

National HIV & AIDS Archive

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HIV Ireland
1987—2017



Dubious of Fr. Lynch

Sir—It may well be as Fr. Bernard Lynch states that those born with homosexual or lesbian tendencies are “spoiled children of God”, but this title hardly applies to them if they become addicted to unnatural sexual acts which offend the same God and are so promiscuous as to have up to one thousand partners in one year.

The same Fr. Bernard Lynch would seem to be entitled also to reject the Genesis 4th condemnation of the sin of Sodom and to campaign for Sodomy to be legalised, but not when he is clothed in the garb of a priest who is supposed to preach the word of God and not his own interpretation of it.

Perhaps the fact that this young man has had the harrowing experience of assisting at the deathbeds of 60 of his friends who died of AIDS has made him lose track of his real vocation, which should be to save souls. At the moment he seems to be more concerned with the material aspects of this life than he is with the spiritual.

It is to be hoped that he will decide soon whether he wants to be a social worker or an apostle of Jesus.

TREASA NI
DONNACHADHA
Kilkenny.

Sunday Press
6th September 1987

Danger of AIDS

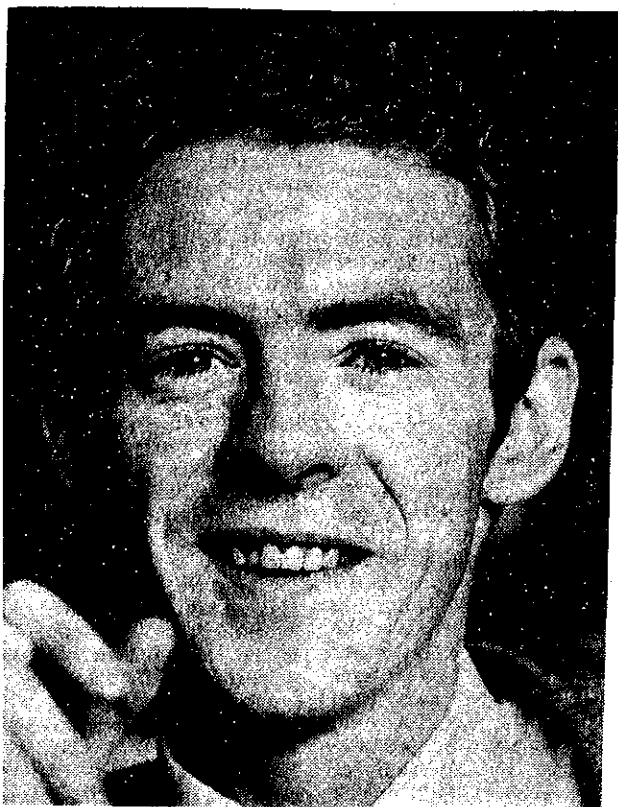
"No more anti-AIDS Adverts" states an article in THE SUNDAY PRESS, so presumably the danger is now past — or is it?

The article goes on to say that "the public perception still remains that AIDS is a gay disease and that heterosexuals are not at risk". The anti-AIDS adverts have done a very good job of quelling the rising panic surrounding this fatal disease but surely some panic is necessary. Thousands of young people are leaving this country. Will they sentence themselves to death by running the risk of infected blood getting into their system by assisting at some casualty without wearing gloves, could they not cut themselves in the process?

Marriages have taken place without partners being tested; will their children be born with AIDS? People who are leaving this country may soon have to be tested but what of those who are coming in? Is it not common sense to suppose that within the next few years it will affect all of us.

MRS. T. O'DONOGHUE
Kilkenny.

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PHIL CHEVRON: Aids concert with the help of U2

Chevron's Radiators come back from space

"SUNDAY TRIBUNE" 6/9/87

by LORNA DONLON

"IT'S about time that people started to do some things in Dublin without the help of U2," said a forthright Phil Chevron yesterday. The Pogues musician, and member of the re-formed Dublin band, Radiators From Space, was scotching rumours that Bono would be appearing in the Radiator's special Aids benefit concert in Dublin next Sunday.

The benefit concert in Hawkins, is the first in a series of projects to raise funds for Cairde, the group which helps Aids victims, and the Gay Health Action Group. The Pogues were asked to take part in some concerts in January, but were unable to commit themselves to a Dublin date

because of touring plans.

"I knew we would be in Australia then," said Chevron, "but then I thought, why not reform the Radiators — just for the night." He had also been thinking of organising his own Aids benefit, but admits that "it's much handier when someone phones you up and asks you if you want to do one they have organised."

The Radiators, who originally formed in 1976, have not played together since 1980. The reformed band will meet for three intensive days of rehearsal later this week. Much of the programme for the concert remains undecided, however. "We can probably do most of the words, but we

may have some problems trying to remember the chords for some of our stuff."

"We'll be happy to produce a reasonably proficient performance for a 40-minute set, and after that all hell will break loose," he says. While the surprise guests are still unknown, the Real Wild West and Gavin Friday and his band will definitely take the stage.

The Radiators says they are doing the benefit in an attempt to highlight the Aids to campaign and to "get rid of this erroneous idea that only gay people have Aids," said Chevron. "We are trying to say that it affects everybody. That way, everyone can come out and support the fundraising campaigns."

SV

AIDS RISE IS STATIC

THE RATE of increase of the killer AIDS virus is remaining static in Ireland yet it's continuing to double every six months in the States and England.

Dr. Derek Freedman, chairman of the Society for Sexually Transmitted Diseases, praised Ireland's gay community. He said: "There has not been a self-perpetuating epidemic of AIDS within the gay community, mainly thanks to their responsible attitude."

But the AIDS expert stressed that this was no reason for complacency. He said: "What we still fear is infection in the drug taking community. Many of them picked up the antibodies in 1983/84 and could develop illness in the next 12-18 months."

SUNDAY WORLD was

first in Ireland in February this year to commission a national survey highlighting the dangers of AIDS and explaining how infection can be prevented.

Department of Health statistics confirmed Dr. Freedman's analysis. There have been just seven recorded new cases of AIDS this year, a very small increase on the six last year. Certainly the number of victims is not doubling every six months as was once predicted.

Drug

But a Department spokesman pointed out that the number of those who have the antibodies was increasing at a faster rate and had now passed 600. The majority of those are drug abusers.

Dr Freedman added that Ireland now has the second greatest number of children,

with AIDS antibodies in Europe. These victims are born to mothers who have the antibodies. Almost all these mothers would have contracted the anti-bodies through using dirty needles to fuel their drug habit.

Dr. James Walsh, coordinator of AIDS strategies at the Department of Health, agreed with Dr. Freedman that there was a surprisingly low incidence of AIDS cases.

He said: "This is especially so when we have as many as 633 HIV positive cases. I simply don't know what the reason is."

One possibility that Dr. Walsh speculated was that in reality there are more Irish cases of AIDS, but that many go unreported.

He added: "It is also possible that some go to England or the United States for treatment, and therefore do not show up on our figures."

Evening Herald, Monday, September 7, 1987

Drug abusers in Aids test shock

AS MANY as 384 intravenous drug abusers in Ireland have been found to have the Aids virus, said Junior Health Minister Terry Leyden today.

The 'sero-positive' abusers were among 2,150 intravenous drug abusers who came forward for voluntary Aids testing, he said.

Mr. Leyden, chairman of the National Co-ordinating Committee on Drug Abuse, said the Department of Health was considering a variety of approaches necessary to

stem the spread of HIV virus among drug abusers.

The Minister was addressing the conference of the European Federation of Therapeutic Communities which opened in Trinity College, Dublin, today.

He said the incidence of drug abuse was now levelling out, in Ireland since reaching a peak in the early 1980s.

The national anti-drug committee "will continue to ensure the full use of all resources in the fight against drug abuse," he said.

And a group of leading doctors, business people and church leaders are behind a big appeal to bring in a million pounds to provide a whole range of special medical and psychological services for victims.

The idea is to provide an integrated care programme for the physical and emotional needs of Aids victims outside hospital, because of the continually rising costs involved.

Already, 18 victims of the killer disease have died here and almost all of them needed special hospital treatment. According to the latest estimates the cost of treating an Aids patient from diagnosis until death is more than £20,000.

Experts predict a big rise in deaths here as the numbers of people with the virus in their systems increase. Official figures now indicate more than 600 people are Aids anti-body positive.

AIDS level is worrying — Minister

By Helen Quinn

The level of AIDS and HIV infection in drug abusers is very worrying, the Minister of State at the Department of Health said today.

Warning that we must not become complacent, Mr Terry Leyden said the figures up to July last showed that of the 2,150 intravenous drug abusers who had come forward for voluntary testing, 384 were positive.

Officials of the Department of Health have met with individuals and agencies working with intravenous drug abusers and a variety of approaches necessary to stem the spread of HIV infection among drug abusers is now being considered by the Minister for Health, Mr. Leyden said.

"Because of the complexity of the problem a diverse range of interventions and approaches are necessary, and the therapeutic communities will have a valuable role to play in tackling this serious public health problem".

Necessary

Defending the Government's Public Information Programme on AIDS, Mr. Leyden said that it was necessary to carry out a general public information programme and to raise the general level of public awareness of the problem.

"This approach is widely accepted as being the most appropriate as a first step and it would have been naive and outdated to simply see the AIDS problem as one which affected a small number of high risk groups.

"Dr. O'Hanlon and I took the view that more detailed and intensive work needs to be carried out in relation to drug abusers, in tandem with the general public information programme" he added.

Hope of earlier testing for Aids

A NEW METHOD of rapidly detecting the Aids virus has been developed by doctors in Chicago, Nicholas Timmins writes.

The test may lead to improved screening of blood donations for the HIV virus which causes Aids. It could enable infected individuals to be picked up earlier.

The present tests detect only antibodies to the virus, rather than the virus itself. These may not develop for between six weeks and six months after infection, and in some cases possibly longer.

The new test could also provide early diagnosis of infection when people suffer the vague symptoms similar to influenza, german measles or glandular fever which oc-

cur for a time shortly after infection. Details are given in a preliminary report in this week's *Journal of the American Medical Association*, linked to warnings that it is too soon to know how useful the test will prove.

So far it has been evaluated just in four patients, who showed up as being infected despite having no antibodies, but who then went on to produce antibodies detectable by the standard test.

The journal says the new test for the virus is much simpler than existing methods, which involve growing it in the laboratory. But a leading article warns that while it may prove useful, much more work needs to be done to establish its potential.

Evening Herald, Tuesday, September 8, 1987

Addicts may get syringes

FREE syringes may be supplied to Dublin city drug addicts by the Department of Health as part of the anti-Aids drive.

Dr. James Walsh, Deputy Medical Director of the Department of Health and the country's Aids strategy co-ordinator, will be recommending the idea.

Dr. Walsh said that the main target in the anti-Aids campaign would have to be the Dublin city intravenous drug users.

Statistics indicated that this group was not being adequately reached by the ongoing barrage of Aids warnings.

And the communal use of syringes was a major

factor in spreading the disease.

Dr. Walsh believes that a regular supply of clean syringes could limit the spread of the disease here.

And he will be urging the Government-appointed committee directing the Aids campaign to introduce the scheme as soon as possible.

"I hope personally that it will be done," he said.

In the most recent Irish Aids survey a total of 11,640 people had been tested for the presence of the Aids virus. Of these, 626 were found to be sero-positive. And of these a total of 412 were intravenous drug users.

New definition will show sharp rise in AIDS figures

IRELAND'S official AIDS figures will rise dramatically within weeks as new medical definitions of the fatal disease are introduced, it was revealed yesterday.

The Deputy Chief Medical Officer with the Department of Health and Ireland's Co-ordinator of AIDS strategy, told an international conference that the World Health Organisation (WHO) definition of what constituted full-blown AIDS must be broadened.

And the new definition which he hoped would be introduced within the next month, would include the AIDS Related Complex, ARC — AIDS Related Complex.

BY STEVE BRENNAN

Until now ARC victims, who can die from the condition, have been told they do not have AIDS.

"We have the ludicrous situation in which a doctor can tell an ARC victim that he did not have an AIDS condition but he would die the next day anyway," said Dr. Walsh at the international conference in Dublin at the Department of Health's AIDS Centre.

The new definition will also include the AIDS Related Complex, ARC cases among Ireland's victims, and statistics would significantly increase official figures.

But Dr. Walsh could not give a clear indication of how many extra cases there might be.

ARC is not a reportable illness so official figures here are not available. However, in Mountain View, at least 10 prisoners in Mountain View are sufferers.

Unlike full AIDS, the syndrome is not always fatal and victims can revert to simply being HIV positive, having AIDS antibodies in their blood but not suffering from the actual disease.

The re-classification will also include the condition known as AIDS-related dementia or neurological AIDS. This is a condition which does not commonly involve the normal full-blown AIDS symptoms but strikes at the brain causing the victim to

display all the clinical signs of dementia.

And it will also involve AIDS-related TB cases. Medical scientists have now proved that a normally harmless TB spread to humans by birds — avian TB — can be keyed to attack humans by the AIDS virus.

This condition too, which so far has not been seen in Ireland, will constitute classification as full-blown AIDS.

Ultimately, this could be very significant in this country because we stand high on the international list for TB incidence. Mr. Walsh said there were no plans to revert to the AIDS safe sex campaign of last May but the Department would be concentrating on the promotion of safe sex.

To this end the Department would be

mobilising teams of volunteers to work closely with drug abusers in Dublin.

Dr. Walsh said Ireland's future full AIDS figures could be much higher than experts initially feared.

Official statistics showed Ireland had more than 650 HIV positive cases, and there were fears that the true figure could be double.

The Minister of State at the Department of Health, Mr. Leyden said the incidence of drug abuse in Ireland was now levelling out since reaching a peak in the early 1980s.

... In Britain, AIDS was now claiming an average of one life every day. Figures out today from the Department of Health and Social Security show that in August people died from the disease.



TECHNOLOGY
Jeremy Warner

INDO

8/9/87

Aids cure may rest on fake virus

BRITISH BIO-TECHNOLOGY last week published for the first time full details of its pioneering work on developing an Aids vaccine — work which in itself has already established a unique example of technology transfer.

The announcement of new breakthroughs in Aids research is almost a daily event but this particular avenue of exploration looks more promising than most.

It has also prompted vaccine producers to hammer at British Bio-technology's door for the rights to undertake a two-year programme of test research into the product.

British Bio-technology, based in Oxford, was formed last year with £2.5m of venture capital to research new treatments for coronary heart disease, rheumatoid arthritis, cancer and other viral diseases by using genetic engineering techniques.

Few bio-technology ventures in Britain have so far shown much promise but this one could be different. Already British Bio-technology has a steady income derived from producing high-tech reagents for academic and industrial research.

The company has also been self-consciously modelled on its successful US counterparts which have achieved a highly potent mix of strong academic research and entrepreneurial flair. British Bio-technology looks like equalising the mix with its Aids vaccine.

The breakthrough was first announced last March but the company did not give full details until last week's *Nature* magazine because of the need to establish worldwide patent rights.

In co-operation with researchers from Oxford University, British Bio-technology has developed a procedure for building fake viruses from a protein found in bakers' yeast. By using genetic engineering, particles from the yeast can be combined with sections of the outer coating of the Aids virus to produce a

"pseudovirus" which looks like the real thing but is harmless.

The \$64,000 question is whether the pseudovirus can be made to trigger the body's natural defence system to produce antibodies which will destroy the real Aids virus. British Bio-technology is now in talks with four big vaccine producers about £2m to £3m of further test research which could lead to commercial production of a vaccine.

The original research on the product was carried out at Oxford University's department of biochemistry and then transferred to British Bio-technology in return for an agreed royalty on any commercial exploitation.

Two of the original university researchers, Dr Alan Kingsman and Dr Sally Adams, now work for British Bio-technology, the



Keith McCullough chief executive of British Bio-technology

first on a part-time basis with his hours divided between the university and the company, and the latter full time. Dr Sue Kingsman, his wife, who also worked on the research, stays at the university.

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54

Health Bureau to be replaced

ELEVENTH hour talks were scheduled today concerning the future of the Health Education Bureau which is facing closure.

Health Minister Dr. O'Hanlon, was meeting the Board of the H.E.B. at noon today and it was expected that he would announce the closure of the board this evening.

However, neither the Department of Health nor the H.E.B. would confirm today that the Minister's meeting was a mere formality to officially announce his intention of closure.

It was expected that Board members would voice serious protest and argue that the £2 million annual budget was being well spent.

Senator Joe O'Toole said today that Ireland was already spending less per capita on health education than any of its European neighbours.

The Bureau, which is the official education body on public health, employs 25 people. But it was learned that its functions are now to be taken over by the Department of Health.

Senator O'Toole has worked closely in the past with the H.E.B. in his capacity as a member of the national co-ordinating committee on health.

Hierarchy will discuss response to AIDS crisis

By Joe Carroll

THE CATHOLIC Church's practical response to the AIDS crisis will be one of the main items on the agenda of the spring meeting of the Irish Hierarchy, which begins today at Maynooth and continues until Wednesday. The Hierarchy's Pastoral Commission was asked by the bishops last January "as a matter of urgency" to make recommendations on practical measures which the Church in its own ministry should take to help AIDS victims.

A bishop who is a member of the Pastoral Commission told *The Irish Times* last night that the Hierarchy would be discussing at this week's meeting the ideas for practical action which the commission had now presented. A statement on the bishops' contribution to combating the spread of

AIDS is expected on Wednesday at the end of their meeting.

Last January the Standing Committee of the Hierarchy issued a statement calling for a "strong moral response to the challenge posed by this crisis" but the emphasis at this meeting of the full Hierarchy is on practical steps which priests and Church workers can take in their ministry to help AIDS victims and their families and counsel potential victims on how to avoid the disease.

The Catholic hierarchies in Britain and on the continent have already issued statements deploring the reliance on "safe sex" and condoms in the official public health campaigns against AIDS. The January statement of the Irish Standing Committee said "it would be sad if the response to this major threat were to be

reduced simply to a debate about free needles or easy availability of condoms. This would be an evasion of the issue."

It remains to be seen how explicit the postponed Government campaign to combat AIDS will be and if it attracts the kind of criticism from the Irish bishops made by their British and continental colleagues.

Last month an AIDS task force set up in the Dublin archdiocese by the Catholic Social Service Conference made proposals on how the Church could respond to the present crisis. These included an AIDS Hot Line to provide accurate information and act as a referral agency to appropriate service and a Church AIDS committee which could liaise with a national co-ordinating committee under the Department of Health.

Action' over condom sale criticised

By Lorna Siggins

THE Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA) has said that a summons served on it yesterday over the sale of condoms at the Virgin Megastore record shop in Dublin makes Ireland, once more, "the laughing stock of Europe".

The summons, issued by the Director of Public Prosecutions, alleges that the IFPA unlawfully sold "a contraceptive" at the Virgin Megastore, Aston Quay, Dublin, to "a person unknown" on January 10th, 1989, contrary to Section 4 (1) (4) of the Health (Family Planning) Act, 1979, as amended by section two of the Health (Family Planning) Amendment Act, 1985.

The act, as amended in 1985, imposed an age limit of 18, abolished the need for a prescription and dropped the "bona fide family planning" qualification in relation to the legal supply of contraceptives by chemists and health boards.

"In light of the seriousness of the worldwide AIDS crisis and the rising rate of unplanned pregnancies, this summons serves only to highlight the ludicrous nature of the contraceptive laws that still exist," Ms Christine Donaghý, chief executive of the IFPA, said.

Evening Herald
10th September 1987

Casual sex hit by fear of Aids

THREE-QUARTERS of women in Britain between 17 and 23 are sticking with one partner to escape the threat of Aids, a survey suggests.

And two out of three think that condoms should be issued to combat the killer disease.

The results of a survey of 19 magazines' 600,000 readers reveal that more young women are building steady relationships to avoid the risk of Aids.

Britain's 1,000 Aids cases have largely been among homosexual men, but young women are clearly taking fewer chances.

More than half said they would ensure a casual sexual partner used a condom—and 43 per cent. have cut out casual sex altogether.

Evening Herald
10th September 1987



Thursday, Sept. 10, 1987, Vol. 96, No. 215.

Inside

Hot stuff!

THE Radiators From Space were one of the best rock bands Ireland ever produced — but fate conspired to break them up in 1981, leaving fans with nothing more than happy memories. Now the band reformed to play a one-off benefit gig for Action Against Aids. Colin Kerr talked to Radiator Pete Holidai about life since the split.
— Page 14.

TODAY

KEEP in touch on Page 17, where you'll find how Miss Selfridge is set to take Dublin by storm, why the famous have taken to canvas, and how Coco Chanel revisited is packing them in for an exhibition in London.
— Page 17.

SV

WHEN Philip Chevron started singing about throwing his telecaster through the television screen 10 years ago, Irish rock music was never going to be the same again.

In the summer of 1976, Chevron, Steve Rapld, Pete Hoidai, Mark Megaray and Jimmy "Crash" Wynne, had come together as The Radiators from Space, Ireland's first punk rock band.

For four glorious years The Radiators blazed a trail, boldly venturing where no other band had gone before, pushing beyond the final frontiers of rock.

The first single, Television Screen, was followed by an impressive debut album, TV Tube Heart, in the summer of '77.

They then decided to try their luck in London and in 1979 released their eagerly-awaited second LP Ghostown.

But although Ghostown was critically acclaimed and hailed by some people as the finest rock album to come out of Ireland, it failed to make the impact in Britain that would have moved the band into the big league.

A combination of financial and legal problems halted their progress and at the start of 1981, a few months after a highly successful Irish tour, the band sadly decided to call it a day.

Now, six years later The Radiators have reformed and are back in town for a once-off concert in Hawkins next Sunday night, a benefit gig organised by the Gay Health Action Group under the Action Against Aids banner.

"A lot of people think that we disappeared into obscurity," reflected guitarist Pete Hoidai as he took a break from rehearsals for next Sunday's gig. "But we were very popular in London after we moved over there and we had a good following overseas in places like France and Japan."

So what went wrong? "We didn't have a manager and that created a lot of problems. If I had a chance to do it all over again I'd get Paul McGuinness to manage us."

According to Hoidai, who wrote some of the band's finest songs, including the classic Million Dollar Hero, the royalty cheques are still coming in and their records continue to sell overseas.

● Benefit

And Phil Chevron has told him that he has seen some of the fans at Pogues gigs (Chevron joined The Pogues in 1985) wearing Radiators T-shirts.

"There still seems to be a genuine affection for the band and both Phil and myself are often stopped in the streets by 17 and 18 year olds who would have been too young to remember The Radiators when the band started out but who have picked up on our music since."

THE RADIATORS (l. to r.): Pete, Phil, Steve, Jimmy and Mark.



Radiating again

They're back! Colin Kerr remembers the good old days of raw, vibrant rock

When The Radiators were around, the lack of venues and other facilities left them with an uphill battle as they tried to make a decent living out of music. Hoidai says that things have improved since then.

"Nowadays, Irish musicians who are based over here can compete internationally because we have the back-up system."

But there is very little

prospect of the Radiators reforming permanently to cash in on the healthier climate that exists in 1987. Chevron is enjoying a new lease of life with the Pogues while Hoidai is playing guitar with the hotly tipped Dublin band Light A Big Fire. Steve Averill, aka Steve Rapld, is best known now as the design artist for U2.

"The split was amicable and we still see each



LIGHT A BIG FIRE: Pete Hoidai is now with Dublin's 'other local heroes.'

other as much as we can but I couldn't really see us getting back together unless it was to do the occasional benefit concert

like next Sunday's gig in Hawkins."

And it's probably better that way. It's usually a bad idea for old hands to

try to relive old glories, but at least for an hour next Sunday. The Radiators will bring back a few fond memories.



RADIATING THE MESSAGE

WHEN THE Pogues were approached by Gay Health Action and asked to participate in a benefit gig for Aid To Fight AIDS in January, they were reluctantly obliged to decline as they were already committed to doing an Australian tour then.

For Philip Chevron this was particularly disappointing: he had already been forced to abandon plans for an AIDS benefit he was arranging because of the logistical problems inherent in arranging an event in Dublin from London. So, in return, he proposed reforming the original Radiators (From Space) for a one-off benefit gig on a date in September which suited the other four ex-Rads. It happens this Sunday, the 13th at Hawkins.

UNSAFE SEX

"It's important that people are seen to give support to Gay Health Action and Aid To Fight AIDS as these are the most important AIDS information organisations in the country," Philip argues. "In most countries such organisations are being supported by their governments but that is not the case here. The government here has given these organisations the res-

ponsibility for spreading information without giving finance. There is an obvious need for correct information. In their campaign the government here has said that casual sex spreads AIDS, and that, strictly speaking, isn't true. It is unsafe sex that spreads AIDS. But the 'moral' aspect of the government's campaign is, I suppose, inevitable."

Apart from the desire to help raise money for and to help publicise Aid To Fight AIDS, Philip was motivated by another factor. "The Terence Higgins Trust is the counterpart of the Gay Health Action Group in England, and in England gay musicians have lent their support to it and represented it. I think it's important that this is done here and that gay musicians lend their support to the gay community. And there are more gay musicians here than you might imagine."

IN THE CLOSET

Philip says that he has been fortunate in that no friend of his has contracted AIDS in any form. "I haven't had a personal experience of a friend of mine dying or anything. But I was speaking to someone in London recently who was telling me he was going to

funerals every four or five weeks. I'm not really part of the gay community in London. I'm more on the fringe because I don't really spend any more time in London now than I do in Dublin."

So what can we expect at the gig? Basically all the old songs, some of which, Philip feels, are even more relevant today than at the time of writing. Or at least more easily understood. "Let's Talk About The Weather" is a song about being in the closet which I wrote when I was in the closet, so it's not surprising that few people understood it. Bill Graham was about the only person who did."

Philip reveals that amongst other surprises The Radiators may play a new song written by Philip "if I've finished it in time", which Philip describes as being "relevant to the occasion while not being about it." The intrigue!

This island has never produced a better band than The Radiators. They have reformed to draw attention to a cause that is of pressing importance to us all. If you are not at Hawkins on Sunday you have no excuse.

John McNeive

Hot Press 10/9/87

The rise and fall of the Health Education Bureau



● Dr Harry Crawley outside the Health Education Bureau's offices in happier days, shortly after his appointment as director by Mr Haughey.

THE greatest irony in the abolition of the Health Education Bureau by Charles Haughey's hairshirt government is that 10 years ago, when Fianna Fail swept into power with a mandate to spend, spend and spend again, and Mr Haughey took over as Minister for Health, it was the HEB he chose to become one of the showpieces of his term in office.

In its first two years of existence it had achieved little. Set up by Brendan Corish in 1975 with a budget of £160,000 and a small staff of less than impressive civil servants seconded from other departments, it marked time until Mr. Haughey, with his famous eye for a good publicity gimmick, boosted its budget to £1 million and appointed a clever young psychiatrist, Dr Harry Crawley, as its director.

The revamped bureau did its new backer proud. Dr Crawley brought in a team of bright young educationalists and publicists who in the late 70s and early 80s started to cover the country with eye-catching posters urging everything from giving up smoking to inoculating babies.

The emphasis in that period was on teaching people through high-profile poster and media campaigns. Around 1982-83 its priorities changed somewhat in favour of training teachers, doctors and other professionals to pass on its messages; programmes for schoolchildren and other young people; and building up stocks of booklets, education packs, films and videos and other training materials.

Andy Pollak reviews the work of the HEB over the past 12 years, and examines the impact of its abolition on public health awareness.

The HEB says more than 2,000 teachers have gone through its training courses; it produces and distributes 1.5 million items of health education leaflets and booklets alone every year, covering 106 different subjects; and it receives around 2,000 direct requests for health information every month.

The bureau is, in fact, the only place in the country which an ordinary person can phone up and get information about everything from backache to cancer, first aid to AIDS. It is highly unlikely that the civil service bosses of the Department's proposed health promotion unit will allow such openness and accessibility.

Among HEB's best-known promotions were the "If you drink, don't die" television, radio and poster campaign at the end of 1979, which used well-known media personalities to put across a powerful pre-Christmas message to young adults and adolescents.

From 1982 onwards the bureau launched a series of superbly designed anti-smoking posters using plays on the word "knot". There was some suggestion however, that just as in other countries which had mounted strong anti-smoking campaigns around this time, these had little effect on the number of young people taking up the habit.

Another campaign which did have a marked effect on people's

attitudes was last year's successful drive to persuade mothers to get their children vaccinated against measles.

Also in 1982 the HEB put a lot of resources into a campaign to discourage young people from using drugs, using a high-profile media and poster campaign combined with less spectacular work to train teachers about the threat of drugs to young people. It produced glossy guides for parents, too, leading to some queries about whether it was targeting those groups in society most at risk from drugs.

Less doubt was cast on the usefulness of its constant campaigns on less highly-publicised areas of public health: its posters on nutrition, dental care to health and safety at work adorned the walls of hospitals, doctors' waiting rooms and community centres the length and breadth of the country, and were the only glimpse thousands of working-class people got of the gospel of primary health care.

By 1987 the Health Education Bureau was spending £2 million per year, this year entirely funded from the National Lottery. The 200 voluntary and self-help groups it assisted are united in their concern about the effect its passing will have on the funding of their individual educational and information campaigns.

The main criticism levelled at the HEB was its cost-effectiveness. It was said that Dr Crawley and his team were too image-conscious, too fond of smart press receptions, and too ready to spend large sums on designing costly posters and producing costly videos.

However, the HEB's most controversial initiative was its recent series of pilot "life skills" programmes in schools. These deal not only with basic health subjects such as hygiene and nutrition, but also with sexuality, personal and family relationships, value systems and lifestyles.

This new programme, proposed during Gemma Hussey's tenure as Minister for Education, was strongly criticised by senior bishops led by the late Archbishop McNamara, and campaigned against by right-wing Catholic pressure groups such as Family Solidarity. These often appeared to suspect the HEB of being the intellectual author of Irish beliefs to undermine traditional Irish beliefs in religion and the family.

Dr O'Hanlon, himself a conservative in such matters, may not have been totally immune to such powerfully-brokered lobbyists. There was no mention of what would happen in the "life skills" programme in his meeting with the HEB's board yesterday. However, despite the occasional criticism, few people involved in health care would deny

that the HEB has done an enormous amount to bring a new awareness of the dangers of such late 20th century scourges as smoking, drugs and alcoholism to public notice. In the words of the HEB's board yesterday, it has come to be regarded nationally as an independent, credible, reliable source of information on health matters.

It is the loss of this independence from the dictates of the Department of Health that many health promotion specialists such as Dr Geoffrey Bourke, Professor of Community Medicine at UCD, are particularly concerned about.

However, Professor Bourke emphasises that health education — persuading the public to adopt healthy habits and to forego unhealthy ones — is only one part of health promotion. He points out that if the Government were to pursue an active health promotion policy — which for example could see it passing legislation limiting the levels of certain harmful nutrients in food — it would be a great step forward.

Some HEB workers believe the bureau's own emphasis on the need for a stronger Government policy on health promotion, which would inevitably bring it into conflict with powerful interests in the food, drink and tobacco industries, may have played a part in its downfall.

They point to the fact that the Government is only following the example of the British Government, which earlier this year scrapped its own independent health education agency, the Health Education Council, choosing to substitute it into the Department of Health and Social Services.

Ireland 'laughing stock' over condom prosecution

THE prosecution of the Irish Family Planning Association for alleged unlawful selling of condoms at Dublin's Virgin Megastore nine months ago was welcomed yesterday by Family Solidarity.

But the summons, issued by the Director of Public Prosecutions under Section 2 of the Health (Family Planning) Amendment Act 1985, would again make Ireland a laughing stock, the IFPA claimed.

The summons alleges that IFPA sold a contraceptive "to a person unknown" on January 10 last. The case will be heard in the Dublin District Court at 2 p.m. on October 24 next.

Mr. Des McDonald, secretary of Family Solidarity said yesterday that the prosecution was "appropriate" and was consistent with the

spirit of the Health (Family Planning) Act 1979 and the 1985 Amendment Act.

Those Acts laid down provisions for the distribution of contraceptives through pharmacists, health boards and family planning centres, and the law should be upheld, he said.

But spokespersons for the IFPA say that they will trenchantly contest any allegation that they are in breach of the law. As far as the IFPA is concerned its selling of condoms in the Virgin store on Saturdays is legal.

It was business as usual yesterday at the IFPA counter at Virgin for the sale of condoms. Sales of condoms began there at the start of this year originally on a daily basis but they are now confined to

Saturdays.

According to Ms. Christine Donaghy, the IFPA chief executive, the prosecution is based on the sale of a packet of condoms to someone on January 10 last.

The Act, as amended in 1985, imposed an age limit of 18, abolished the need for a doctor's prescription and dropped the original "bona fide family planning" qualification in relation to the legal supply of contraceptives by pharmacists and health boards.

Ms. Donaghy added: "In the light of the seriousness of the worldwide AIDS crisis and the rising rate of unplanned pregnancies this summons serves only to highlight the ludicrous nature of the contraceptive laws that still exist in the Republic."



• Vicki O'Connell selling the condoms yesterday in the Virgin Megastore.

IT was business as usual yesterday at the condom stall in Dublin's Virgin megastore — despite a threat of prosecution.

The Irish Family Planning Association which runs the stall has revealed that it will continue to sell condoms at the store every Saturday — despite being served with a summons alleging that the practice is illegal.

By noon yesterday Vicki O'Connell, a voluntary worker with the IFPA, had sold £40 worth of condoms.

"Business is quite good," she told SUNDAY WORLD.

She added that the customers were mostly male.

The summons was issued by the Director of Public Prosecutions and the case will be heard in the Dublin District Court next month.

Ms. Christine Donaghy, chief executive of the IFPA, said that in light of the seriousness of the worldwide AIDS crisis and the rising rate of unplanned pregnancies, the summons served only to highlight the "ludicrous nature of the contraceptive laws that still exist in this country."

She went on: "It is both inhumane and silly for a law to restrict the sale of condoms in this way when condoms provide much needed and valuable protection for those who choose to use them.

"Condoms, a responsible and positive contribution to health promotion, are not dangerous and not damaging to your health. The responsible use of condoms as both contraceptives and prophylactics should be encouraged by both the law and State health policies.

"This summons will cause Ireland to be seen, once again, as the laughing stock of Europe as our contraceptive laws and policies remain incomprehensible to our European neighbours — and rightly so," she said.

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The Times
10th September 1987

Condom action

VIRGIN RECORDS has fallen foul of Ireland's family planning legislation. Eamonn Barnes, the Irish director of public prosecutions, will attempt to stop the sale of condoms at the Virgin store in Dublin in a district court case expected next month. Only chemists and health boards can legally supply contraceptives.

5 ✓