Ethical Issues in AIDS Education

By TOM MEW

On October 18, a discussion was presented on the topic of Ethical Issues in AIDS Education.

The guest lecturer was Professor Bell, a member of the faculty at the University of South Carolina who has served on several state and national panels on the subject of AIDS education.

Noting that the current moral climate is one of "distrust and intolerance," Professor Bell stressed the importance of "democratic education" over more compulsory methods such as mandatory testing and incarceration.

She also said that AIDS is a particularly difficult disease to deal with, because the issue of AIDS education is also crowded with moral questions and dilemmas.

Describing public response to the disease as "haphazard," Professor Bell also noted that the nature of the disease is changing. AIDS has now evolved into a "chronic disease."

Also, new studies show that there is an increasing rate of infection among heterosexuals, particularly women and the urban poor.

Bell stated that AIDS treatment is particularly problematic because people must make lifetime reforms, and the modes of contraction include the addictive habits of IV drug users.

Bell stated that "success is achieved only if persons can be responsible for their own learning."

She also said that AIDS education was "an inappropriate platform for moralizing."

She noted that education has been effective in changing the behavior of such high-risk groups as IV drug users.

However, she added that there has been relatively little change in the attitudes of adolescents and young adults.

In order to address this age group, she called for more explicit education.

Bell concluded by stating that the bottom line in AIDS education is "the elimination of the disease."

Summing up her idea of a democratic approach to education, she stated that the principle of democratic education shouldn't be to force any particular social value, but to prevent the spread of the disease.

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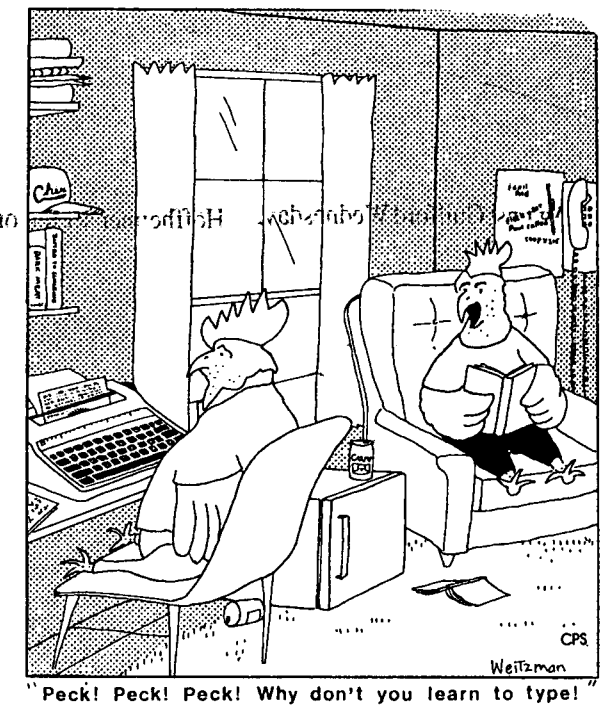
ZOO U. by Mark Weitzman



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