deliberately holding up the development of drugs and treatments for AIDS. He then treated the commission to a litany of popes, cardinals, and saints, including Joan of Arc and Saint Augustine, who were supposedly homosexual!

This was followed by the accompanying testimony of NDPC medical coordinator, Dr. John Grauerholz.

group which is not presently a major source of transmission.

The appropriate American response to this challenge is typified by the Apollo Program of President John F. Kennedy, which mobilized the nation to a great commitment and created the climate of cultural optimism of the early 1960s. America's unique strength is its capacity to undertake such great tasks of technologic mobilization and succeed. This is why Lyndon H. LaRouche, and the National Democratic Policy Committee, have called for the implementation of a BSDI, a Biological Strategic Defense Initiative, which would create a multidisciplinary scientific mobilization to apply the most advanced technologies of biophysics to AIDS in particular, and the life process in general.

AIDS policy at crossroads

Absent such a scientific crash program, combined with a real economic recovery, public health measures alone will not stop the disease, and any time they buy will be wasted. This program will require billions of dollars to implement, but, like the Apollo program, will repay the investment more than tenfold, and reestablish our cultural commitment to growth and development, while providing our only hope of ultimately stopping the AIDS pandemic. If we persist in the present economics and culture of stagnation and decay, then the AIDS virus and many other infectious organisms, which in their own way are committed to growth and development, will prevail over us.