

Another timely flip

Bush's AIDS shift may be temporary

A day after AIDS activist Kimberly Bergalis died of complications from the disease, President Bush met Monday with top health officials and the National Commission on AIDS.

Nice timing.

Bush made another timely announcement Friday: He will propose a health care reform package next month during his State of the Union address.

Clearly the campaign speeches of Bush's prospective presidential opponents are ringing in the president's ears. In fact, his upcoming State of the Union message promises to address many campaign issues, including domestic sore spots such as the economy.

Although the moves obviously are politically motivated, we hope they indicate an important shift in Bush's thinking — a shift that may mean the president will fulfill his promise to devote more time to domestic issues.

One issue brought up at Bush's meeting with the National Commission on AIDS is the lack of health care for people with AIDS.

Dr. June Osborn, chairwoman of the commission, said the lack of health insurance for millions of Americans will cause the disease to put "pressures on a lot of our social structures that were a little shaky to start with."

"We've got a bad decade coming," she predicted.

Perhaps Bush's new health care proposal will address this political hot potato and others related to the AIDS crisis. In examining such issues, he should be wary of talking from both sides of his mouth.

On Monday, Bush could not stay away from his favorite AIDS-related rhetoric: the "behavioral message."

On the AIDS commission's newest member, former basketball star Earvin "Magic" Johnson, Bush said: "I think Magic can be helpful in this behavioral side of things. He's started off sounding like he wants to be, and I really think therein lies a real outreach."

Apparently, Bush still believes the spread of AIDS can be controlled by preaching abstinence. AIDS activists know better and will no doubt call the president on his "behavioral message" stance.

Citizens shouldn't be too hard on Bush for his political motivations. After all, he is a politician.

But Bush's past shifts have shown how easily he can pay lip service to politically expedient issues, only to change his tune at a later time.

—J.P.



THE PROBLEM WE STILL LIVE WITH

GARY LONGSINE

Arms spending wastes future

"The only rational American goal is the fastest possible nuclear disarmament."

Quite possibly, that is the most revolutionary and important sentence to appear in print since the explosion of the atomic bomb. Imagine, a major national newspaper — The New York Times — editorially endorsing as the only rational choice what only 10 years ago was labeled wishful, radical or impossible.

The time to make the future is now. Historians will cite the recent referendum on sovereignty in the Ukraine as the date marking the end of the Soviet Union. The day before the vote, the United States signaled that it would recognize the Ukraine as independent if the referendum carried.

The day after the election, Boris Yeltsin, president of the Russian federation, recognized the independent status of the Ukraine.

More importantly, officials of the Bush administration dropped the article "the" in reference to Ukraine, in accordance with the wishes of Ukraine.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union seems to be running about two or three years behind the disintegration of what used to be called the East Bloc.

Civil war already has erupted between the Serbs and the Croats in Yugoslavia. In a year or two, we may see wars between former republics of the Soviet Union, or more civil wars between ethnic groups within them. The Soviet military — still centrally controlled — can scarcely contain Armenia as it stands. Fighting there already has resulted in many deaths.

The next five years will bring the future of the world. Our country will help determine, through action or inaction, the kind of future that the children of the world will live in.

Inaction may thrust us into a post-apocalyptic future of hunger, disease, malnutrition, pollution, war and fear.

Swift and thoughtful action can bring something better. We desperately need direction, but no one is leading the way to the future that we all want — one of peace, prosperity, health, clean water and clear conscience; a future free from nuclear nightmares.

What passes for the political left in this country — the Democratic party — has been an accomplice for a decade. With its help, the right has crushed trade unions, fought against population control, sold national forests, brought escalating violence to our cities with drug prohibition, poured



billions into redundant thermonuclear bombs, given lip service to education while cutting support for schools and students and favored an obscene concentration of wealth over the creation of new wealth.

We have all suffered, but there are a few hopeful signs. Congress recently approved \$400 million in aid to the Soviet Union to help dismantle nuclear weapons. Some are scheduled to be decommissioned in compliance with the START treaty. Many more were scrapped voluntarily by Mikhail Gorbachev.

These are necessary and refreshing, though tentative and late, first steps. Meanwhile, on the home front, it seems to be business as usual for want of a better idea.

Only a few weeks ago, Congress approved spending billions for deployment of an anti-ballistic missile system. It will consist of two bases (the maximum allowed by existing treaty) and will protect — not U.S. cities — but U.S. nuclear missiles.

Defense of U.S. cities from even a few errant missiles would cost tens of billions more, require dozens of new bases in violation of treaty and isn't even being considered seriously.

Congressional criminal negligence is further exemplified by the continuing escalation of the "black budget" — the spending requested by the president and approved by Congress that is so secret that only a few members of Congress ever get to know what's in it.

In the last decade it has mushroomed from a few hundred million dollars for secret intelligence-gathering agencies, including the CIA and the National Security Agency, into billions and tens of billions of dollars.

The black budget has concealed the design, development, and even the procurement of entire fleets of planes from the United States taxpayer. To this day no one knows the

cost of the F-117 stealth fighter — a plane whose very existence was denied officially until a squadron of more than 50 planes became operational.

The cover story of the current issue of Popular Mechanics uncloaks another, lesser-known but expensive and secret stealth plane — already familiar to readers of Aviation Week. Based on a design from a firm that lost the competition to build the original stealth fighter, the new stealth plane likely was used in the Persian Gulf War, according to Popular Mechanics.

The magazine says the plane probably was used to locate targets and illuminate them with laser beams that guide the "smart" bombs dropped by the stealth fighter.

To lead our nation and the world into a bright future, Congress should take immediate steps. Waiting for presidential leadership could be a fatal exercise in breath-holding.

The fiasco of the ballistic missile defense should be stopped immediately. Weapons procurement should be stripped from the black budget and exposed before the taxpayer so we may rightly judge the usefulness of things we buy.

But it won't happen. The process of weapons systems research, development and procurement is tremendously inertial.

Congress is afraid to make drastic cuts in stupid, wasteful programs including the B-2 bomber, the MX missile and the ballistic missile defense because it would cripple the high-tech aerospace industry that has been a driving force in the economy and in technology for decades.

If we are going to be a part of the future, we must make rational restructuring of federal government spending and the economy an immediate priority. Rather than cut the aerospace industry loose, we should give it a new mission, so the United States can continue to be a technological leader.

A number of civilian projects, including a new space transportation system, solar-powered satellites made in orbit from lunar materials and magnetic levitation trains could be sane alternatives to continued spending on thermonuclear explosive devices.

Such spending would provide a much greater benefit to society in the way of technological spin-offs and direct economic benefit than another nuclear missile ever will. Congress, make it so.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Black media outlets would enlighten whites

This letter is in response to Bryan Ganzel's letter ("Black television doesn't curb racism," DN, Dec. 6).

Frankly, I didn't hear any angry responses when Lifetime network started an all-female network, nor did I hear any anger when the Catholic church aired its Catholic network. Absolutely no one was upset when The Nashville Network began or any other "culturally unique" station has been brought to the air.

I have grown up in Lincoln my entire life. Talk to me about cultural diversity, please. I went to an all-white school, an all-white church and predominantly white bars and other entertainment activity.

Growing up in Lincoln was a blessing and a hell. Many things about Nebraska are wonderful, and I consider this state my home. However, I also know the unheard racism that exists — yes, exists here in the great state of Nebraska as well as every other state in the union.

When you are alone, or there are very few people like yourself, you begin to lose touch with who you are. There is nothing wrong with the idea of the great melting pot, which the world hopes to achieve. But until every error, stereotype and difference is examined and understood, there will never be a melting pot. How can people be in harmony when they can't

respect, identify or understand each other's differences.

The idea that there isn't white pride is erroneous. How could there not be when our entire existence is defined in those terms? Everything I read or see on television or hear from my friends is defined from a white perspective. Naturally, when the majority is speaking, it will speak in terms of the majority. The existence of the Black Entertainment Television network, or any other black medium, doesn't take anything away from whites. It adds to blacks and enlightens whites.

Blacks are not defined by rap, jazz, blues, dancing, the Cosbys, athletes or any other groups typically seen by the public; those are only aspects of the black culture, areas that have been highlighted. Until there was a Miss Black USA contest, most white people hadn't ever considered black women to be beautiful. They didn't consider them to be anything except the other race.

Change is the only constant in life. Those who embrace change grow and evolve. Those who fear and ignore change watch the innovators pass them by.

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