

AIDS lecture June 1, 1987

Remarks

By

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This was the third such international conference on AIDS in which I had participated, but the first one where I brought welcoming remarks to the gathering. It was three days since I last spoke publicly about AIDS. These conferences attracted people interested in AIDS across the board, but militant pro-active people usually captured the floor as well as the attention of the press. It was six days since I had last spoken publicly about AIDS.

After welcoming folks, I noted the attendance of people from throughout the world and the extraordinary coverage of the international media meant that this conference was being regarded as a watershed event.

Jonathan Mann of the World Health Organization was quoted. His announcement the previous week indicated that 112 countries had reported a total of more than 51,000 cases of AIDS, and that the count was at least under-estimated by as much as half. (Jonathan Mann was a passenger on the TWA flight that crashed in the Atlantic en route to Europe.)

I reminded the audience of my position in the U.S.A. and in respect to the AIDS epidemic as well as my role as a representative of the United States at International Meetings including the Annual World Health Assembly in Geneva. I specifically reminded the Assembly that the 40th World Health Assembly Meeting in the previous weeks had pledged to the face the danger of AIDS and fight it with collaboration and cooperation that, like the disease itself, knew no geopolitical boundaries.

The members of the WHA indicated that they were: "Deeply concerned that this disease, caused by one or more naturally occurring retroviruses of undetermined geographical origin, had assumed pandemic proportions affecting all regions of the world and represented a threat to the attainment of 'health for all.' "

Certain things in that statement need clarification for most readers. The words, "naturally occurring," were extremely important so that no one thought that this was a man made disease. The use of the term, "undetermined geographical origin," was extremely important in reference to Africa, where it had been very difficult to get statistics of incidence of infection with the AIDS virus because many AIDS workers had opined that the disease probably started in Africa and African nationals were fearful of being blamed

for this scourge upon the world. Finally. The words, “attainment of health for all,” refer to the current goal of the World Health Organization.

I closed repeating the kind of challenge we faced and reminded the audience that the people we represented – especially those who were most at risk – looked to us for help, and that we dare not respond with anything less than our very best effort.

Challenges for the future
Current International statistics on the incidents of
AIDS
Resolution of World Health Organization
Significance of World Health Organization
Resolution

Dr. Galasso
Dr. Harmison
Jonathan Mann
Dr. Robert Windom (Assistant Secretary for Health)
World Health Organization