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Number 5
Volume 27

A St. Andrews Student Publication

February 23, 1989

The Lance

AIDS Discussed at Fireside Chat

Michael Roberts

The subject of the latest in the Fireside Chat series was AIDS, and the guest speaker was Dr. W.D. White, Distinguished Professor of the Humanities. White stated that one of the main problems concerning AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is the hysteria, fear, paranoia, and phobia concerning the disease. White cited the fact that in 1987, alone, five-hundred legislative bills were introduced to "protect public health, concerning AIDS." Of these bills, fifty-one passed. "There is really nothing that these bills can significantly do," said White, except allocate money for funding programs and for education." He added that this would not help those members of society that have the disease or have tested positive for the HIV virus, and who have been ostracized, quarantined, and imprisoned.

Another result of the paranoia surrounding AIDS, according to White, is the rise in the number of cases of

"gay-bashing." "Gay-bashing is a term that can be stated literally," he said, while explaining the increase in cases of violence against homosexuals. White cited Laguna Beach, California as his example. He stated that this particular part of California has, per capita, the same percentage of reported AIDS cases as San Francisco. Reported cases of violence against homosexuals has doubled in the last two years according to White.

White also informed the group present of a situation known as "dumping." "Dumping" is the act of transferring a patient diagnosed with AIDS from one hospital to one which is better equipped to handle such cases. White cited a hospital in Texas that once handled AIDS patients, but is now closed due to a lack of funds. In most cases, patients were transferred there for the sole reason that other hospitals simply did not want to work with AIDS cases, according to White. White told the audience of one case of

dumping in which one individual lost his job, his family, and his insurance. No rest home would accept him, his family could not afford to accept him, and the Veterans' Administration refused support, although he was eligible. White further added that the patient was forced to stay at the hospital until his death.

White reported that there have been 83,000 reported cases of AIDS in the United States. Out of these, 1,350 were children under the age of twelve. Of the 37,000 that have died, 1,200 have been children under the age of two. The life expectancy of someone diagnosed with AIDS is between eighteen months and two years. White also indicated that for every one that dies, seven or eight are implicated. He also reported that there have been 1.5 million cases of people that have tested HIV positive. He added that 75 percent, and probably 100 percent will die within fifteen years.

White indicated that studies have

been done to determine how many cases have been reported in several identifiable groups. His statistics show that people with black or brown skin have had twice as many reported cases of AIDS per capita than those without black or brown skin. The military reported that out of every 1,000 people that tried to enter the service last year, 1.5 tested HIV positive. He added that 70 percent of hemophiliacs have tested positive.

White said that he believes that scare tactics do not work in the war against AIDS. "This is the only disease we know of that is 100 percent fatal, and 100 percent preventable," he said. "Our biggest problem is in the language we use," he added. White stated that the language we use to inform the public is often ambiguous and confusing. When commenting on the behavior of college students, White said, "I believe that students are frightened, but as of yet, there is no evidence that they have changed their behavior."

Racism Forum During Black History Week

Mary Griggs

The second event that was scheduled to celebrate Black History Week was a campus wide forum on racism. Only 20 students attended the meeting which was sponsored by the Black Student Union. The students and faculty viewed a Frontline documentary on Racism on College Campuses and then spoke about common concerns.

The most common sentiment expressed by the students who attended the event was anger that racism is still so alive in the United States.

"You would think that coming to college would get rid of those old stereotypes," says Omar

Feaster, "People don't realize that the way that an individual acts is not the way the whole group acts."

Another student, Vemita Thompson asked, "Why are whites so uncomfortable around blacks? In Saga, if there is a table with 2 blacks sitting at it and the rest of the seats are empty, they walk on by, like we have it reserved or something."

Campus Chaplain Shirley Arnold wondered if the white students are just waiting for the invitation to join.

Many other students remarked on the behavior of many white student at BSU parties. "They seem to wait outside so that they are not the only white face there," said one student, "It

is a good thing, what with the low percentage of black students at the school, that the other minorities don't act the same way."

The need for respect was another concern shared by all of the participants. One person on the film stated "You don't have to like me, but you do have to respect me."

This was echoed by Jah Rootz, "People have been miseducated. We must see people for what they are worth. Respect them because we must all interact."

Those attending also spoke about possible changes in the deep rooted prejudices that most people seem to hold.

"First of all," said Shantina Erwin, "the black student population at St Andrews must be the same as that in the nation--12 percent. That is not that much."

On the 20th anniversary of the death of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. the forum poignantly illustrated that the fight for racial equality is not over yet. In fact, it seems to have barely begun.

President Reuschling asked, "Why can't we get along 1 on 1?" He received numerous answers.

"Change can't just be on an individual basis," said Whissett Cohens. "It is going to take effort and lots of time," said another.