

children as young as seven to halt the disease's spread. One widely publicized recommendation was to round up all homosexuals and shoot them. The California AIDS initiative, put on the November ballot by backers of conservative politician Lyndon

LaRouche, sparked fears nationwide that all carriers of the AIDS virus could be subject to quarantine. The measure, which was defeated, would have designated AIDS a contagious disease, making victims subject to state quarantine and isolation

laws. It was opposed by the medical community and virtually every political figure in the state. Floyd Beam, chairman of the Lane County Republican party, said he knows of no local groups such as the ones that organized California's AIDS initiative.

While the Republican party has no formal position on the issue, Beam's personal opinion is that the issue is not discrimination against those with AIDS but personal protection of individuals.

"It's not discrimination, it's protection and that's a hell of a lot more important than (homosexuals') constitutional rights," he said.

Because the disease is communicable, AIDS patients should be quarantined to protect others, he added.

"If it's communicable, then why shouldn't we quarantine

them like we would with any other communicable disease?"

"We'd better get our heads out of the sand and find a cure for this disease or make homosexuality illegal and start prosecuting for it," Beam said.

A different kind of fear has arisen within the gay community and among others in high-risk groups — what will happen to those with AIDS if discrimination continues to escalate, as many fear it will?

"We can do incredibly strange things when we're scared as a culture," Storer said.

About 110,000 Japanese-Americans were interned in detention camps during World War II because of fear, he added. "There was absolutely no basis for interning Japanese-Americans 40 years ago other than strict fear."

Identifying AIDS with a sexual persuasion or with a drug habit skirts the fact that the disease is spreading among heterosexuals as well, Seibert said.

"It's not a gay disease. It's a sexually transmitted virus," he said.

In fact, while the disease's spread among heterosexuals will represent only about 10 percent of all AIDS cases by the 1990s, medical experts make no guarantees that the disease will not spread rapidly among heterosexuals as it is doing among men and women in parts of Africa, which has some 10,000 new AIDS cases each year.

"This disease is going to challenge virtually everything," Seibert said, including state welfare and medical budgets, counseling abilities and the parameters of research and medical treatment.

Ken Brownell, Mid-VAC vice chairman, said he believes that by 1990, almost every U.S. household will be affected in some way by AIDS as the disease "spreads like wildfire."

And as the disease spreads, so will the fear, Brownell said, particularly among small private businesses that do not have specific non-discrimination policies as many public agencies and large businesses do.

"It's the private, independent individual, the unenlightened owner, who is scared to death

for his business...fighting to keep the business open anyway...who will cause discrimination problems," Brownell said.

One particularly worrisome example is the restaurant owner who could feel public pressure to fire an employee with AIDS or even one suspected of being gay, he said.

**'It's not a gay disease. It's a sexually transmitted virus.'**

— Scott Seibert

"I could see that happening — there's just enough rednecks in this town who would say, 'I'm not going to that restaurant. There's a queer there,'" Brownell said.

Public health officials have no evidence that AIDS can be spread through casual contact like a handshake or a sneeze, and Brownell said as the public becomes more educated about the disease, there may be less discrimination and more acceptance.

But members of the religious right are equating AIDS with a latter-day Black Death, a disease designed to kill off society's undesirables. Storer believes AIDS should be treated as what it is — a deadly disease that is killing thousands of people, not a scourge that selectively kills "deviants."

"AIDS should be viewed as a medical issue. Unfortunately, more often it is viewed as a moral one," Storer said.

Looking at AIDS as a cure-all for eliminating specific groups of people is simply "crude thinking," he said.

"That for me is just not how God functions," he added.

Storer sees two dangerous myths that surround AIDS and that may contribute to the disease's stigma — you have to be a drug abuser or you have to be promiscuous to have AIDS.

But "because you have AIDS doesn't say anything about you being a whore or a 'bad apple,'" Storer said. "Sometimes bad things happen to nice people."

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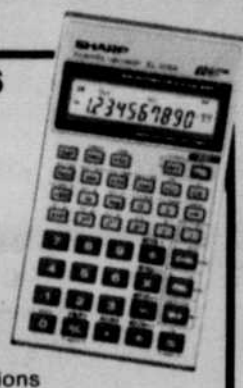
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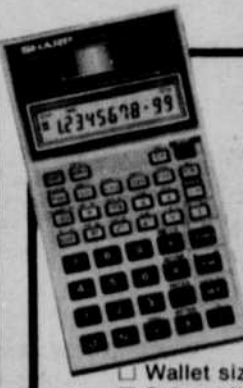
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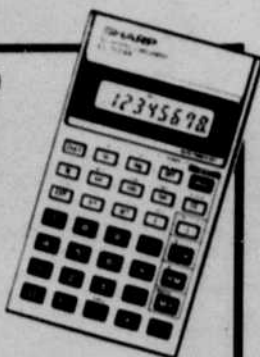
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