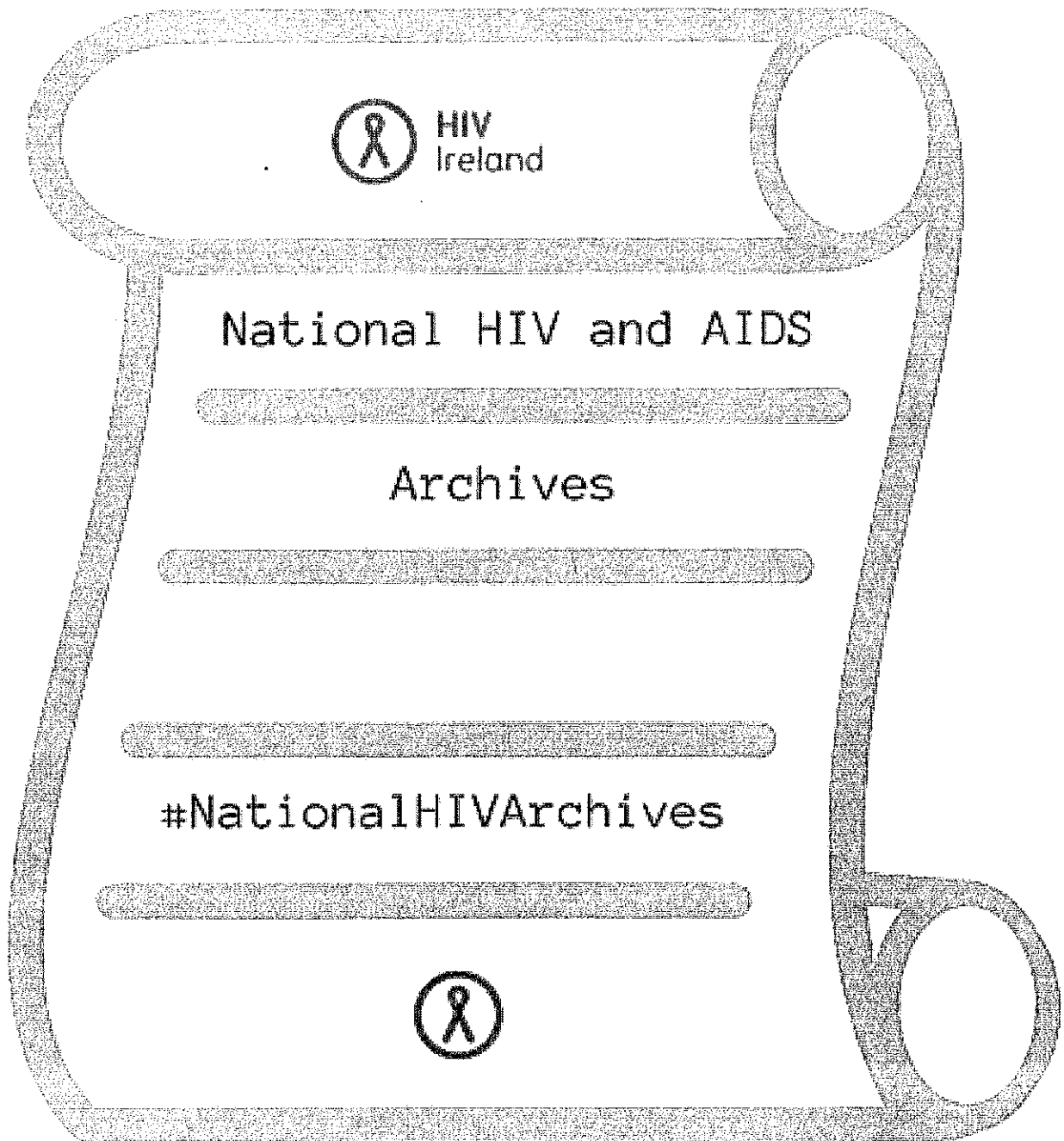


Print Media



16th to 18th May 1987

AIDS virus

Sir — It is being suggested that the use of condoms to prevent the transmission of the AIDS virus is legitimate, and that the use can be condoned by the Church. The intention is not contraceptive, the argument runs, and so the use is not covered by the Church's condemnation of contraception.

But a prior question needs to be faced. Is the use of the condom a direct sterilisation of the act of sexual intercourse?

If it is, then the use is morally unacceptable, regardless of the intention inspiring it. I find it impossible to see how wearing a condom can be other than an act of direct sterilisation.

The intention may be to prevent the transmission of the AIDS virus, but the deed sterilises directly the act of intercourse. The sterilisation may not be what is directly desired, but it is so directly caused that it cannot be put outside the intention.

In short, I do not see how the principle of double effect can be applied here, and so the use of the condom does fall under the Church's general prohibition and can not be condoned.

MICHAEL C.

McGUCKIAN S.J.

Della Strada,
Dooradoyle Rd.,
Limerick.

A Chara — Regarding the "Late Late Show" on May 15, my sympathy went with the man in the audience who was "a wee bit disappointed" with the practical lesson on the condom. I think he was as sad on his way home as I was.

I recalled Marie Antoinette, Queen of France, whose heart was broken, not by the prospect of her approaching death by guillotine, but by the alienation of her children by the new power in France.

I think some aspects of the media, especially television, constitute a form of persecution, that the older generation has to endure — unintentional, I hope. The accusation of being old and ignorant is only a minor example. Their ideals and traditions are being constantly denigrated and sometimes held up to ridicule. That generation has taken on board more changes in their *modus vivendi*, socially and economically, than any previous generation, and have done so mostly with dignity.

To tell us we can turn off the knob is facile; we do pay our licences, and we must extend courtesy to other viewers in the family. To tell us that this or that is reality is less than complimentary to the majority of people.

The media, especially television, is our new preacher, and we don't have to travel to hear its doctrine. I know the Director of Programmes had to portray a balanced view, as he sees it. But a producer must be sorely tempted to be seen as modern and up-to-date. He has a very onerous task indeed. "It must needs be that scandals come," said Christ, but He added: "Woe to him through whom they come."

MATILDA COONEY

Luggacurran,
Portlaoise.

Sexual promiscuity among politicians was quite widely regarded with indulgence, even with a touch of admiration. But in America now AIDS is casting a dark shadow over such relationships.

'PRESIDENTIAL Hopefuls Uneasy About Questions On Adultery.'

So read a headline on the front page of Thursday's New York Times. Gary Hart is politically dead, as far as Presidential contests are concerned, but his ghost is still haunting the Presidential campaign. The Press in the course of the week bombarded all the Presidential candidates with questions like these:

"Do you consider adultery to be a legitimate campaign issue and voter concern?"

"How should a hypothetical Presidential candidate who has not committed adultery answer the question 'Have you ever committed adultery?'"

"How should a hypothetical candidate who has committed adultery answer the same question?"

Almost all the candidates hedged, very naturally. Candidates know that the idea of "legitimate" or "illegitimate" voting concerns is a very slippery one to handle in an electoral context. What is of actual concern to the voter — whether the concern is held to be legitimate or not — is all that really matters.

The fact that a given "voting concern" — e.g. about a candidate's suspected adultery — is deemed to be illegitimate, does not deprive a vote so motivated of any part of its electoral validity. The fact that Gary Hart considered the question of his own alleged adultery to be politically irrelevant, did not prevent that question from being so politically relevant that it biased his political career, within a week from the day when the question came to the fore.

The remaining Presidential candidates cannot classify adultery as politically irrelevant, without the risk of arousing suspicion, in that large category of voters which does not share that view. On the other hand, the candidates cannot say flatly that it is politically irrelevant, without risking a loss of support from that other large category of voters which sympathised with Gary Hart, and still resents his treatment at the hands of the media.

So the candidates hedge. What else can they do? Demos is a harsh and capricious master, and hates to be contradicted, especially when he is engaged in contradicting himself.

The nervous, muffled answers of the candidates to those questions are not of much interest. But the questions themselves are very interesting, constituting as they do an altogether new phenomenon in American electoral history.

Presidential candidates have never before been faced with public questioning of this kind. The original question, put at a Press Conference to Gary Hart, "Have you ever committed adultery?" seems still to boggle minds, and prompt further questions in this area. The press itself does not seem sure why it has suddenly started behaving in this apparently prurient way.

The separation of sex from politics was once almost as strict a rule in America as the rule of the separation of Church from State. During the 1960 Presidential campaign a reporter assigned to the lobby of John Kennedy's Manhattan Hotel to keep watch on the political comings and goings there, informed his editor that Kennedy was being visited by "A well known actress" (probably Marilyn Monroe). "There's no story in that," ruled the editor. Not many editors could be relied on to

Politics of Aids



hand down a similar ruling, in 1987.

So what has happened? I haven't seen any convincing explanation. So let me offer some thoughts and guesses of my own.

The basic phenomenon that has to be explained, in the Gary Hart case, is that people seemed to be more worried about the possibility that he might be a womaniser, than people used to be about such a possibility on the part of earlier candidates and presidents. My guess is that, like much else that seems to be going on in the subconsciousness of Americans in the '80s, this phenomenon is AIDS-connected.

Up to about 1981 sexual promiscuity used to be quite widely regarded with indulgence, and even a touch of admiration, as lending a bit of spice and dash to a politician's reputation. (An attitude not unknown in Ireland today). But in America, as the '80s draw to a close, AIDS is casting a dark and lengthening shadow over such patterns of relationships.

Even the bare possibility that a President might be elected who would die of AIDS is enough to give Americans the heebie-jeebies.

Everyone knows that a multiplicity of sexual relationships increases the danger of AIDS. So promiscuity begins to look, no longer dashing, but sinister in its implications. Even the bare possibility that a president might be elected who would die of AIDS in the Whitehouse is enough to give many Americans the screaming heebie-jeebies.

Hence, I think, the new nervousness, hence the questions, surfacing out of depths of subconscious anxiety. We are, after all, talking about some of the side effects of a plague, now in its early stages.

It is reckoned that 1.5 million of Americans have been exposed to the Aids virus. By the end of the century, barring a medical breakthrough — about one fifth



Donna Rice: questions, few answers.

of all Americans are expected to be so exposed. And the U.S. Surgeon-General has warned that no medical breakthrough, with widespread effects, seems likely before the end of the century.

Of course, similar prospects face most, perhaps all, other countries. But America is now deeper into the nightmare than other countries. And America is less used to nightmares than others.

Most of the discussion of AIDS so far has necessarily been clinically oriented, and concerned with prevention. Yet it is already clear that the disease must also have far-reaching social and political consequences. It is likely for example, to affect race relations, and probably for the worse. The category most exposed to the virus, and least apt to change its behaviour in order to reduce the exposure, consists of poor drug abusers using dirty needles. And most of these are blacks in the inner cities. These drug abusers will become even more frightening than they already are, both to whites and — especially — to the other blacks, among whom they live.

One thing that seems certain is that all this will have become a lot worse, and more conspicuous, than it is now, by the time the Presidential election comes round in November 1988 (assuming Ronald Reagan holds out till then). What bearing the AIDS factor might have on that contest is largely unpredictable. Yet, one or two patterns may already, perhaps, be seen emerging.

On the Republican side, the AIDS factor seems likely to strain the relations between two of the components in the Reaganite coalition: the Moral Majority, mainly based

on the Bible Belt, and the upwardly mobile urban young (Yuppies). Jerry Falwell, Moral Majority leader, has appeared to view AIDS with favour as God's punishment on sinners (including, presumably, haemophiliacs, and people who get transfusions of infected blood).

The young, more at risk from AIDS than their elders, seem unlikely to view the Falwell approach with much favour. If the Moral Majority are as prominent in 1988, on the Republican side, as they were in 1980 and 1984, many young people might desert the Republicans.

On the other hand, if for that and other reasons — for example, the scandals of "Pearlygate" and the misfortunes of the TV preachers — the Republicans were to snub the Moral Majority, they might lose some votes in the South.

On the Democratic side the relevant tensions are mainly between the white "ethnic" blocs — Poles, Italians, Irish, Czechs, etc. — and the "racial" minorities, mainly blacks and Puerto Ricans. AIDS seems likely to make these tensions worse. This factor affects, even now, the chances of the Rev. Jesse Jackson, and, in longer perspective, puts in doubt the Democratic hopes of the Presidency, bright as these have seemed to become, with the spectacular decline of the Reagan Administration, during the last six months.

Since the fall of Gary Hart, Jesse Jackson appears as Democratic front runner. He is a black, and, outside the Jackson campaign, has been a vocal proponent of the "black power" movement. He is also a Presidential nominee in 1988. He would, possibly, on the basis of his black bloc support, build up a strong making position, at the Democratic Convention and make an effective bid, for the Vice-Presidential slot on the Democratic ticket.

The original question, put to Gary Hart, 'Have you ever committed adultery?' seems still to boggle minds, and prompt further questions . . .

By playing his cards carefully, as he is now doing, Jesse Jackson could come to play a major role at the Democratic Convention, and win the Vice-Presidential slot on the party ticket. The question is, what would happen then?

There would obviously be one great "plus" for the Democrats. Large numbers of blacks, who would not otherwise vote at all, would come out to vote for a Democratic ticket which included Jesse Jackson. But would that ticket cost the Democrats more white votes than it would win in black votes?

Not necessarily. Most white racists — though by no means all — now vote Republican anyway. Many white Democrats would be glad to see a good, black candidate on the ticket. And Jesse Jackson looks like a good candidate this year, as last year he did not.

Yet I fear the potential effects of the AIDS factor on all that. Not just the specific heavy incidence of AIDS in the inner cities, but the general climate of plague, always conducive to increased suspicion and avoidance of strangers. Yet other, counterbalancing factors may appear. And surprises. Who foresaw what has just happened to Gary Hart?

Romance is dead in a flash at Trinity Ball

IRISH TIMES, SAT. 16th MAY, 1987

By Kathryn Holmquist

AMID the romance of the Trinity Ball last night, a flashing sign implored the guests to 'play safe' — use a condom. Condoms available in the Student Union shop, now open.

So while the young women in their ballgowns and the young men in their tuxedos played out the enduring Trinity ritual of promenading arm-in-arm through the arch, they were being disabused of any notions they might have had of 'being carried away'.

And for those who had no notions of being carried away in the first place, the vital issue was the etiquette of the situation. Does one ignore the sign or comment politely upon it? Could this be viewed by one's escort as a leading question?

For those of us old enough to remember romance before AIDS, there was no use in feeling sentimental. The Ball has survived the onslaughts of rock 'n' roll, miniskirts, punk, the Pogues and the almost annual rain over the past 30 years — it will survive condoms. And clearly the Trinity Week Committee was determined that as many as possible of the 5,000 young people who were having the times of their lives last night will survive the AIDS epidemic.

What more appropriate setting could there be, after all, than the legendary Ball to show that flights of the heart and safe sex can go hand-

in-hand? Although, as the starry-eyed couples strolled elegantly beneath the flashing AIDS message board, not one of them seemed the slightest bit interested in consummating their relationship there within the quadrangle. Not only was it too cold, but there was just too much old-fashioned fun to be had.

In fact, the students' first lesson in how to bring the issue of AIDS and condoms into the open without social embarrassment was only one of the hundreds of attractions on offer. The traditional madness was as irresistible as the romance was indestructible.

It's not called the social event of the year for nothing. As usual, there was hectic dancing to 33 bands. Meanwhile, thousands of hangovers were created, dresses became ever more bedraggled, tuxedos ever more creased and facial expressions ever more enthusiastic.

And, as usual, there were the heroic but futile efforts to jump the wall and crash the party. But security was tight and only holders of the £35 per couple tickets (£75 on the black market) were allowed in.

Except, that is, for the 50 who paid £80 a ticket for the charity reception in the Atrium in aid of the Trinity AIDS Concern Trust, helping to bring the total funds raised for the charity during Trinity Week to £6,000.

Irish Times
16th May 1987

EEC condemns compulsory AIDS screening

**From Rebecca Franceskides,
in Brussels**

EEC HEALTH Ministers yesterday condemned compulsory mass screening, especially at borders, to identify possible AIDS victims.

There were fears that some countries such as West Germany were ready to introduce obligatory blood tests to prevent the entry of AIDS sufferers.

Earlier in the week the German Interior Minister, Mr Friedrich Zimmermann, had proposed that Germany should close its borders to AIDS victims. But at yesterday's meeting the German Health Minister, Mrs Rita Suessmuth, said that there were no such plans.

The Minister for Health, Dr O'Hanlon, said that Ireland now had 19 cases of AIDS and there

had been 12 deaths from the virus. He said that the only weapon at Government's disposal to fight AIDS was public information.

He opposed obligatory mass screening as a way of finding and controlling the spread of the infection or identifying AIDS victims. He said Ireland would be against restricting the entry of AIDS carriers.

He did not want to see notification of the virus made compulsory, as this would breach confidentiality and put people off reporting the illness.

In a joint statement after the meeting Ministers said they opposed "any policy of systematic and compulsory screening, in particular during health checks at frontiers."

SV04

Irish Times
16th May 1987

AIDS trace is ruled out

EEC health ministers yesterday ruled out suggestions of compulsory follow-up investigations for AIDS patients, writes Bernard Purcell from Brussels.

Ministers met in Brussels to discuss co-ordinating research and public information campaigns for AIDS and cancer.

The consensus at the meeting was that compulsory notification for AIDS patients and their sexual contacts would be undesirable.

"It was decided that if this did happen it might stop people turning up for examination and there is a need for confidentiality in such matters, ministers believed," said Irish Health Minister Rory O'Hanlon.

Ministers also ruled out any suggestion of border controls which would forbid access to suspected carriers.

There has been no pressure on Ireland to emphasise the desirability of condoms, Dr. O'Hanlon said.

Meanwhile, Britain refused to back a planned £16 million EEC anti-cancer campaign until the cost is cut by more than half.

SUNDAY INDEPENDENT, MAY 17, 1987

RTE medium AIDS message

FOR one whole week RTE became the great AIDS moving picture show. Our national broadcasting network became our national AIDS campaign and if proof were needed that the medium is the message, this was it.

The lay people who put the programmes together were more unshockable, clinical — and therefore caring — than the Health Education Bureau.

Today Tonight led the way. They shirked no issues. Michael Henry's penetrating handling included laying hands on dying AIDS victims. Although the thrust of their campaign was phallic and fearless, the devastating irony is that in Ireland AIDS is less a sexually-transmitted disease than a result of chronic drug abuse.

Borderline, normally a funkier and softer focussed affair, took a hard line on safe sex. To make their point they had an antibody positive person taking part. He told a harrowing tale: seven months after testing for AIDS, he hadn't been given any result and had unprotected sex with two girlfriends.

By ANNE HARRIS

Borderline is for young people and subtlety doesn't have to be part of their marketing profile. They hammered their message home simply: don't carry the can, carry a condom.

As the week wore on, so did the expressions of goodness and liberalism and suddenly a hazard of media saturation appeared: to be caring is good, but to be that caring can also be tedious.

It was with this treacherous sentiment lurking in the background that the Late Late Show had to begin the job of wrapping up the week.

Gay Byrne was slightly apologetic at the outset. He knew we'd heard everything we wanted to know. All he was doing was giving us a sort of summary.

And, of course, he did nothing of the sort. He created a brand new programme. It was magnetic, and irresistible. It was less about AIDS and more about sex and the Irish.

There was Fr. Paul Lavelle, delicately walking the razor's edge of compassion and theology. With

his right hand he clutched at the condom as a preventative for disease. With his left hand, he threw it away as a contraceptive.

Dr. Harry Cawley of the Health Education Bureau was as reticent as his AIDS campaign, until he explained that all the material was censored by the Department of Health.

Dr. Derek Friedman, normally a pioneer of the prophylactic, was strangely low-key in the face of religious objections.

Journalist Ann-Marie Hourihane punctuated the show with three mini-sermons, used in a variety of different ways. She spoke about the realities of sex and young people, the role of the condom and the rude necessity of talking about sex as a nation.

And that was precisely what RTE did for the country with its AIDS campaign — engaged it in one long dialogue with itself about sex. And if some of it — like Gay Byrne's very explicit commentary on using a condom — was not for the weak-minded, everyone who cares agrees about the necessity for strong measures.

All in all, it was a pro-life week.

ful in her modelling
ays. The fashion busi-
ess was "tedious and
underpaid."

And in the 15 months after it, she moved through the PR world of London like a whirlwind, stopping first at Lynn Franks — the last buzz in PR — and then at enfant terrible Jasper Conran's.

Brand war raging

... sees it her decision to
... the running of Red Stripe
... the Patrick manages the
... and Gung-ho was not
... decision at all.

"There's a relevance and a passion in currently doing guerrilla work in fashion," says Berman. "In fact I'm able to use the same contacts. The only difference is how seriously taboo subject matter is considered, and how reasonable, designatise

it. I know this isn't something ex-fashion models normally do, but the time is right for it."

Indeed, the timing couldn't be better. Bigger companies, such as London Rubber, Lifestyles and Jiffi are all entering the marketing front with bared teeth and sometimes tasteless tactics. Jiffi in particular sells itself by use of gimmicks like flavourings, ribbing, and dubious slogans. The rest, claim Paula, are simply boring.

"Our sense of style is more serious," she explains. "We're actually aiming at the target of responsibility in these times of AIDS, STDs, and cervical cancer. Red Stripe carries a safe sex guide — and I think we're the only one that does. I know life certainly doesn't."

Despite the seemingly radical change of career, Paula stresses that she's always found the fashion business tedious, as well as underpaid, and that taking over Red Stripe has added a whole new dimension to her career.

The rubber boom caught a lot of people by surprise and left small companies like Red Stripe very little time to make marketing decisions.

There have been a lot of problems, not the least of which is that the bigger companies would prefer if Red Stripe weren't around as a competitive terrier to nip at their heels. Red Stripe has, in fact, already run up a £6,000 debt defending itself against allegations by London Rubber, many of them ridiculously minor in the first instance and later dismissed.

"We entered the market so quickly that there was little time to think all these things out," explains Paula. "We import directly from France and, initially, our boxes and inserts weren't even in English."

How does one go about improving the image of a humble prophylactic? Red Stripe has been dubbed the "Designer Condom", which Paula dislikes, feeling that it makes light of the life or death issues at stake, like AIDS.

But after five years in the fashion business she well understands that marketing strategy must be geared at the designer level.

"The same young people who buy fashion gear will be buying Red Stripe," says Paula.

You've surely heard people joking about taking out shares in the condom industry. Have those who have done so realised a profit yet?

"The American boom started before ours," says Paula, "and I think

Paula and Pat Moylett. She has taken over his Red Stripe business, while he manages a new rock band.

The reason is, because heterosexual men are still not using them. "I talk to your average man in a pub," says Paula, "and you'll find he'll still just laugh about it." She agrees with Fitz Taylor that it may have to take a glamorous heterosexual woman to die of AIDS before people will realise this isn't a minority disease.

1 "And the press can be very irresponsible about investigating the extent of the disease. It seems to be well understood that Vincent Hanly could have died of AIDS and yet the press in Ireland is more concerned about protecting his family than discovering the truth."

Ireland, she realises, has its own sets of problems. It's Patrick Moylett's

sister Veronica who markets Red Stripes in Ireland, but Paula, who is from the North, can imagine the difficulties. "Young people are the same all over the world, but in Ireland there's a particular problem about what the state will allow in terms of marketing. We can't be explicit and this is going to cause problems."

In the end, Paula agrees that perhaps targeting women for condom sales may be one aspect of necessary techniques. AIDS aside, condom use may turn out to be God's gift to the women's movement. No more thrust wars, bladder infections, herpes, gonorrhea or chlamydia. And no more dangerous contraceptives like the coil and the pill.

"Women have always been more responsible than men when it comes to their health," she says. "Even the rhythm method was a woman's role." Just hope it won't take too many more casualties for people to recognize the extent of the problem. "I've struck his neck out in this business initially, he was very brave, very courageous. We've been living from hand to mouth up until now."

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Sunday Press
17th May 1987

Late Late condoms — no Church ire

THE Late Late Show's explicit demonstration of the use of condoms was "quite constructive" but would offend the moral sensibilities of many people, said the Catholic Press Office yesterday.

Reacting to the programme, which received immediate complaints from many appalled viewers, the director of the Catholic Press Office, Mr. Jim Cantwell, said it was difficult to know what precise audience was being addressed. "But perhaps one of its effects was to show that the use of condoms in the context of AIDS is not risk free, and we are talking about a killer disease for which there is no known cure."

RTE defended their decision to show the demonstration which was similar to one shown on British TV recently. Viewers had been warned by Gay Byrne that some might not find the item suitable. But an RTE spokeswoman Elis Pearce said the information was intended to show how to use condoms properly if they were to work as a disease barrier.

She said that RTE feels it has nothing to apologise for and was not encouraging the use of condoms but was stating the effects of their use. "It covered all aspects of the topic, including medical and social responsibility and the main thrust of our policy has been to be as factual as possible." The presentation had been carefully planned, she added.

Mr. Cantwell said the Church's essential message was a call to moral responsibility. The only certain was of avoiding AIDS was not to abuse drugs or sex, to be faithful to one's marriage

partner and to practice restraint outside marriage.

The capacity of people to respond to a message of this kind should not be underestimated because of the deadly nature of the disease.

The AIDS virus was most prevalent here within the drug culture and this group was very difficult to reach through a mass audience, which obviously needed special approaches to deal with its specific situation, added Mr. Cantwell.

Members of the gay community applauded RTE for its courage in putting out the programme and said that the explicitness was necessary to make people realise the extent of the problem.

Sunday World
17th May 1987

'Why choose Durex and not ours?' **IRISH** **CONDOMS** **FIRM SLAMS**

By DES
EKIN

IRELAND's only condom company has lashed out at RTE for boosting its British rival — Durex.

Veronica O'Leary, boss of the Monkstown-based company that packs and distributes R3 condoms, accused the Today Tonight programme of actively endorsing the Durex brand at the expense of her own.

Several times during their AIDS specials last week, Today Tonight showed packs of condoms with the brand-name of Durex clearly visible.

And the same thing happened on the RTE programme Borderline, according to Ms. O'Leary.

"It's disgraceful," she fumed this week. "By law, we're not allowed to advertise our brand of condoms."

"But yet the national broadcasting network — quite rightly drawing people's attention to the fact that condoms can help prevent the spread of AIDS — shows the public only the rival British brand."

Ms. O'Leary said she would have had no objection if RTE had shown the blank side of one of her own company's condoms, with no trade-name displayed.

"But they chose to use Durex, which has the brand-name repeatedly printed all over both sides of the pack."

However, an RTE spokesperson explained that Durex was only the only

brand the production team could lay their hands on at the time of filming.

"It was not our intention to endorse or demonstrate one particular brand at the expense of another," she said.

Insiders at RTE say strict instructions have since been issued that, in future, no brand name should be visible when condoms are shown on screen — particularly in the context of disease control.

Ms. O'Leary's company, Frederick Trading of Monkstown, is the only firm to distribute Irish-packed condoms.

Although the condoms R3 and Red Stripe are imported from Germany in



• Veronica O'Leary — fuming at RTE.

loose form, they are packed here in locally-manufactured boxes, providing

employment for Irish people, Ms. O'Leary pointed out.

Free one with girlie mag!

IRELAND's controversial girlie magazine "Esprit" is giving away a free-flavoured condom with every copy of its latest issue which comes out this week.

The Belfast-based magazine which features full

frontal nudes of local girls, has been appointed Irish distributor for Jiffi Condoms, which come in a flip-top, cigarette-type packet on sale from vending machines in pubs, clubs, high-street shops, restaurants and boutiques.

They also come in special flavours —

liquorice, strawberry, lemon, mint, orange and banana and are specially aimed at young people although they do carry a message saying that while sex isn't necessary for a fulfilling and caring relationship it's best to carry a Jiffi and be safe rather than sorry.



Freddie Mercury's ex-Irish personal manager Paul Prenter: he's caused a storm over his claims that the singer is living in fear of AIDS.

Freddie Mercury socks it to 'em at Slane last year.
Picture: TOM McELROY.

IRISHMAN IN FREDDIE'S GAY LOVES ROW

AN IRISHMAN is at the centre of a major row over allegations about the sex life of rock superstar Freddie Mercury.

Paul Prenter has claimed that the Queen lead singer had a string of gay love affairs and that two of his former boy-friends died recently of AIDS.

Belfast-born Prenter, who lives with his parents at Glenageary, Co. Dublin, was formerly Mercury's personal manager.

He made the allegations in a series of articles in a British newspaper on the personal life of the colourful rock star who performed for

By PAUL WILLIAMS

thousands of Irish fans at Slane Castle last year.

Now a furious Mercury has hit back at his former colleague. "I can't believe he'd do something like



Paul Prenter's home in Glenageary, Co. Dublin.

that," Mercury is quoted as saying.

Prenter who worked with "Flash Freddie" for nine

years rocked the music world with his claims that Mercury is living in fear that he too will contract the dreaded AIDS disease.

And this week SUNDAY WORLD traced Prenter to a secluded bungalow on Albert Road, Glenageary where he has been living quietly since the storm.

Prenter, who has been working with his brother who runs a bookmaker's shop on Queensboro Road, was reluctant to talk to us when we contacted him.

Prenter also claimed:

- Mercury slept with a string of men — with his conquests running into hundreds;

- He became terrified of sleeping on his own... and seldom did;

- He developed an obsession about his two cats and even went so far as phoning from Japan where he was touring and speaking to them;

- That he had one long-term relationship with a woman which ended in 1977 after which Mercury confessed he was an out-and-out gay.

When we called to Prenter's home, he was obviously very distraught by the pressure his revelations have brought upon him.

When he answered the door he said: "I don't want to talk to you... I have nothing to say and I don't want you to call here again."

Replying to Mercury's comments on his behaviour, Prenter said the rock

How would YOU react to an AIDS sufferer?



BEFORE you read any further, ask yourself (honestly now) how do you think you would react in the following situations. I say "think", because nobody really knows until it actually happens.

Just suppose you go to work some day and discover that someone you have to work closely with, every day, has AIDS. You have worked with him for years and you have shared your tea-breaks, went for the odd drink, known him quite well but never knew that he was gay until he tells you he has AIDS.

There is a whole group of "concerned" people who now want him fired. What will your decision be? Will you fight for him? Will you still share the tea-breaks and the drinks? Or will you keep your distance?

Or just suppose again that your son comes home from school some day and informs you that his ten-year-old classmate has AIDS. The child is a haemophiliac and has got a bad transfusion way back. Some of the crusty parents want the boy removed from the school.

Will you join the protest? What will you say to your son?

Would you invite the AIDS victim into your home?

Do you think your child should still play with his classmate?

And while we are still supposing, just suppose your young sister whom you have always suspected was involved in drugs up in Dublin, rings you all weepy someday and says that she has contracted AIDS from sharing a needle with her addict friends. She is shattered and wants to come home. She asks you to take her into your home. She might not have long to live, but you could have her dying in your home for a couple of years.

What would you say? How would you convince your spouse? What would you tell your parents? And what would you tell the neighbours?

I suggest you read no further and try to answer those questions; you might really surprise yourself.

I don't care what sort of religious person you think you are — even assuming that you are like the rest of the world and have yourself convinced that you are not a religious person, whatever that is. Your answers will be a truer guide to whether you are religious or not than any "practice" rules.

Those are real questions, all of us will have to answer with greater sincerity in the not too distant future. Those of us who are involved in parish work in Dublin have had to face those questions often in the past eight months.

By the end of this decade it is said that AIDS will become the number one killer disease. And if the history of this country's reaction to T.B. is any guide, we'll need to think long and hard about our attitudes.

The campaign now running about AIDS facts is not causing the reaction many thought it would. That could be for two reasons. Maybe

the British campaign was so startling that nothing shocks us. Or maybe we are just sweeping everything under the carpet, presuming that it will not happen to us or to our family.

As well as the health campaign, I am convinced we need an attitudes campaign. We need to think about AIDS, but we also need to think about how we can best minister to those who have and will contract AIDS.

Some Christian churches and some alleged Christians have not helped AIDS victims. They are responsible for the alienation AIDS victims suffer. They have been isolated.

When Fr. Lynch was on the Late Late recently he did a great deal to right the balance. Yet I thought even he was less than fair to the genuine efforts most church people have made in America.

It must be admitted that the "AIDS is a punishment from God" brigade, got all the publicity. People who spout such rubbish are not Christians. How can you say that a loving God is a vengeful God? If you have a warped, vicious image of God, you have no right to preach such a God and you have no right to impose such a God on anyone else. If AIDS is a punishment from God, for homosexual behaviour, as you so stupidly and maliciously maintain, how do you explain the fact that women, children and heterosexuals also suffer from AIDS?

Then there are other so-called Christians who have made no response at all.

I prefer Christians like Mother Teresa who, with the help of the Archdiocese of New York, has set up a home for AIDS sufferers where she ministers to the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of those poor people who have contracted such a final and debilitating illness.

I have found that AIDS sufferers see themselves as

modern day lepers. And Jesus showed us how we are to deal with such social outcasts.

He touched them, loved them, walked with them and healed them, even though ninety per cent forgot to thank him and everyone else condemned him.

If we believe in Jesus we must treat AIDS victims with love and compassion. We cannot afford to be judgemental nor can we condemn them. Jesus risked loving the lepers because he wanted us to know that all are loved equally by God. That every-



• Mother Teresa.

one can be reconciled with God.

He stood by them in time of need and gave them dignity. He joined his own suffering to theirs. People who suffer from AIDS are God's children too and therefore all are our brothers and sisters.

And it is not just a matter of loving them at a distance. If we want to be good human beings — without bringing religion into it at all — we have no choice but to support those who suffer from this or any other perplexing and terrible illness. We have to love by our presence, our concern, our spiritual help and by bringing them all the healing power at our disposal.

We have to help their families and we have to help those who are bereaved. When it comes to AIDS we have a duty first of all to know the facts.

I remember the first time I was dealing with AIDS vic-

tims, I was sceptical about drinking tea from the same cups, or even cuddling the babies who have AIDS because their mothers are AIDS victims.

There are those who think that you can get AIDS from turning the same door-knob that an AIDS person has turned. Or talking on the same telephone mouthpiece, or drinking from the same glass at a party.

In the beginning there was some excuse because there was such a hysterical outcry. But not now.

The people who have tried to sell Rock Hudson's mansion could tell you a thing or two about attitudes. They can't even give his mansion away.

We might prefer not to have to take away children's innocence, but nowadays education about AIDS must start at an early age because children have a right to know that they can grow up and avoid whatever activities might put them at risk from AIDS.

For those who have AIDS, the time for condemnation and judgment and moralising is long over. For those who have contracted AIDS there are no real moral issues anymore. Nor are there any sexual issues. That's all in the past. One priest put it perfectly when he told me, "I cannot change the past for the sufferer, but the worst thing I can do is to sit there and moralise and tell them it is all their fault."

What's the point in coming the heavy? What the victim needs is someone who will understand where they are at now.

Try to put yourself inside their heads.

Try to imagine the suffering they are undergoing. Try to think what it's like to have only a short time to live.

To live daily with the fact that any infection may come and that you have no resistance to it. Every cold becomes a possible pneumonia which could kill.

It is important to know that so far there is no cure. But there are other forms of healing.

If you succeed in convincing a dying person that they are loved by God, no matter what happened in the past, you have done more than words can describe.

You can tell them that they are God's children and you can bring them a sense of peace, a sense of dignity. The person with AIDS is a neighbour to be loved.

We have no choice but to be convinced ourselves that all people are loved and accepted by God. We have to rid ourselves of harshness and judgemental attitudes.

We have to become personally involved in loving and touching and caring for AIDS victims. We have to work hard for a cure. We have to ensure that attitudes which lead to the spread of AIDS don't go unchallenged. We have to be compassionate people.

Certainly we have to realise that AIDS is a preventable disease. And for that reason we have to support campaigns to make people aware.

But the thrust of this article is somewhat different. My primary concern is for AIDS sufferers, their families and friends who suffer so much with them.

In a word, as human beings, we cannot stand apart from the afflicted.

Now maybe you would like to go back to the first paragraph and see how you answer those "just suppose" questions. Let me know how you get on.

NOVENA OF HOPE:
THE Novena of Hope begins today in Mount Argus Church. Any of the Sunday Masses will do today or next week. On weekdays we have services at 10.00 a.m. and 7.30 p.m. On Wednesday, we'll have housewife of the year Milda Sheridan to speak. She's super. On Saturday next we have a special Mass for the sick at 2.30. As always you're welcome, no matter where you come from. If you want a novena leaflet, send an s.a.e. to "Novena of Hope", Mount Argus, Dublin 6.

Nurses cautioned On risk of Aids

A TOP patient care expert has told nurses that they themselves are going to need counselling and support after treating Aids patients.

Carmel Taaffe, the matron at Cherry Orchard Hospital in Dublin, told nurses that they would see and care for many young people who would die from Aids over the next few years.

"It's going to be very traumatic and nurses are going to need counselling and support to deal with it," she said in an address to an International Nurses Day Conference.

Ms. Taaffe said nurses would have to take extreme care to

avoid needle injuries. If they got such an injury, they should take the recommended steps and report to a superior.

She told nurses that in some cases they would not be aware that a patient's blood was antibody positive so it was necessary to follow set procedures with all patients.

She said it was much easier for nurses to become infected with hepatitis B than with the Aids virus. She warned nurses that there was no excuse for leaving used needles or syringes lying around. To do so would be criminally negligent.

Great care had to be taken with all sharp instruments, including theatre instruments, and with intravenous drips. When dealing with blood, protection had to be worn. Nurses should also avoid being bitten or scratched by patients.

Ms. Taaffe said it was not necessary to isolate Aids patients.

Linen with minor bloodstains would have to be specially wrapped before being sent to the laundry and washed at high temperatures. Linen with a lot of blood would be sent to the incinerator.

The matron warned that confidentiality to a greater degree than normal would be needed

and breaches would be reported to the fitness of practice committee of An Bord Altranais.

Nurses would have to pull out all the stops when it came to caring for Aids patients and there would have to be very close co-operation between nurses and doctors in the management of the disease.

She warned nurses to forget any hang-ups they might have about morals or drugs or homosexuality. Nurses had to create an atmosphere of trust and be supportive of the patient and keep him informed.

Nineteen people in Ireland have developed full-blown Aids and 12 of them are dead.

Synod told 'marriage sex only' may stop AIDS

By JOSEPH POWER and
BAIRBRE POWER

A REPORT on AIDS to the General Synod of the Church of Ireland this week says there is a good possibility that AIDS will eventually be contained and possibly eradicated in the long term if sexual intercourse is kept within marriage.

The report recommends that if AIDS is to be avoided by people who are married, chastity must be practised and those who are married, the report urges fidelity.

It may be that the AIDS disease will cause many heterosexual couples and homosexuals to seriously reconsider the

whole question of their sexual lifestyle, says the report.

The report holds that if the risk of illness and death can be reduced by the use of a condom, there is something to be said in favour of this precaution. However, it adds that to say that the disease can be eradicated by condoms is a counsel of despair.

And Health Minister Dr Roy O'Hanlon has admitted that infection from AIDS "is a major health risk for nurses."

In an address to a nurses conference delivered by the Chief Medical Officer at the Department of Health, Mr. Alphonsus Walsh, the Minister said he is aware that many nurses are seriously concerned about the AIDS virus and the way it can be spread.

In his experience, he said, "health care workers are just as likely as the public in general to develop irrational notions in relation to the virus in which the virus could be transmitted." The Government's AIDS information programme is designed to allay unfounded fears and set out clearly the four proven ways in which the virus can be transmitted from person to person.

Dr. O'Hanlon, who was unable to attend the International Nurses Day conference on health care for health workers because of a Council of Ministers meeting in Brussels, found that 70 per cent of health workers with AIDS had occupational exposures which gave them an increased risk of contracting the virus.

However, he says that needle stick injuries by all particular concern to nurses but WHO found that the chance of acquiring HIV from a needle stick injury is of the order of one per cent.

Worldwide evidence to date indicates that the risk of occupational transmission

of AIDS to health care workers can be eliminated by scrupulous attention to established procedures for infection control and the avoidance of needle stick injuries.

Dr. O'Hanlon points out:

Because of the Brussels meeting dealing with AIDS problems and the fight against cancer, Dr. O'Hanlon was also expected to miss Friday night's late show, which dealt explicitly with the AIDS problem and the use of condoms to help combat it.

And there are fears that the Government's £1 million national AIDS campaign may be proving counterproductive as people who fear they have AIDS antibodies refuse to come forward for tests.

Letters

The threat from AIDS

Sir — I have watched with interest and concern the two programmes about AIDS presented by "To-day To-night" on RTE.

We may rightly presume that 90 p.c. of the population of this country of ours believe in "God the Father, the Almighty Creator of Heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, Our Lord".

I am completely surprised and confused when I find a responsible body like RTE refusing to suggest the Law of God Almighty and the Word of His only begotten Son as the only true and effective way of conquering such a menace in our midst.

If a very large number of cars throughout the world were developing a particular fault which mechanics could not correct, surely the makers of those cars would be inundated with enquiries for their correction. But in considering the remedies for AIDS, not one reference was made to the Maker and Conservator of the bodies and souls of the human race.

I should imagine that the car manufacturers would investigate the purposes for which the complainers were using the cars, and insist that they would run properly if they acted according to the normal rules set down for them.

Both programmes were conducted and carried through, giving the impression that fornication, promiscuous sex, homosexuality, all sorts of sex-activity outside the marriage and even unnatural modes of behaviour were normal and sinless, and that there were no rules laid down by the Creator about these things.

At no time was the truth suggested that all these activities were gravely sinful and that those who indulge in them must not be surprised at the evil effects brought about by indulgence in them.

Let us face the truth . . . the use of condoms at any time by anybody is a serious sin, and can lead to the eternal death of the soul, which is much worse than the death of the body. Why so much concentration of the sharing of needles, instead of emphasising the value and salutary effects of Christian self-control and good example?

In the face of this terrible threat to our people I would like to propose to all parents, teachers, priests and bishops to instruct all, young and old (and especially our young people) about the uplifting effects of chastity and self-control for the love of God.

HARRY LAWLOR, S.J.,
Jesuit Church,
Limerick.

AIDS campaign 'not explicit enough'

By Padraig Yeates

THE GOVERNMENT could have been more explicit in its sexual education on AIDS, and particularly the use of the condom, the Rev Paul Lavelle, pastoral care co-ordinator of the National Task Force on AIDS, told an Ogra Fianna Fail conference in Dublin yesterday.

He defended the demonstration of their use on RTE's Late Late Show last Friday and said that the references to condoms should have been on page one of the Government leaflet, not page nine.

He said that the media loved to highlight difficulties that the Church allegedly faced on this issue and its influence on the Government's education programme. But the Church had had no consultations with the Government beyond saying the latter had a duty to "get out there and care for people".

The Church had no problem over condoms. "From the Church point of view it's the moral behaviour of people that has to be looked at. If people are sexually active outside of marriage that is,

immoral behaviour and the Church says so.

"If people decide they are going to have sex outside marriage regardless, it would seem irresponsible not to take the necessary precautions. Indeed, unprotected sex by someone with AIDS is verging on manslaughter."

He also called for a crash programme by health agencies to reach intravenous drug users on a one-to-one basis because the national publicity campaign would not influence their behaviour to any great degree. A needle exchange programme should be looked at seriously in this context.

Father Lavelle contrasted the attitude to AIDS and drugs abuse with that towards drink. "Nobody says boo when they see Frank Stapleton on a poster holding a pint and wearing an Irish jersey. And if you did say boo, you wouldn't get any media coverage for it because of the vested interests involved."

Yet issues of AIDS and drug education were about changing lifestyles and basic attitudes in Irish life, he said.

Unit unable to do AIDS tests on abused children

By Padraig Yeates

LACK of funds prevented AIDS screening tests being performed on children who were victims of sexual assaults, Dr Maura Woods, head of the Sexual Assault Unit at the Rotunda Hospital, Dublin, told a conference of Ogra Fianna Fail yesterday.

"We do tests for sexually transmitted diseases on all victims of assault, but don't test everyone for AIDS because the money isn't there," she said. "A lot of children who come to us are sexually abused." This was a high risk group.

At least 60 new children a month were being treated at the unit. So far this year, over 220 of 285 patients had been children. Since September 1985, nine months after the unit was established, the majority of referrals had been children.

A recent survey had shown that at least two children in every

school class in Ireland had been sexually abused and the minimum period of abuse was five to six years. In any one year, at least 5,000 children were being sexually abused in the Dublin area.

Because of health cuts, the unit is due to close by June 1st. Dr Woods said she had begun phasing out clients since last Friday. Until then she had "still been hoping some guardian angel would swoop down and save us."

Dr Dermot Fitzpatrick, a Fianna Fail TD for Dublin Central and a member of the Eastern Health Board, told the conference that Dr Woods' unit had exposed abuses in an area of Irish life ignored for far too long. "I think the abuse of women and children is something we are going to have to face up to as a society, sooner rather than later."

He said after the formal end of the conference that "with goodwill on all sides the future of the

unit can be sorted out in an afternoon over a table. At present it's caught up in medical politics."

Dr Fitzpatrick said that the Minister for Health, Dr O'Hanlon, was particularly concerned about the future of the unit, and the future strategy for dealing with sexual assault would be given priority.

Dr Woods said that it would be a few months at least before the Rotunda's facilities could be replaced. As it was, resources were inadequate, with children having to wait for up to eight weeks for referral from the Sexual Assault Unit once their cases had been validated.

Initially, Temple Street Children's Hospital in Dublin had agreed to take all referrals but because of cutbacks it had had to reduce progressively its catchment area. Likewise, the Rotunda was reducing all its services.

Wall Street Journal
18th May 1987

Spread of AIDS Within the U.S. May Be Slowing

Studies on Military Recruits, San Francisco Population Suggest Fewer New Cases

By MARILYN CHASE

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

SAN FRANCISCO—The spread of acquired immune deficiency syndrome may be leveling off in some segments of the U.S. population—among them, military recruits and San Francisco homosexuals.

San Francisco's public health department says the increase in new infections from the AIDS virus among the city's homosexual men has slowed to a rate of about 1% a year from about 12% to 14% annually during the peak years of its spread from 1980 through 1982. The figures were obtained from stored blood samples taken for a 10-year study of San Francisco gay men in a hepatitis-B survey.

The San Francisco study roughly parallels a report last week from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, which tentatively suggested that the infection level among military recruits may be stabilizing at about 1.5 per 1,000. The study, carried in the CDC publication *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, looked at applicants for military service during the 15 months from October 1985 through December 1986.

Greater Public Awareness

The two pieces of welcome news may indicate the success of some public education programs, although in the case of the military, it may merely mean the avoidance of induction centers by those who fear they are infected.

And it doesn't mean a waning of the epidemic anytime soon, because the volume of AIDS cases for the next few years is already programmed—"locked in" by the number of people who are already infected with the deadly virus but haven't yet shown symptoms. Because of the long incubation period, those infected with the virus often don't become ill for several years.

As of last Monday, the center reported 35,518 cases of AIDS, which is spread by blood, shared needles and sexual contact. About 1.5 million Americans are believed to carry the virus. San Francisco studies indicate that 60% of those infected with the virus have progressed to AIDS or AIDS-related complex after seven years. AIDS-related complex, or ARC, is an earlier phase of the disease.

Data Viewed Cautiously

George Lemp, chief of AIDS surveillance for the San Francisco Public Health Department, said the U.S. public should welcome the new data cautiously, and without abandoning current education programs.

"Massive education and public awareness should level off the rate of new infection," Mr. Lemp said. "It's been shown in San Francisco gay men that the new-infection rate has plummeted since they began practicing safe sex. Education and community involvement is very effective in changing behavior, for example in reducing numbers of partners and in using condoms."

However, he noted, "we expect the number of cases of disease to continue to increase because there are a large number of people infected in prior years who will continue to progress to AIDS." Because of the long incubation period of the virus, he explained, the majority of infected people were exposed "before the disease was ever

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U.S. health officials say the spread of infection by the AIDS virus may be leveling off in some segments of the U.S. population, including San Francisco homosexuals and U.S. military recruits. But the evidence doesn't mean a waning of the epidemic anytime soon. (Story on Page 8.)