

Nationalize the production of AZT

The fact that the Burroughs Wellcome Company bowed to growing pressure from AIDS activists and lowered the price of AZT is proof enough for the federal government to step in and prevent further profiteering in life-saving drugs.

AZT was developed by scientists who were aided by taxpayer scholarships and who worked in public-supported laboratories. It is a genuine crime that this private company can reap such a harvest sown with public monies.

The government should suspend patent rights on any drug proven to be as important to the public welfare as AZT. As in the case of supplying the government with planes and guns, drug companies should be forced to bid for production rights, with the award going to the lowest bidder. Under those circumstances, I have a hunch that the cost of these drugs would drop like a stone.

Even with the recent 20 percent reduction, it will still cost an AIDS patient \$8,000 a year for full treatment. This is a national disgrace.

... Between the Lines ...

BY JACK RILEY

Navy scapegoats a dead sailor

Military investigators did their damndest to prove that a "wrongful intentional act...most probably committed" by Gunner's Mate Clayton Hartwig caused a turret explosion that killed 47 seamen aboard the U.S.S. Iowa last April.

In short, the military thinks that Hartwig was a jilted homosexual who grew despondent and suicidal enough to slip a detonator between two of five powder bags rammed into the barrel of the middle gun.

Of course, there was little evidence left.

The Navy could not prove Hartwig to be homosexual. A psychological profile could not even point to Hartwig being under mental or emotional stress.

Hartwig's family has asked Congress to take a fresh look at the Iowa disaster. Homophobia, a real problem in the U.S. Armed Forces, seems to have reared its ugly head again.

Drug abuse and AIDS lead business concerns

It's not surprising that a new study of United States business executives found they believe substance abuse to be the nation's primary labor and employment problem. AIDS ranks number two in concern, followed by wages and benefits.

Part of the problem is that most business leaders have not taken time to understand AIDS and how the virus is transmitted. Too many employers and employees fear working around someone infected with HIV, even though contracting the disease in the workplace under normal conditions is virtually impossible.

It's going to be a night scene, all right

A regular television talk show aimed at Portland's gay and lesbian community airs November 7 on Channel 11, the community access channel shared by all the major cable companies in the area.

Any program that can promote a little meaningful dialogue in this community will certainly be welcome, but I'm a little skeptical that host Lanny Swerdlow (owner of the City Nightclub) can pull it off without embarrassing himself and the community.

Swerdlow says the program will have a *Tonight Show* format with guest interviews and entertainment. One of his first guests will be self-appointed gay mayor Sandy Director, and part of the "entertainment" will be a dating segment modeled after *Love Connection*.

Enough said.

The Oregonian: homosexuality is a weakness?

At least that's what I read in a recent editorial about Rep. Barney Frank and the flap over his relationship with a male prostitute.

"But Frank's lapse also needs a bit of perspective," the Oregonian said. "He was, as Rep. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., noted, 'human and vulnerable — not corrupt.' Human vulnerability needs understanding and sympathy, not merely condemnation. It would be a cruel irony if the nation's weak and unfortunate lost one of their most articulate champions because of his own weakness."

Since when did Barney Frank become the champion of Johns in this country?

Call me anything, but don't call me a faggot

Some jerk was out on the fire escape the other night, adding his two bits to a small misunderstanding between a gay couple several floors up.

"Faggots!" the guy shouted. Not once, but several times in the direction of the two guys who were probably arguing over what to eat for dinner. "Faggots!" he repeated and at about that moment my blood pressure began to rise and I leaned out the window to shout something myself. Then I reminded myself why I do not keep a gun in my apartment.

The word faggot gets kicked around a lot more these days than it used to. Fear of AIDS and growing bigotry in pop culture keep the word very much alive. The heavy metal band Guns N' Roses sold nine million albums which highlighted the song "One in a Million." Check the verses:

"Immigrants and faggots/ They make no sense to me/ They come to our country/ And think they'll do as they please/ Like start some mini-Iran/ or spread some fuckin' disease,"

And if you happen to be both gay and black, this band just loves the word "niggers." The verse continues:

"get outta my way/ Don't need to buy none/ Of your gold chains today."

These racist and homophobic attitudes among young people, especially in the working classes, are very real. These attitudes will always stand in the way of any civil and homosexual rights movement.

The words hurt, because you know what is really behind them.



Gail Witte

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