

# Opinion

## AIDS policy condemns Americans to death

U.S. Surgeon General Everett Koop has failed in his task of overseeing the health of our nation. His effort to combat AIDS through education and the use of condoms is based on dangerous assumptions and political expediencies. His policy is fatally flawed and must be changed before it condemns many more Americans to death.



**Brian Frederick**

We have been told that AIDS is transmitted primarily through sexual contact, especially homosexual contact. Transmission also occurs through tainted blood transfusions and the contaminated needles of drug users. We are told that transmission through casual contact is virtually impossible and that with proper precautions, we may still enjoy "safe sex" without fear.

But an increasing number of AIDS cases do not fit these categories. Though not widely publicized, they are undermining the assertions repeated to soothe public fears. They show that AIDS may not be as hard to transmit as we have been told.

In May the *Washington Post* reported that three Atlanta hospital workers who were splattered with infected blood later tested positive for AIDS. Officials believe the three contracted the disease by way of small cuts.

Although most officials are quick to deny that mosquitoes and other insects can transmit AIDS, scientists in Africa say they have evidence to the contrary. In February 1985, the British medical journal *Lancet* reported that in Africa, the virus appears to be transmitted through heterosexual activity and exposure to blood through insects.

A similar situation was discovered in Belle Glade, Florida, where a large proportion of those with AIDS are not part of any identified risk group. Researchers found evidence that mosquitoes were responsible, but an official who leaked the researchers' results to the media was fired.

Even Koop's condoms are of dubious value. Using them is said to greatly

reduce the risk of getting AIDS. But a scientific study on the efficacy of condoms showed that without condoms, AIDS was transmitted in five of six cases. When condoms were used, the virus infected one of six. Sex with condoms is about as safe as playing Russian roulette.

And intercourse is not necessarily the only intimate activity which could transmit the disease. In January 1985, the Centers for Disease Control reported that there is a risk that the virus could be transmitted through oral sex or intimate kissing.

The AIDS virus has been found in the blood, saliva, semen and tears. In laboratory tests, it has survived outside of the body at room temperature for up to 15 days.

While Koop and his subordinates tell us not to worry, the disease spreads. Officially, the number of Americans infected with the virus who have not developed symptoms remains at 1.5 million, but this number has not been revised for over a year.

Of these people, 20 percent to 30 percent will develop the disease within five years and eventually die. Recent studies suggest that up to 75 percent may develop it after fifteen years. The National Academy of Sciences estimates that 270,000 Americans will have the disease by 1991 while 179,000 others will already have died.

Worldwide, the World Health Organization estimates that at least 100 million people will die before the disease runs its course. AIDS has the potential to fundamentally change Western Civilization, as did the Bubonic Plague of the fourteenth century.

Lulled by Koop's assurances, Americans continue to engage in potentially fatal activities. Fearing special interest groups, he and the bureaucrats have sought to protect their careers rather than the public welfare. They will not come out with unpleasant facts about the disease until circumstances compel them. At that point, it will probably be too late.

To have any hope for stopping AIDS, we must act now. We must legislate mandatory testing for all citizens and foreigners and give each a card stating the results. In addition to testing, we need stiff legal penalties for those who,

having tested positive, engage in activities that threaten the welfare of fellow citizens. No one's right to privacy or any other right can be construed to allow him to jeopardize the life of another.

Koop was right on one point. The best preventative for AIDS is fidelity in

marriage and abstinence before marriage. Though it does not guarantee that one will not catch AIDS by another means, it does provide the only 'safe sex' left on earth.

It may well be that with the advent of AIDS we are witnessing the end of the sexual revolution. We may have come

out of our closets only to go to our graves. Only prompt action and a renewed morality can save us and civilization.

**Brian Frederick is a senior history major and a columnist for The Battalion.**



## Heroes of the labor movement

*"We were nervous and we didn't know we could do it. Those machines had kept going as long as we could remember. When we finally pulled the switch and there was some quiet, I finally remembered something... that I was a human being, that I could stop those machines, that I was better than those machines anytime."*

**Jerry Rosiek**  
Guest Columnist

— Sit-down striker  
Akron, Ohio, 1936

Labor Day came and went again this year, the same as the past 23 years, with me not having a clue as to what it was about. I guess I can be excused for maybe the first 10 years of ignorance. By 11, though, I'm sure I knew the stories behind most other holidays — George Washington's Birthday, the Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Halloween, Easter, Christmas. By 11 I probably even knew the stories behind some of the holidays I didn't celebrate like Hanukkah and Cinco de Mayo. But come last week, at age 23, I still didn't know why we close our banks and post offices on Sept. 7.

But this year events conspired to get me off my arse and check things out. I read Kurt Vonnegut's *Jailbird* this summer. Good book. Deceptively easy to read. The main character is a turn-of-the-century communist radical who graduated from Harvard and grew up to be a failure on the Nixon White House staff. Throughout the book, Vonnegut expresses his distress at our generation's ignorance about labor.

Then a respected professor mentioned the importance of the labor movement, and I heard a National Public Radio program on the history of Labor Day. But the critical event was a call from my good friend Jay Simmons.

Jay told me he'd recently had his first Coors beer in four years. The AFL-CIO had been boycotting the Adolf Coors company for its anti-union policies. And although Jay was not a union member, he had been honoring the boycott. Last week, when the AFL-CIO and the Adolf Coors company worked out their differences and the union lifted its

boycott, Jay had a Coors. What a way to drink a beer! I admired his beer, and I admired his information. So I decided to look into this union stuff.

Don't take me wrong — I don't claim to be an expert on the American labor movement. But just a little scratching at the surface of this subject reveals a lot of interesting facts and at least one glaring question. Why wasn't I taught some of this earlier? The American labor movement is the stuff of American mythology. It has brave heroes, powerful and greedy opponents, martyrs, industrious individuals who start with nothing and make themselves powerful, and scores of men and women who devoted their lives to improving the lives of their countrymen.

Still, how many stories can you tell about Eugene V. Debs, Mother Jones, The Knights of Labor, Samuel Gompers, Sacco and Vanzetti, Philip Randolph, etc?

I think we've been censoring the history books in our own public schools, and I think we are not taught about labor history because many of the founders of the labor movement were socialists or communists. Of course, that was before communism found a home in Russia, but for some people communism is communism. It scared people then and it scares them now.

The fact is that the labor movement was democracy's answer to the problems that inspired communism. And labor unrest seems to be part of every young democracy's development. South Korea and the Philippines are recent examples. So what good is our silence?

I believe that truth and democracy are always better served by an open discussion of all the issues than by ignorance. And I believe that those who support the violent repression of an ideology, either by censorship or arms and either at home or abroad, demonstrate a great lack of faith in democracy.

As evidence of my faith in democracy, let me introduce to you a

few of the great figures of the labor movement:

Meet Mother Jones (1830-1900). Mother Jones was a frail and elderly woman who helped found the United Mine Workers of America. She came from one miners' community to another leading protest marches against exploitation and unemployment. In the presence of the head of these marches gave the campaigns a legitimacy that might not otherwise have had. In testimony before a Congressional Committee on Labor unrest at the end of the century, Mother Jones said:

"I live in the United States, but not know exactly where. My address wherever there is a fight against oppression. My address is like mine. It travels with me. I abide where there is a fight against wrong."

Meet A. Philip Randolph (1889-1979). A. Philip Randolph once called "the most dangerous Negro in the United States" by Woodrow Wilson was the organizer of the Brotherhood Sleeping Car Porters, an all-black union. Randolph and the Brotherhood are remembered for being the first black trade union to take the lead in the national struggle for civil rights. A. Philip Randolph once said:

"The essence of trade unionism is social uplift. The labor movement, traditionally has been the haven for the dispossessed, the despised, the neglected, the downtrodden, the oppressed."

Meet Eugene V. Debs (1855-1926). Eugene V. Debs was the organizer of the American Railroad Union, the union to admit members regardless of their skill. Debs ran one of the most successful independent candidates for president in American history as a 1912 Socialist party candidate. In this late celebration of Labor Day these thoroughly democratic workers Eugene V. Debs:

"Intelligent discontent is the mainspring of civilization. Progress is born of agitation. It is agitation of stagnation."

**Jerry Rosiek is a senior physics philosophy major and a regular appearing guest columnist for The Battalion.**

## Mail Call

### Let Jackie be Jackie

EDITOR:

In response to Betsy Wallace's letter of Sept. 8, I ask, "Who do you think you are?" Who are you to tell Jackie Sherrill what he should do to win a ball game? With all the knowledge you seem to have about why we lost to LSU, it's a wonder you're not A&M's head coach!

And what's this about Sherrill not wanting to win the game? How do you think he keeps his job, Ms. Wallace, by losing games?

Also, to address your undying support for Stump, I say this: A&M can either lose with Stump or lose with Pavlas. If we lose with Stump, we gain nothing. But if we lose with Pavlas, he gains valuable experience. It is Pavlas, not Stump, who will be here for the next four years.

So please, Ms. Wallace, don't show your ignorance by spouting off about something you obviously know nothing about! Maybe one of these days when Podunk Elementary School needs a coach you can apply there, but for now please stick to being a student and let Sherrill handle the coaching.

**Clint Ramsey '87**

### Senseless controversy

EDITOR:

The controversy over the Corps using the Confederate battle flag is senseless. The Confederate flag is part of the history of the South and of the states that formed the Confederacy. The flag should remind us that a majority of the population in the South — and therefore the majority of the people who fought in the war — did not own slaves. The reason that the Southerner fought was because he loved his country (the Confederate States of America) and because he loved his individual state. The flag also should remind us that an estimated 258,000 Southerners made the ultimate sacrifice during the course of the war, and they should not be forgotten.

**Mike Burkett '88**

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## BLOOM COUNTY

by Berke Breathed

