CEK

# REMARKS

BY

C. EVERETT KOOP, M.D., SC.D.
SURGEON GENERAL
OF THE
U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

PRESENTED AT THE PREMIERE OF "AIDS QUARTERLY" (PBS)
WASHINGTON, D.C.
FEBRUARY 13, 1989

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

I WANT TO CONGRATULATE THE ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION, THE PEOPLE AT NOVA AND FRONTLINE WHO ARE PRODUCING "AIDS QUARTERLY," AND THE PUBLIC BROADCASTING SYSTEM AND ITS MEMBER STATIONS FOR PUTTING IT ON THE AIR.

THIS VENTURE OF YOURS COULDN'T HAVE COME AT A BETTER TIME. WE ARE, AS YOU KNOW, IN THE 8TH YEAR OF THE "AGE OF AIDS." THE AIDS VIRUS HAS STRUCK OVER 85,000 AMERICANS, SINCE WE BEGAN KEEPING RECORDS BACK IN JUNE OF 1981 ... AND 57 PERCENT OF THOSE PERSONS HAVE ALREADY DIED.

NOW, IT'S TRUE THAT MOST CASES ARE STILL FOUND IN FOUR MAJOR CITIES: NEW YORK, SAN FRANCISCO, LOS ANGELES, AND MIAMI, FLORIDA. HOWEVER, IT'S ALSO TRUE THAT WE'VE HAD AT LEAST A DOZEN CASES OF AIDS REPORTED FROM EVERY STATE, THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, PUERTO RICO, AND THE VIRGIN ISLANDS.

SO LET THERE BE NO MISTAKE ABOUT THIS EPIDEMIC. IT IS A NATIONAL EPIDEMIC. AND OUR ONLY WEAPON TODAY, IN THE ABSENCE OF AN AIDS VACCINE -- AND OUR BEST WEAPON -- IS PUBLIC EDUCATION.

OBVIOUSLY, THAT'S WHERE "AIDS QUARTERLY" COMES IN AND THAT'S WHY I'M DELIGHTED TO BE HERE AT ITS PREMIERE.

A FEW DAYS AGO, THINKING ABOUT THIS EVENT, I TRIED TO IMAGINE WHAT THINGS MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN THE "AIDS QUARTERLY". BUT WITHIN MOMENTS IT WAS CLEAR TO ME THAT SUCH A LIST IS VIRTUALLY INFINITE BECAUSE THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE INVESTING VERY GENEROUSLY IN THE BATTLE AGAINST AIDS, WHETHER THROUGH TAXES OR CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS OR DIRECT, PERSONAL SERVICES.

THE U.S. GOVERNMENT, VARIOUS STATE GOVERNMENTS, LOCAL PUBLIC AND PRIVATE AGENCIES, PLUS HUNDREDS OF PRIVATE GROUPS ARE SUPPORTING A WIDE RANGE OF AIDS-RELATED PROGRAMS IN RESEARCH, SERVICES, AND EDUCATION.

THIS FISCAL YEAR, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ALONE WILL SPEND OVER $2 BILLION FOR RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND PATIENT CARE. THAT FIGURE WILL SURELY BE MATCHED -- VERY LIKELY EXCEEDED -- BY STATE AND LOCAL AGENCIES. TOGETHER, THEN, THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS MAY BE INVESTING AN ESTIMATED COMBINED TOTAL OF NEARLY $5 BILLION THIS YEAR ALONE IN AIDS-RELATED ACTIVITY NATIONWIDE.

FROM THAT VOLUME OF INVESTMENT, I CAN ASSURE YOU THERE WILL COME A MORE THAN AMPLE FLOW OF INFORMATION FOR A QUARTERLY REPORT ON AIDS.

AND LET'S HOPE THAT THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS, SINCE THE AMERICAN PEOPLE NEED TO KNOW -- IN SOME DEPTH -- JUST WHAT THEIR COUNTRY IS DOING TO GET CONTROL OF THIS EPIDEMIC ... MAYBE TO STOP IT ... AND MAYBE EVEN TURN IT AROUND.

I CAN TELL YOU THAT THE PEOPLE OF THIS COUNTRY ARE EAGER FOR THIS KIND OF FACTUAL, THOUGHTFUL INFORMATION. YOU WILL RECALL THAT A LITTLE OVER TWO YEARS AGO I RELEASED MY REPORT ON AIDS. SINCE THEN, MORE THAN 30 MILLION COPIES HAVE BEEN DISTRIBUTED IN THE UNITED STATES.

BUT THAT REPORT IS ALSO PART OF A MAJOR NATIONAL EDUCATION CAMPAIGN NOW GOING AT FULL STEAM, INVOLVING TELEVISION, RADIO, MOVIE THEATERS, NEWSPAPERS, MAGAZINES, BUS CARDS, AND PHYSICIANS' WAITING ROOMS.

ALSO, OUR NATIONAL AIDS INFORMATION CLEARINGHOUSE DISTRIBUTES MORE THAN A MILLION BROCHURES AND OTHER UP-TO-DATE MATERIALS REQUESTED BY HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AND OTHER CITIZENS.

OUR NATIONAL AIDS HOTLINE IS HANDLING CLOSE TO 2 MILLION CALLS A YEAR. THE HOTLINE IS OPEN 24 HOURS A DAY, 7 DAYS A WEEK, AND WE HAVE PEOPLE ANSWERING QUESTIONS IN BOTH ENGLISH AND SPANISH AND, WITH THE HELP OF NEW TECHNOLOGY, WE'RE RESPONDING TO THE HEARING IMPAIRED, ALSO.

AND ONE LAST EXAMPLE.

YOU MAY REMEMBER THAT ALMOST A YEAR AGO WE LAUNCHED ONE OF THE LARGEST INFORMATION EFFORTS IN THE HISTORY OF PUBLIC HEALTH: WE MAILED A COPY OF A BROCHURE, UNDERSTANDING AIDS, TO EACH ONE OF 107 MILLION HOUSEHOLDS IN THE UNITED STATES.

SINCE THEN, WE'VE PRODUCED VERSIONS IN 10 OTHER LANGUAGES AND BRAILLE.

FROM THE SURVEYS WE'VE DONE AND THAT OTHERS HAVE DONE, TOO, WE ESTIMATE THAT SOME 87 MILLION ADULTS HAVE READ THE BROCHURE AND WE CAN SAY THAT THE PUBLIC'S KNOWLEDGE OF THE DISEASE OF AIDS IS STEADILY IMPROVING.

SO WE'VE COME A VERY LONG WAY IN THE RELATIVELY SHORT PERIOD OF TIME SINCE JUNE 1981. BUT OUR TASK IS FAR FROM COMPLETE.

THE DAY IS STILL VERY FAR OFF, WHEN WE WE'LL BE ABLE TO SAY THAT EVERYONE IN THE UNITED STATES BETWEEN THE AGES OF 8 AND 80 KNOWS WHAT NEEDS TO BE KNOWN AND IS THEREFORE PROTECTED FROM THE FATAL, INFECTIOUS DISEASE OF AIDS.

BUT THAT DAY WILL COME. I AM CONFIDENT THAT IT WILL ... THANKS TO THE DEDICATION AND HARD WORK OF THOUSANDS -- MILLIONS -- OF PEOPLE WHO HELPED GET THE JOB DONE.

AND THE PEOPLE CONNECTED WITH THE "AIDS QUARTERLY" WILL BE ABLE TO PROUDLY COUNT THEMSELVES AMONG THAT NUMBER.

AGAIN, CONGRATULATIONS ... AND BEST WISHES ON THIS NEW AND VERY IMPORTANT VENTURE IN PUBLIC EDUCATION.

THANK YOU.

# # # # #