PS1 for 5/7/87#A PROGRAM TO BATTLE AIDS

It's been hard to turn on the tube or pick up any newspaper during the past six months without being confronted by news reports calculated to raise our awareness about AIDS, including its devastating effect, its financial cost, and its galloping contagion. But with all the important services that state governments are called on to provide, it's hard to see any justification for diverting $450,000 of Illinois taxpayers' money into a nebulous new service called "AIDS Awareness."

The Illinois bureaucrats who were assigned the task of spending the $450,000 must have been hard put to figure out what they could say about AIDS that hasn't already been redundantly said by the media. So they hired a group called ""Local Talent'' to write a song called ""The Condom Rag'' and a series of skits called ""Street Talk.'' The theme is that using condoms is ""safe'' and ""fun,'' and the vulgarity of this ""talent'' is exceeded only by its bad grammar.

The lyrics and the dialogue are not suitable for family reading in this column even AFTER the ""explicit'' references had been deleted. Lest you think I am too prudish, even Illinois Governor James R. Thompson said "it's garbage ... everyone will think we are lunatics.''

But the Illinois Public Health Department presented the song and skit publicly in a two-hour ceremony on the Old Capitol Plaza in downtown Springfield, Illinois. Earlier this year, the Missouri Public Health Department had tried a similar exotic AIDS awareness ploy; it published a pamphlet called ""Condom Sense'' that had to be destroyed after state officials called it offensive.

We are already painfully aware of AIDS. The question is, what are we going to do about it?

Since there is no cure for AIDS and none is in sight, our society faces two tasks: care for those who have the disease, and protection

for the uninfected against the infected. Here are some suggestions.

1. Legislation to require blood tests for AIDS before marriage licenses are issued, just like blood tests for other venereal diseases. In addition to other reasons, this is a women's rights issue because most of those with AIDS are men, and every woman should have the right to have the state ascertain that her prospective husband is just as free from AIDS as from syphilis and gonorrhea.

2. Legislation to require all doctors, dentists, nurses and other health personnel to be tested for the AIDS virus so that their patients can be notified whether or not their health care providers are AIDS carriers. ""Informed consent'' to all medical procedures should include the right to give or withhold consent to treatment by an AIDS carrier.

3. Legislation to require that infection with the AIDS virus be a reportable condition so that health authorities can trace sexual contacts. Current law requires this procedure for syphilis and gonorrhea so that victims can be traced and counseled, and so that they do not unknowingly infect others. AIDS should be treated likewise.

4. Legislation to require that persons in sensitive jobs be tested regularly for AIDS because of its brain dementia effect. Testing should also be done for illegal drugs at the same time.

5. It should be made a crime for anyone to donate blood, semen or organs who has engaged in high-risk behavior in the last ten years. High-risk behavior includes homosexual acts, prostitution, or intravenous drug use.

6. It should be made a crime for anyone to transmit AIDS to another, just as it is now a crime to transmit other venereal diseases to another person.

7. Anyone needing a blood transfusion should have the right to

receive the blood of his choice. It is not enough to be able to give your own blood, because this is impossible for emergency surgery.

8. Hospices should be established for AIDS victims so that they may receive compassionate care, yet not be a danger of infection to others who are hospitalized.

9. We should institute mandatory testing for AIDS of everyone admitted to hospitals, so that precautions can be taken to protect all health care personnel who serve them, as well as other patients.

10. We should institute mandatory testing for certain groups, including immigrants, prisoners, prostitutes, and persons convicted of intravenous drug use.

11. Legislation should be passed to make it clear that Congress did not intend to include persons with contagious diseases (including AIDS) in the definition of ""handicapped'' under the federal law barring discrimination against the handicapped.

The public health departments of the United States as well as of every state should address their attention toward constructive proposals to protect the uninfected from the AIDS infected, instead of paying for vulgar ditties and materials.