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

I WANT TO THANK YOU ALL VERY MUCH FOR INVITING ME TO SPEAK TO YOU THIS MORNING. I'M PLEASED TO PARTICIPATE IN A CONFERENCE OF COMMUNICATORS BECAUSE OUR ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE THE FACTS ABOUT AIDS TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE IS THE ONLY THING THAT STANDS BETWEEN OUR SOCIETY AND AN OVERWHELMING NATIONAL TRAGEDY.

I'D GUESS THAT EVERYONE HERE HAS A REASONABLY GOOD BASIS OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE DISEASE, SO I WON'T GIVE YOU A LOT OF "BOILER-PLATE" THIS MORNING.

BUT IF I'VE GUESSED WRONG ABOUT YOU, THEN -- PLEASE -- CALL THIS NUMBER: 1-800-342-AIDS, AND ASK FOR YOUR FREE COPY OF THE "SURGEON GENERAL'S REPORT ON AIDS."

AND LET ME ADD A FOOTNOTE RIGHT HERE, REGARDING THAT REPORT.

IT TOOK ME 8 MONTHS TO PREPARE THAT REPORT, FROM FEBRUARY TO SEPTEMBER OF 1986. AND I THINK IT'S A GOOD ONE. BUT IF IT HAD BEEN LEFT TO GOVERNMENT ALONE TO GET THE PUBLISHED REPORT INTO THE HANDS OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, I'M AFRAID WE MIGHT STILL BE WAITING.

THAT'S AN OBSERVATION, NOT A CRITICISM. OUR SOCIETY HAS BEEN CAREFUL TO KEEP GOVERNMENT RELATIVELY INEFFICIENT AS A COMMUNICATOR, SINCE WE BELIEVE THE ALTERNATIVE -- THE TOTALITARIAN APPROACH OF BEING ABLE TO REACH EVERYWHERE -- HAS NO PLACE IN OUR KIND OF DEMOCRACY.

SO, I'M JUST YOUR SURGEON GENERAL...I'M NOT YOUR "BIG BROTHER."

AND LET'S KEEP IT THAT WAY...FOR ME AND FOR WHOMEVER COMES ALONG NEXT.

BUT THE REPORT HAS BEEN READ BY MILLIONS OF AMERICANS, AND FOR THAT WE HAVE TO THANK PEOPLE LIKE YOURSELVES...THE PROFESSIONALS WHO PROVIDE OUR CITIZENS WITH INFORMATION DAY IN AND DAY OUT.

COMMUNICATING TO THE PUBLIC IS MORE THAN A JUST A JOB.  
RELATIVE TO WHAT YOUR INDUSTRY HAS ACCOMPLISHED WITH AIDS, I'D SAY  
IT'S A VITAL PUBLIC SERVICE.

THEREFORE, AS I INDICATED A MOMENT AGO, YOU'VE BEEN SO TERRIFIC  
IN GETTING OUT THE FACTS CONCERNING AIDS -- AND MAYBE READING THAT  
MATERIAL IN THE PROCESS -- THAT I WANT TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO  
TEST SOME IDEAS AND TO ASK SOME QUESTIONS FOR WHICH WE, AS YET, HAVE  
NO GOOD ANSWERS.

I WANT TO TALK ABOUT WHAT THE AIDS VIRUS IS DOING TO SOME OF  
OUR PEOPLE...WHAT IT COULD DO TO ALL OF OUR PEOPLE...AND WHAT WE  
MUST DO TO HELP PEOPLE FIGHT BACK AND CONQUER AIDS, WHICH COULD WELL  
PROVE TO BE THE MOST VICIOUS OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES IN THE HISTORY  
OF THE HUMAN RACE.

LET ME CONFESS THAT, IN THE BATTLE AGAINST AIDS, MEDICINE AND SCIENCE HAVE BEEN MAKING VERY SMALL HEADWAY. YES, THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL ACHIEVEMENTS -- THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE VIRUS, THE BLOOD-TEST, THE DEVELOPMENT OF A.Z.T., AND SO ON -- BUT, RELATIVE TO WHAT WE STILL MUST ACCOMPLISH, WE'VE NOT MOVED THAT FAR FORWARD.

IN FACT, I'LL GO EVEN FURTHER AND SAY THAT THE FINAL VICTORY OVER THIS DISEASE MIGHT NOT BE THE EXCLUSIVE VICTORY OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND CLINICAL PRACTICE.

RESEARCH AND PRACTICE WERE THE ALLIES THAT CONQUERED SMALLPOX, FOR EXAMPLE, AND POLIO.

BUT THIS TIME, THE VICTORY WILL MORE LIKELY SPRING FROM THE IMPELLING FORCE OF COMPASSIONATELY COMMITTED AND ETHICALLY MOTIVATED MEN AND WOMEN WHO HAVE LITTLE OR NO MEDICAL BACKGROUND AT ALL,

AND NOT JUST A FEW OF THEM. I MEAN MILLIONS OF THEM.

LET ME EXPLAIN THAT OBSERVATION.

RIGHT NOW, EVERYTHING THE PUBLIC THINKS AND DOES ABOUT AIDS SEEMS TO BE RELATED TO THE THREE BASIC ASPECTS OF THE DISEASE:

ITS MYSTERY...WE'RE STILL NOT SURE EXACTLY WHAT IT IS AND DOES.

ITS VIRTUALLLY 100 PERCENT MORTALITY RATE.

AND THE WAY MOST PEOPLE GET AIDS IS BY DOING THINGS THEY OUGHT NOT TO DO...ENGAGING IN UNPROTECTED ANAL INTERCOURSE...BEING SEXUALLY PROMISCUOUS...AND "SHOOTING" ILLEGAL DRUGS WITH BORROWED NEEDLES.

EACH OF THESE ASPECTS TENDS TO CONFOUND THE INHERENTLY GOOD INSTINCTS THAT MOST PEOPLE HAVE TOWARD ONE ANOTHER.

FOR EXAMPLE, CONSIDER THE MYSTERY OF THIS DISEASE.

WE MAY KNOW HOW THE VIRUS IS TRANSMITTED AND HOW IT ATTACKS AND DESTROYS THE HUMAN IMMUNE SYSTEM -- BUT WE DON'T KNOW WHY IT DOES THAT AND WE CAN'T PREDICT WHEN IT WILL DO THAT.

THE GENERAL PUBLIC DOESN'T LIKE MEDICAL MYSTERIES AND DOESN'T TOLERATE THEM VERY WELL.



THAT'S ONE OF THE REASONS THAT MEDICAL QUACKERY STILL SURVIVES IN OUR SOCIETY. FAKE CANCER CURES...FAKE AIDS CURES...FAKE DIETS...FAKE TONICS FOR BALDNESS AND ALL THE REST.

MOST OF THESE SCAMS WOULD BE HUMOROUS, IF THEY DIDN'T CAUSE SO MANY PEOPLE TO LOSE SO MUCH OF THEIR MONEY AND IF THEY DIDN'T PROLONG PAIN AND AGONY WITH THE FALSE HOPES OF QUACK MAGIC.

IN AN UPSIDE-DOWN WAY, MY COLLEAGUES IN SCIENCE AND MEDICINE ARE PARTLY RESPONSIBLE.

IF WE HADN'T BEEN SO SUCCESSFUL OVER THE PAST 25 YEARS IN DEFEATING OR CONTROLLING DOZENS OF SERIOUS MENACES TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH -- SMALLPOX, POLIO, SICKLE CELL ANEMIA, HYPERTENSION, LEAD POISONING, GERMAN MEASLES, AND SO ON -- THEN PEOPLE WOULDN'T SEEN SO CONVINCED THAT SCIENCE IS MAGIC AND MAGIC IS SCIENCE AND TOGETHER THEY CAN DO ANYTHING.

WHEN THEY LEARN THAT'S NOT THE CASE AT ALL, MANY PEOPLE TEND TO LOSE THEIR PATIENCE...THEY LOSE THEIR TOLERANCE...OR THEY LOSE THEIR FAITH.

AND SOME PEOPLE LOSE ALL THREE.

WE NEED TO BE PREPARED FOR THIS VERY HUMAN -- ALBEIT UNPLEASANT -- RESPONSE AND TRY TO DEAL WITH IT.

AS THE DAYS WIND ON, WE'RE GOING TO SEE THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WITH AIDS CONTINUE TO GO UP.

WE ESTIMATE THAT ABOUT A MILLION TO A MILLION AND A HALF PEOPLE ARE WALKING AROUND TODAY WITH THE AIDS VIRUS IN THEIR BLOODSTREAMS. EVENTUALLY, EACH ONE WILL SHOW SIGNS OF AN AIDS-RELATED DISEASE OF ONE KIND OR ANOTHER.

AND THEY WILL DIE OF THOSE OPPORTUNISTIC DISEASES.

AND SO THE NUMBER OF AIDS-RELATED DEATHS WILL CONTINUE TO CLIMB AS WELL.

WHILE THOSE NUMBERS CLIMB, THE PUBLIC WILL BE MORE FEARFUL AND LOOK FOR QUICK ANSWERS AND QUICK SOLUTIONS. BUT WE HAVE NONE TODAY AND WE WON'T HAVE ANY TOMORROW EITHER.

AND "TOMORROW" CAN STRETCH INTO THE 1990's AND BEYOND.

SO FAR, OUR SOCIETY HAS BEEN ABLE TO HANDLE THIS FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN WITH A MINIMUM OF IRRATIONALITY.

WE'VE HAD ARCADIA, FLORIDA, WHERE THREE HEMOPHILIAC BOYS AND THEIR FAMILY WERE LITERALLY DRIVEN OUT OF TOWN. BUT THANK GOODNESS...THE EXPERIENCE IN ARCADIA IS NOT THE RULE IN AMERICA.

AND WE HAVE TO DO OUR VERY BEST TO MAKE SURE THAT THAT'S THE CASE FOR THE LONG, HARD YEARS AHEAD.

WE MUST NOT PANDER TO FEAR AND IGNORANCE AND PREJUDICE IN THE FACE OF THE MYSTERY OF AIDS. WE MUST, INSTEAD, COUNTER WITH FACTS AND PATIENCE AND FAITH IN THE FUTURE OF THE HUMAN RACE.

I SAID THAT THE SECOND FACT ABOUT AIDS IS ITS FATALITY RATE: THE DISEASE IS VIRTUALLY 100 PERCENT FATAL.

AIDS HAS ATTACKED MORE THAN 44,000 PEOPLE SINCE JUNE OF 1981 AND ALMOST 26,000 OF THEM HAVE ALREADY DIED.

THAT'S THE TRUTH...BUT THERE'S MORE. THE TRUTH ALSO INCLUDES THE FACT THAT, OF THOSE PEOPLE WHO HAD AIDS IN 1981, AT LEAST 91 PERCENT OF THEM HAVE ALREADY DIED.

OF THOSE WHO HAD THE DISEASE IN 1982, SOME 87 PERCENT HAVE ALREADY DIED.

OF THOSE IN 1983, 89 PERCENT OF THEM HAVE ALREADY DIED OF AIDS.

AND SO ON.

AIDS IS THE CLOSEST THING IN OUR ENVIRONMENT TODAY TO BEING A "VIRTUALLY 100 PERCENT FATAL DISEASE."

WE HAVE ONLY A FEW DRUGS COMING INTO THE MARKETPLACE --  
A.Z.T. MOST PROMINENT AMONG THEM -- AND THESE DRUGS HELP PROLONG  
LIFE A LITTLE BIT...A FEW MONTHS...MAYBE A YEAR OR SO.

BUT WE HAVE NOTHING AT ALL...NOTHING... THAT WILL SAFELY AND  
EFFECTIVELY STOP THE DISEASE OF AIDS IN ITS TRACKS.

WE HAVE NO DRUGS...NO VACCINES...NO MAGIC BULLETS...NOTHING  
THAT CAN ACCOMPLISH THAT LIFE-SAVING JOB.

SO THE AIDS EPIDEMIC PROVIDES A DANGEROUSLY FERTILE  
ENVIRONMENT FOR HOPELESSNESS.

PEOPLE ASK ME, "WHAT'S THE POINT OF SPENDING GREAT SUMS OF MONEY ON THESE PEOPLE WITH AIDS...WHEN THEY'RE GOING TO DIE ANYWAY?"

OR, ON A MORE PERSONAL LEVEL, "WHY SHOULD I DO ANYTHING FOR A PERSON WITH AIDS, WHEN DEATH IS RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER?"

MAYBE EVERYONE DOESN'T PUT IT QUITE SO BLUNTLY. BUT THAT'S WHAT THEY'RE THINKING, WHEN THEY REFUSE TO ADMIT AIDS PATIENTS TO HOSPITALS OR TURN THEM AWAY FROM CLINICS AND SCHOOLS.

THIS SECOND ASPECT OF AIDS -- ITS VIRTUALLY 100 PERCENT MORTALITY RATE -- IS AT THE SOURCE OF THIS TURN TOWARD ABANDONING PEOPLE WITH THE AIDS VIRUS.



AND ABANDONMENT OF THE SICK -- EVEN OF THE MORTALLY AND  
FATALLY ILL -- IS TOTALLY CONTRARY TO WESTERN ETHICAL  
TRADITIONS.

WE MUST NOT LET THIS DISEASE INFECT AND CORRUPT OUR VALUES,  
WHILE IT DESTROYS THE BODIES AND MINDS OF MANY OF OUR  
CITIZENS. WE SIMPLY MUST NOT ALLOW THAT TO HAPPEN.

PREVENTING THAT IT FROM HAPPENING IS A TASK ALL OF US MUST  
SHARE.

SO THERE IS THE MYSTERY OF AIDS.

AND THERE IS THE CERTAINTY OF DEATH FROM AIDS.

AND FINALLY, THERE IS THE THIRD ASPECT OF THE DISEASE WHICH, IN MANY WAYS, IS THE MOST DIFFICULT ASPECT: THE FACT THAT PEOPLE GET AIDS BECAUSE THEY DO THINGS MOST OTHER PEOPLE DON'T DO AND DON'T APPROVE OF DOING.

APPROXIMATELY 29,000 HOMOSEXUALS AND BISEXUAL MALES HAVE BEEN REPORTED AS HAVING AIDS SINCE JUNE 1981. THEY MOST LIKELY BECAME INFECTED WITH THE AIDS VIRUS DURING ANAL INTERCOURSE.

TO THAT FIGURE OF 28,000 WE MUST ADD THE 11,000 DRUG ADDICTS WHO HAVE SHARED DIRTY NEEDLES AND OTHER DRUG "WORKS" AND, HENCE, SPREAD THE DISEASE EVEN FURTHER.

THE VAST MAJORITY OF AMERICANS ARE HETEROSEXUALS AND THEY GENERALLY DO NOT ENGAGE IN THE SEX PRACTICES COMMONLY FOUND IN THE HOMOSEXUAL COMMUNITY. AND THEY DON'T "SHOOT" DRUGS EITHER, NOR DO THEY APPROVE OF PEOPLE WHO DO.

IN OTHER WORDS, 95 PERCENT OF THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE THE DISEASE OF AIDS CONTRACTED IT WHILE THEY WERE ENGAGING IN HIGH-RISK BEHAVIOR...THE KIND OF BEHAVIOR WHICH THE MAJORITY OF THE PUBLIC DOESN'T LIKE.

NOW THEY HAVE A DISEASE THAT NOBODY UNDERSTANDS AND EVERYONE FEARS. IN ADDITION, IT IS A VIRTUAL CERTAINTY THAT THEY WILL DIE, AND MEDICALLY THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO ABOUT IT.

IN OTHER WORDS, THIS DISEASE IS SHAPING UP NOT ONLY AS ONE OF THE MOST COMPLEX SCIENTIFIC CHALLENGES WE'VE EVER HAD, IT IS ALSO PRESENTING US WITH ONE OF THE MOST PROFOUND ETHICAL AND MORAL CHALLENGES WE'VE EVER HAD.

ARE WE PREPARED TO MAKE AVAILABLE EVERY SOCIAL, LEGAL, AND MEDICAL RESOURCE FOR PEOPLE WITH AIDS?

MY ANSWER, AS SURGEON GENERAL, IS CLEAR ENOUGH: YES, WE MUST. I'M NOT PREPARED TO COMPROMISE A 5000-YEAR-OLD JUDEO-CHRISTIAN TRADITION OF COMPASSION IN HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS NOR AM I READY TO ABANDON THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF OUR 200-YEAR-OLD AMERICAN SOCIETY.

BUT I THINK THAT'S THE KIND OF ISSUE WE HAVE BEFORE US.

LET ME OFFER AN EXAMPLE OF THIS ISUSE.

WE DO NOT NOW HAVE A SAFE AND EFFECTIVE VACCINE TO PREVENT ADIS. BUT WE'RE SEARCHING FOR ONE...AT A COST OF \$30 MILLION LAST YEAR...\$60 MILLION THIS YEAR...AND APPRECIABLY MORE THAN THAT NEXT YEAR, I'M SURE.

EACH ONE OF YOU, AS A TAXPAYER, IS CONTRIBUTING YOUR SHARE TO PAYING THAT RESEARCH COST.

BUT WHEN A VACCINE COMES ALONG...I DOUBT THAT ANYONE IN THIS AUDIENCE WOULD BE FIRST ON THE LIST TO RECEIVE A SHOT. ON THE CONTRARY, HERE IN NEW YORK CITY THERE ARE ABOUT 50,000-60,000 DRUG ADDICTS AND THEIR SEXUAL PARTNERS WHO SHOULD BE GIVEN THE SHOTS FIRST.

AND TO BE PERFECTLY HONEST WITH YOU, I DON'T KNOW HOW THAT KIND OF OBVIOUS PUBLIC HEALTH DECISION WILL BE RECEIVED.

I'D LIKE TO THINK THAT IT WOULD BE APPLAUDED AND  
UNIVERSALLY SUPPORTED.

BUT I JUST DON'T KNOW.

AND THAT UNCERTAINTY IS AS GREAT A BURDEN TO CARRY AS THE  
WEEKLY CASE REPORT HAS BEEN SINCE JUNE OF 1981.

THIS IS NOT AN EASY TIME FOR US, EVEN FOR THOSE OF US WHO  
HAVE THE TRAINING OR THE EDUCATION OR THE PROFESSIONAL AND  
WORLDLY UNDERSTANDING TO KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON...AND WHAT'S AT  
STAKE.

HOW MUCH HARDER, THEN, IS IT FOR OUR NEIGHBORS -- FOR  
AVERAGE CITIZENS ALL ACROSS OUR COUNTRY -- TO BE WISE...TO BE  
COMPASSIONATE...AND TO BE FAIR.

I THINK YOU AND I MUST BE ALL THOSE THINGS...AND WE MUST DO WHAT WE CAN TO HELP OTHERS BE, ALSO. THAT'S A MAJOR TASK FOR COMMUNICATIONS...A MAJOR ASSIGNMENT FOR THE MEDIA.

THE HUMAN RACE HAS FALLEN VICTIM TO A DISEASE FOR WHICH SCIENCE AND MEDICINE CAN OFFER ONLY A PARTIAL CURE...OR MAYBE NO CURE AT ALL. RATHER, WE MUST SUMMON THE SOCIAL AND SPIRITUAL STRENGTH OF SOCIETY ITSELF, IF WE HOPE TO PREVAIL.

AIDS IS THAT KIND OF A DISEASE AND THEREFORE -- YOU AND I AND AS MANY OTHERS AS WILL JOIN WITH US -- WE HAVE MUCH WORK TO DO...TOGETHER.

THANK YOU.

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