PS1 for 3/26/87#DR. KOOP IS CALLED TO ACCOUNT

Dr. C. Everett Koop, Surgeon General of the U.S. Public Health Service, has stepped into the thicket called ""sex education'' and doesn't seem to know how to extricate himself. Fifty-five leaders of conservative and pro-family organizations have offered him a way out but, so far, he stubbornly remains entrenched in what many believe is an untenable position.

It all started when Koop made a few explosive comments about sex education in his published report on AIDS. He called for mandatory ""early elementary school'' sex education, ""at the lowest grade possible,'' including ""information on heterosexual and homosexual relationships.'' Wow!

Earlier this month, the 55 leaders signed a letter to Koop. Tactfully refraining from expressing indignation at Koop's offensive proposal, they simply asked him in a straightforward way to state that public schools should (1) teach sexual abstinence until marriage, and fidelity afterwards, (2) NOT teach or discuss sexual acts or devices or nonmarital lifestyles, and (3) NOT install any medical facility that could dispense contraceptives.

The 55 leaders argued that these statements are necessary as a public health measure and would be consistent with Koop's much-publicized campaign against smoking. Koop urges people not to smoke because it is unhealthy; he never says, if you smoke anyway, use a cigarette holder with a good filter.

We certainly would not tolerate the public schools setting up a clinic to provide children with clean needles to protect them from SOME of the risks of injecting themselves with illegal drugs. We certainly would not allow public schools to teach underage teenagers to take only two drinks of alcohol a day.

The 55 leaders also argued that, for public schools to teach children how to use devices to engage in premarital sexual activity is a violation of the First Amendment rights of public school children who come from families who believe that sex outside of marriage is morally wrong. Just as the atheist child has the constitutional right to attend public school classrooms that are antiseptically cleansed of all references to God and the Ten Commandments, the

child who believes in God and moral standards should have a constitutional right to attend public school classrooms antiseptically cleansed from all teaching that fornication and homosexuality with condoms are acceptable behavior.

Dr. Koop replied to the letter of the 55 leaders, but he did not answer a single question they asked. He said that public school ""curriculum policies are reserved to state and local governments for decision,'' and would be ""inappropriate'' for him to comment on.

That would have been a sound position before he issued his AIDS report. But it won't stand up now after Koop voluntarily injected himself into the sex education controversy with his bizarre statements.

Koop is also distributing copies of a recent speech in which he said that he has ""had NO misgivings about anything'' in his report on AIDS. In that speech, he even called for sex education to start with teaching Kindergartners ""where do babies come from.''

Koop's public statements on sex education simply will not bear critical analysis. He refuses to differentiate between advice to adults, who have the freedom to engage in high-risk behavior if they choose, and advice for teaching children, who are a captive audience in the public school classroom. Curiously, Koop always refers to ""monogamy'' and never to marriage.

In his reply to the 55 leaders, Koop self-righteously protested that he has been ""scrupulously correct and scientific'' in his public statements. Unfortunately, it is not scientific or correct to tell people that condoms mean ""safe sex.''

Condoms have a 10-20 percent failure rate in preventing conception. But women are capable of becoming pregnant only three to five days a month, while the AIDS virus can be transmitted 365 days a year. Spermatazoa are 500 times larger than a virus and therefore much more easily stopped by a barrier.

No one really knows what the failure rate for condoms is in preventing AIDS, but some tests show that it is very high. If public schools teach children that sex with condoms is safe, that opens up the schools to tremendous financial

liability for the diseases, pregnancies, and broken lives that result from teenage promiscuity encouraged by school authorities.

Koop's unfortunate remarks about sex education show that he is out of touch with the reality of current public school curricula, which critics say include ""disgusting, embarrassing, pornographic, offensive descriptions of sexual activity.'' Koop's critics believe that his remarks have created a scandal, and that he has ""an obligation to undo the damage'' he has caused by his unfortunate remarks.