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ADDRESS

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PRESENTED TO THE NATIONAL P.T.A.

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

JUNE 19, 1988

(GREETINGS TO HOSTS, GUESTS, FRIENDS, ETC.)

THANK YOU FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK AT YOUR ANNUAL MEETING. AND THANK YOU FOR BEING TRUE AND EFFECTIVE ALLIES TO THE OFFICE OF THE SURGEON GENERAL.

THIS IS MY 7TH YEAR IN THAT OFFICE. IT'S BEEN ONE OF THE MOST EXCITING -- AND MOST REWARDING -- PERIODS OF MY LIFE. THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUES I'VE HAD TO CONFRONT HAVE BEEN PROFOUNDLY CHALLENGING.

BUT WITH THE HELP OF PRIVATE, GRASS-ROOTS ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE NATIONAL P.T.A. AND THE THOUSANDS OF INDIVIDUAL, LOCAL P.T.A.'s AROUND THE NATION, WE'VE BEEN ABLE TO "MAKE A DIFFERENCE" -- A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE -- IN THE LIVES OF AMERICA'S CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES.

WE'VE DEALT WITH THE NEEDS OF OUR HANDICAPPED AND DISABLED CHILDREN. THIS WAS AMONG THE FIRST ITEMS ON MY AGENDA, WHEN I ASSUMED THIS OFFICE. AND WITH YOUR HELP, WE'VE BEEN ABLE TO BRING TOGETHER EDUCATORS, PUBLIC HEALTH PERSONNEL, AND CONCERNED LAYPEOPLE AND WE'VE MADE THEM FOCUS ON THE PROBLEMS OF THESE CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES AND COME UP WITH BETTER SUPPORT AND MORE RELEVANT SERVICES FOR THEM.

TOGETHER WE'VE MET THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY HEAD-ON. WE'VE
PROPERLY DENOUNCED THEM FOR DOING A TERRIBLE THING ... FOR
SHAMELESS ADVERTISING DESIGNED TO CONVINCE OUR NATION'S CHILDREN
TO BECOME ADDICTED TO CIGARETTE SMOKING.

AND THAT'S PRECISELY AND MEDICALLY WHAT SMOKING IS ... AN
ADDICTION ... ONE THAT WILL EXPOSE CHILDREN TO THE RAVAGES OF
MAJOR HEART AND LUNG DISEASES THROUGHOUT THEIR LIVES.

AND IT WILL SHORTEN THEIR LIVES AS WELL.

BUT THROUGH OUR SCHOOLS, WE'RE REACHING CHILDREN WITH THE TRUTH AND, AS A RESULT, FEWER AND FEWER OF THEM ARE BUYING THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY'S FLASHY BUT DEADLY FALSEHOODS.

AND TOGETHER, ALL OF US -- PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND PUBLIC HEALTH PERSONNEL -- WE'VE LINKED ARMS IN THE BATTLE AGAINST SUBSTANCE ABUSE, WHETHER IT'S JUVENILE ALCOHOLISM AND DRUNK DRIVING OR MARIJUANA AND COCAINE.

THAT BATTLE IS ALSO FAR FROM OVER. BUT AGAIN, WE HAVE EVERY REASON TO BE ENCOURAGED BY THE RESPONSE BY THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE. THEY UNDERSTAND THE DANGER. AND THEY'RE NOT BUYING.

AND RIGHT NOW, WE STAND TOGETHER ONCE AGAIN, A UNITED FORCE FOR REASON ... AND HEALTH ... AND FOR LIFE ... A UNITED FORCE IN A BATTLE AGAINST WHAT IS POTENTIALLY ONE OF THE MOST DEVASTATING OF ALL THE DISEASES THAT EVER SCARRED THE HISTORY OF THE HUMAN RACE.

AIDS ... THE "ACQUIRED IMMUNE DEFICIENCY SYNDROME" ... A DISEASE SPREAD BY A VIRUS.

NO, THAT'S NOT QUITE RIGHT. IT'S A DISEASE CONDITION CAUSED BY A VIRUS THAT IS SPREAD. IT DOESN'T GO ANYWHERE ON ITS OWN ... NOT THROUGH THE AIR ... NOT IN OUR RIVERS AND RESERVOIRS ... AND NOT IN OUR FOOD.

PEOPLE TRANSMIT THIS DEADLY VIRUS THROUGH THEIR OWN PERSONAL, HIGH-RISK BEHAVIOR: ANAL INTERCOURSE ... SEXUAL PROMISCUITY ... NEEDLE-SHARING AND DRUG ADDICTION ... THE THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN TALKED ABOUT ON RADIO AND TELEVISION AND DESCRIBED IN NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES.

EVERY PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY I'VE SEEN RECENTLY INDICATES THAT CLOSE TO 99 PERCENT OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT AIDS AND ABOUT THE WAYS IT IS MOST COMMONLY TRANSMITTED.

YOU DESCRIBE THE SITUATION VERY CANDIDLY IN YOUR P.T.A. BROCHURE, HOW TO TALK TO YOUR TEENS AND CHILDREN ABOUT AIDS. I'VE ALSO WRITTEN ABOUT THIS EPIDEMIC IN TWO PAMPHLETS -- MY FIRST SURGEON GENERAL'S REPORT ON AIDS, WHICH I RELEASED IN OCTOBER OF 1986, AND THE ONE THAT IS NOW GOING INTO EVERY MAILBOX IN AMERICA, CALLED UNDERSTANDING AIDS.

AND AT THIS CONVENTION YOU CAN SEE FOR THE FIRST TIME A SHORT VIDEO PRODUCED BY THE NATIONAL P.T.A. AND THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE IN WHICH I GIVE THE FACTS ABOUT AIDS AND ASK LOCAL P.T.A.'S TO HELP GET THE MESSAGE ACROSS TO EVERYONE IN OUR SCHOOLS: STUDENTS, TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS, BOARD MEMBERS, AND PARENTS.

WHY ALL THIS URGENCY? THE ANSWER IS SIMPLE ... AND VERY, VERY WORRISOME.

FIRST OF ALL, AIDS IS A FATAL DISEASE. THE MORTALITY RATE, FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES, IS 100 PERCENT. ALMOST A THIRD OF THE PEOPLE WITH AIDS DIAGNOSED JUST LAST YEAR HAVE ALREADY DIED.

SECONDLY, WE HAVE NO CURE FOR AIDS. NO VACCINE ... NO PILL ... NO TABLET ... NO "MAGIC BULLET" ... NOTHING.

NO DOUBT YOU'VE READ NEWS REPORTS ABOUT SOME VACCINE TESTING THAT'S JUST GETTING UNDERWAY. IT'S TRUE ... THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALLOWED SOME VACCINE TESTING TO BEGIN.

BUT THESE ARE ONLY THE VERY FIRST STEPS IN VACCINE DEVELOPMENT. THE REMAINDER OF THE PROCESS WILL BE VERY LONG -- STRETCHING TO THE END OF THIS CENTURY AT THE LEAST. AND THAT'S PUTTING THE BEST FACE ON IT.

SO I MUST SAY THAT IF YOU -- OR ANY OF YOUR TEACHERS OR ANY PARENTS OR STUDENTS -- MINIMIZE THE SITUATION WE'RE IN, EXPECTING A CURE TO BE DISCOVERED ANY DAY NOW ... YOU -- AND THEY -- ARE SADLY MISTAKEN.

"ANY DAY" COULD BE 12 TO 15 YEARS AWAY.

WE DO HAVE A.Z.T., WHICH SEEMS TO SLOW DOWN THE DISEASE PROCESS, ADDING MONTHS -- MAYBE EVEN YEARS -- TO THE LIFE OF SOMEONE WITH AIDS.

BUT A.Z.T. IS NOT A CURE EITHER.

AND FINALLY, AIDS IS SPREADING. THE NUMBERS ARE ALL GOING UP, NOT DOWN.

EXACTLY SEVEN YEARS AGO, IN JUNE OF 1981, WE HAD OUR FIRST REPORTS OF THIS STRANGE DISEASE. A RARE TYPE OF PNEUMONIA HAD STRUCK FIVE "OTHERWISE HEALTHY HOMOSEXUAL MALES" IN LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA.

SINCE THOSE FIRST 5 CASES WERE RECORDED, LOS ANGELES HAS REPORTED ANOTHER 5,000 CASES ... AND THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE HAS TURNED UP MORE THAN 65,000 CASES OF AIDS.

FROM 5 CASES TO 65,000 CASES IN 7 YEARS. OVER HALF THOSE PEOPLE HAVE SINCE DIED. AND THE REST PROBABLY WILL.

YOU MUST TAKE SERIOUSLY ANY DISEASE THAT EXPLODES UPON A NATION -- AND UPON THE WORLD -- WITH SUCH SPEED AND SUCH SEVERITY.

BUT THE AIDS EPIDEMIC IS MORE THAN JUST AN EXERCISE IN NUMBERS. THE FIRST REPORTS MAY HAVE COME FROM LOS ANGELES, BUT TODAY EVERY STATE AND TERRITORY HAS BEEN TOUCHED BY THIS EPIDEMIC.

INDIANA, OUT IN THE HEARTLAND OF AMERICA, HAS HAD 337 CASES SO FAR ... KANSAS HAS HAD 149 ... MAINE, 76 CASES ... NORTH DAKOTA, 7 ... AND EVEN GUAM HAS HAD 5 CASES SO FAR.

AND 20 CITIES IN 14 STATES HAVE EACH REPORTED OVER 500 CASES OF AIDS SINCE 1981. CLEARLY, THE AIDS EPIDEMIC IS GROWING NUMERICALLY AND SPREADING GEOGRAPHICALLY.

BUT THE VIRUS IS FOLLOWING A FAIRLY STABLE PATTERN, AS IT SPREADS. FOR THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS ...

- ... ABOUT TWO-THIRDS OF ALL PEOPLE WITH AIDS WERE HOMOSEXUALS OR BISEXUAL MALES
- ... ANOTHER ONE-FOURTH OF ALL AIDS VICTIMS HAVE BEEN DRUG ADDICTS WHO SHARE THEIR NEEDLES
- ... AND A VERY SMALL NUMBER -- 4 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL -- HAVE BEEN NONE OF THE ABOVE BUT ARE HETEROSEXUAL MEN AND WOMEN AMONG WHOM THE VIRUS HAS BEEN SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED.

THERE ARE, HOWEVER, SOME EARLY SIGNS OF POSSIBLE SHIFTS TAKING PLACE. FOR EXAMPLE, THE NUMBER OF HOMOSEXUALS WITH AIDS IS NOT CLIMBING AS RAPIDLY AS IT HAS IN THE PAST, WHILE THE RISE IN THE NUMBER OF DRUG ADDICTS WITH AIDS IS BEGINNING TO ACCELERATE.

NEVERTHELESS, THE BASIC AIDS POPULATION IS REMAINING THE SAME: 90 PERCENT OF ALL AIDS CASES INVOLVE EITHER HOMOSEXUALS AND BISEXUAL MALES OR INTRAVENOUS DRUG ABUSERS.

TO OUR BEST KNOWLEDGE, THIS IS STILL THE PATTERN SHOWING UP IN ALL THOSE AREAS I MENTIONED BEFORE ... THE MIDWEST, NEW ENGLAND, THE NORTHWEST, AND SO ON ... THE AREAS WHICH, AT THIS LATE DATE, ARE JUST BEGINNING TO REPORT THEIR FIRST CASES OF AIDS.

THEREFORE, IF WE HOPE TO PREVENT THE DISEASE FROM SPREADING INTO THE GENERAL POPULATION -- AND DO THIS WITHOUT THE HELP OF ANY BIOMEDICAL CURE -- WE MUST FIND A BIOBEHAVIORAL WAY.

AND THAT MEANS EDUCATION:

EDUCATION TO CONVINCe HOMOSEXUALS AND DRUG ADDICTS TO CHANGE THEIR LIFESTYLES AND ABANDON THEIR HIGH-RISK BEHAVIOR ...

AND EDUCATION TO CONVINCe THE REST OF THE COUNTRY NOT TO CHANGE.

ONE APPROACH WITHOUT THE OTHER WOULD BE DISASTROUS FOR US. HENCE, WE'VE BEEN SENDING STRONG EDUCATIONAL MESSAGES TO THE HOMOSEXUAL COMMUNITY -- AND WE BELIEVE THE VIRUS TRANSMISSION RATE MAY BE GOING DOWN AS A RESULT -- AND WE'RE TRYING, AS ALWAYS, TO MAKE SOME DENT IN THE SHADOWY UNDERGROUND SUB-CULTURE OF DRUGS.

AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, WE'RE MAINTAINING A STRONG AND CONTINUOUS PROGRAM OF AIDS EDUCATION DIRECTED TO THE COUNTRY AT LARGE ... IN EFFECT, TO NON-ADDICTED HETEROSEXUALS.

AND THESE ARE OUR STUDENTS, OUR TEACHERS, OUR PARENTS, OUR COMMUNITY LEADERS, AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC.

AND JUST WHAT ARE WE TELLING THESE DIFFERENT GROUPS?

TO THE DRUG ABUSERS, THE MESSAGE IS CLEAR ENOUGH:

DON'T SHARE DIRTY NEEDLES OR SYRINGES.

TO THE HOMOSEXUAL COMMUNITY...

DO NOT ENGAGE IN UNPROTECTED SEXUAL ACTIVITY.

TO HETEROSEXUAL ADULTS AND YOUNG ADULTS, WE'RE SENDING
ESSENTIALLY THAT SAME MESSAGE.

BUT FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS, WE NEED TO PRESENT
SOMETHING QUITE DIFFERENT. IT'S LIKELY THAT THEY HAVE LITTLE OR
NO UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN SEXUALITY. AND I MUST CONFESS THAT I
AM DEEPLY SADDENED BY THE IDEA THAT WE MUST EXPLAIN HUMAN
RELATIONSHIPS AND HUMAN SEXUALITY TO A NEW GENERATION OF GIRLS
AND BOYS -- SO THAT THEY MAY AVOID CONTRACTING A FATAL DISEASE.

AND YET ... WE MUST.

AND OUR FIRST RECOMMENDATION OUGHT TO BE ABSTINENCE FROM
SEX.

I GRANT THAT SEXUAL ABSTINENCE MAY NOT WORK FOR EVERYONE.
IF IT DID, THAT WOULD LITERALLY MEAN THE END OF THE HUMAN RACE.

BUT SEXUAL ABSTINENCE IS A VERY GOOD IDEA FOR YOUNGSTERS OF
SCHOOL AGE.

TODAY -- IN THE PRESENCE OF THE DEADLY AIDS EPIDEMIC -- I THINK WE, AS ADULTS, MUST STEP FORWARD AND HELP OUR CHILDREN ADDRESS THE PHENOMENON OF THEIR OWN SEXUALITY IN A CARING, DEVELOPMENTAL WAY.

AND OUR MESSAGE OUGHT TO INCLUDE THE WISDOM OF CHOOSING TO BE SEXUALLY ABSTINENT, WHILE STILL IN SCHOOL.

FOR THE REST OF US -- THE ADULTS AND YOUNG ADULTS IN THE COMMUNITY -- ABSTINENCE MAY NOT BE THE BEHAVIOR OF CHOICE. WHAT THEN?

I BELIEVE THE NEXT BEST THING IS MONOGAMY ... ONE PERSON,
ONE MATE: FIND SOMEONE TO WHOM YOU CAN GIVE YOUR LOVE AND
RESPECT AND TRUST ... SOMEONE WHO WILL GIVE THE SAME IN RETURN
... AND STAY WITH THAT PERSON FOREVER.

SUCH A MONOGAMOUS RELATIONSHIP IS NOT LIKELY TO BE INFECTED
AND CONSUMED BY AIDS ... OR BY ANY OTHER DISEASE EITHER.

OF COURSE, A NUMBER OF PEOPLE ARE MONOGAMOUS -- BUT IN
SEQUENCE: THAT IS, THROUGH DIVORCE AND RE-MARRIAGE, FOR EXAMPLE,
AN INDIVIDUAL MAY HAVE ONE ... TWO ... OR MORE MONOGAMOUS
PARTNERS DURING HIS OR HER ADULT LIFETIME. WHAT ABOUT THEM?

AND WHAT ABOUT THE PEOPLE WHO, FOR WHATEVER REASONS, DO NOT HAVE A LOVING, MONOGAMOUS RELATIONSHIP -- AND PERHAPS NEVER WILL HAVE? YET, THEY, TOO, MAY WANT TO EXPRESS THEIR OWN SEXUALITY FROM TIME TO TIME AND THAT'S A NORMAL ENOUGH DESIRE.

FOR THEM WE MUST RECOMMEND THAT THEY PROTECT THEMSELVES. AND, AT THE PRESENT TIME, THE ONLY EFFECTIVE PROTECTION AVAILABLE IS THE LATEX CONDOM.

CONDOMS ARE NOT ONE-HUNDRED-PERCENT-PERFECT. I'VE NEVER CLAIMED THAT THEY WERE ... ALTHOUGH, FRANKLY, CONDOMS -- AS GADGETS -- ARE MORE RELIABLE THAN THE PEOPLE WHO USE THEM.

HOWEVER, WHEN USED CORRECTLY -- THAT IS, WHEN THE LATEX CONDOM IS WORN FROM START TO FINISH DURING SEXUAL INTERCOURSE, WITH A LITTLE SPERMICIDE ADDED IN THE TIP AND ON THE SIDES -- IT DOES PROVIDE AN EFFECTIVE BARRIER AGAINST THE TRANSMISSION OF THE AIDS VIRUS.

ABSTINENCE ... MONOGAMY ... AND THE USE OF THE LATEX CONDOM ARE AT THE CORE OF OUR EDUCATION PROGRAM TO HELP ADULTS AND YOUNG ADULTS DEFEND THEMSELVES AGAINST THE TRANSMISSION OF THE AIDS VIRUS THROUGH SEXUAL INTERCOURSE.

OF COURSE, IT IS EASIER TO DESCRIBE THAN TO DELIVER. AND IT'S AN ESPECIALLY DIFFICULT MESSAGE TO DELIVER TO YOUNG PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY CHILDREN IN ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL.

BUT IT IS A LIFE-SAVING MESSAGE AND, THEREFORE, WE ARE DUTY-BOUND TO DELIVER IT.

THOSE OF US IN MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH MAY RELY TOO MUCH ON THE CLINICAL ASPECTS OF THE MESSAGE. AND I THINK THAT'S A MISTAKE.

A THOUGHTFUL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM DEALING WITH SEXUALITY AND AIDS PREVENTION SHOULD ALSO TOUCH UPON SOME NON-CLINICAL CONCEPTS, SUCH AS SEX WITH RESPONSIBILITY ... SEX WITH CARING ... SEX WITH JUSTICE ... AND SEX WITH SELF-RESPECT AND WITH MUTUAL RESPECT.

FROM A PUBLIC HEALTH POINT OF VIEW, THEN, THIS IS ALL THERE IS TO A BASIC INFORMATION PROGRAM ABOUT AIDS: WHAT IT IS, HOW IT'S TRANSMITTED, AND HOW TO PROTECT ONE'S SELF AGAINST IT.

AND I BELIEVE THAT WE ADULTS ARE MORALLY OBLIGATED TO TELL YOUNG PEOPLE THE FACTS ABOUT AIDS. BUT THOSE FACTS DO NOT EXIST IN A VACUUM.

MAHATMA GHANDI ONCE WROTE THAT "MORALITY IS THE BASIS OF ALL THINGS AND TRUTH IS THE SUBSTANCE OF ALL MORALITY." WELL, THEN, LET'S TELL OUR YOUNG PEOPLE THE TRUTH ABOUT AIDS. BUT LET US ALSO TELL THEM THE TRUTH ABOUT HUMAN DECENCY AND LOVE AND MUTUAL RESPECT AND RESPONSIBILITY.

AND WITH THESE FACTS AND THESE TRUTHS, LET US HELP THEM PUT TOGETHER THE SUBSTANCE OF THEIR OWN MORAL LIVES AND, IN SO DOING, HELP THEM TO DEFEND THOSE VERY LIVES AGAINST AIDS ... AND EVERY OTHER HUMAN CALAMITY AS WELL.

THAT'S THE KIND OF ADULT OUR SOCIETY NEEDS TODAY.

AND TOMORROW ... EVEN MORE SO.

WITH YOUR HELP -- AND WITH THE HELP OF YOUR SCHOOLS AND YOUR
COMMUNITIES -- WE WILL HAVE THOSE ADULTS TOMORROW ... ALIVE AND
WELL AND LIVING IN AMERICA.

THANK YOU.

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