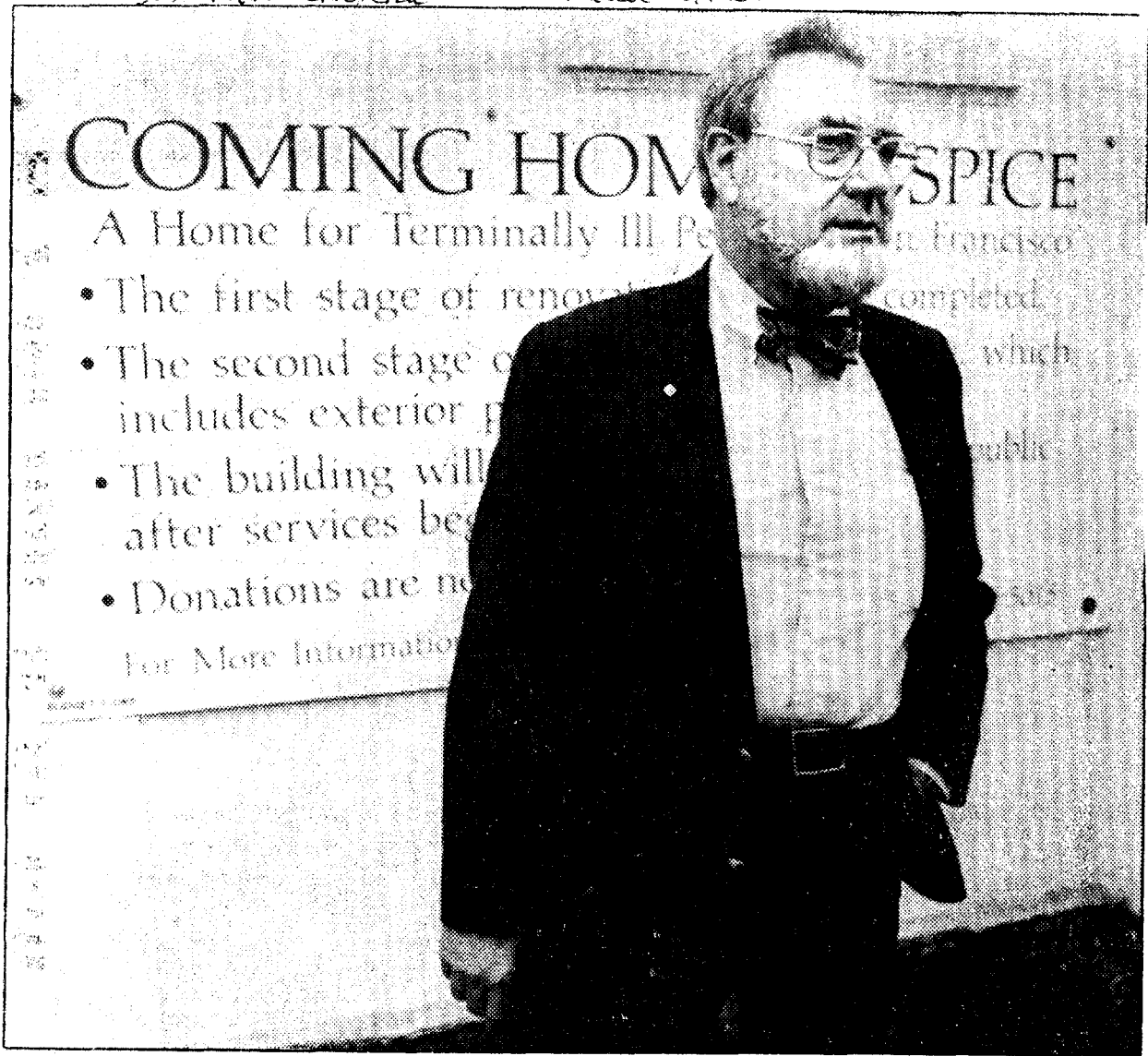


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BY FREDERIC LARSON/THE CHRONICLE

Surgeon General C. Everett Koop visited the new hospice for AIDS victims in San Francisco

Koop Urges Reagan To Take the Lead In 'War' on AIDS

U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop called on President Reagan yesterday to "assume a role of leadership" in fighting the AIDS epidemic.

In a visit to San Francisco, the nation's top physician also endorsed "national planning" on how federal, state and local governments can coordinate their efforts against the disease.

"We've got to have long-term financial planning, the way you'd plan on how to finance a war," said Koop, a Reagan appointee. "After all, this is a war."

Koop's comments came in an interview on the first day of his three-day Northern California tour designed to heighten public awareness of the AIDS epidemic.

This morning, Koop and Nobel Prize-winning scientist Dr. David Baltimore are scheduled to address a joint session of the state Legislature. After the session, Koop plans to meet with Governor Deukmejian.

Koop's comments about Reagan came as scientists grow increasingly critical about the lack of any presidential statements about the epidemic, which has claimed more than 31,000 victims in America.

In the six years of the epidemic, Reagan has publicly mentioned AIDS only once. The comment came last year in response to a reporter's question in a press conference. Since then, the president has not issued any other statement about the disease or its victims.

At a press conference yesterday with Koop, virologist Baltimore, who is chairman of the National Academy of Sciences' AIDS Task Force, said he hoped the publicity about the surgeon general's visit to San Francisco will "embarrass the administration into bringing the resources that are necessary to deal with this epidemic forcefully."

"This is an issue which is important and calls for presidential leadership," Baltimore said later. "The effort to stem the tide of AIDS will not be complete until the president asserts his leadership."

Baltimore added, however, that "whether the administration in the form of President Reagan (does this) seems dubious to me."

Koop told The Chronicle that an "elaborate series of plans" to brief the president on the AIDS epidemic were formulated late last year after the surgeon general called for massive education and prevention programs across the country.

"That meeting has been postponed several times," Koop said, because of the Iran arms scandal. Another meeting with the president is scheduled for the end of March, he said.

If he were called into the president's office this morning, Koop said, he would ask Reagan "to assume a role of leadership" in the battle against the epidemic.

"It's conceivable that at the end of this month, he'll do it," Koop said.

The surgeon general also said the federal government could encourage the development of an AIDS vaccine by issuing a purchase order assuring pharmaceutical companies that the government would purchase enough vaccine doses to make research profitable.

Koop described the plan, a statewide version of which was adopted by the Legislature last year, as "a good system."

In his first stop in San Francisco yesterday, Koop toured a Castro District AIDS hospice and lauded the "pioneering role" that San Francisco has taken in fighting the epidemic.

"We are not going to be able to afford all the costs of taking care of all the people with AIDS in hospitals," said Koop after walking through the Coming Home Hospice on Diamond Street.

"This is precisely the kind of facility we are going to need in order to provide compassionate care to the enormous numbers of people who will be coming down with AIDS in the years to come."

Koop argued against suggestions for mandatory AIDS testing, saying it might "drive the epidemic underground."

Koop's tour of Northern California was organized by San Francisco Assemblyman Art Agnos, who used his appearances with Koop to promote an omnibus AIDS bill introduced to the Legislature on Monday. Among other things, the bill would establish a state AIDS commission to set priorities for AIDS programs and funding.

In an appearance before physicians last night, Koop said, "I would hope what Art Agnos has proposed to your Legislature becomes law." The bill, he said, was "the model of what could be done nationally."

Agnos' bill also would ban discrimination against AIDS victims. When reminded that Governor Deukmejian previously has vetoed such legislation twice, Koop said the issue was "on the list" of issues he planned to discuss with the governor today.

After Koop's hospice visit yesterday, a 29-year-old AIDS sufferer cast the significance of the surgeon general's Northern California visit in more prosaic terms.

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