

COLUMBIA SPECTATOR

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Columbia Daily Spectator, Volume CXVII, Number 18, 11 February 1993 — SPECTRUM A profound need for prophylactics
[ARTICLE+ILLUSTRATION]

SPECTRUM

A profound need for prophylactics

Conor Ryan

Tonight at 7:30 p.m. in John Jay lounge, the Columbia-Barnard Campus Crusade for Christ (CCC) is sponsoring a lecture entitled, "The Scientific Case Against Condoms." Their featured guest is David Thom, an "AIDS/HIV researcher and speaker on university campuses for the past eight years," according to their promotional poster.

The CCC has a right to exist, as does any other organization. What the "Crusade"-ers do among themselves is their own business.

When they start spreading misinformation to promote their own agenda, however, they have overstepped their boundaries.

The same poster proclaims the lecture important, "for anyone who places their trust in condoms to prevent HIV infection," and says that the lecture will address the, "scientific case against condoms and alternatives to condomania."

Condomania? I'm not even sure that's a word. More importantly, though, what exactly does that mean? The CCC seems to be implying that too many people erroneously look at condoms as the solution to stopping HIV infection. Presumably, their "alternative" sugges-

tion would be abstinence.

It is true that if all humans abstained from sexual intercourse, the spread of HIV would be reduced. But the question is, is that either plausible or, in fact, necessary?

According to Laura Pinsky, co-author of “The Essential AIDS Fact Book” and co-director of Columbia Gay Health Advocacy Project (GHAP), an organization which promotes AIDS education and handles HIV antibody test counseling, “The problem with focusing on abstinence is it doesn’t seem to be what most university students practice.”

Leslie Kantor of the Sex Information Council of the United States points out that the CCC is just one of a number of far-right groups that are part of a national movement to promote extremely conservative values.

“Part of what they promote is fear-based sex education,” said Kantor, who was formerly the coordinator of Columbia Health Services.

“One of their major tactics is to distort medical information. They both totally fabricate information and misrepresent

condom findings in laboratory studies,” she continued.

Both Kantor and Pinsky are concerned that giving people the idea that condoms are ineffective will

lead to more unsafe sex, said Kantor, "They get people into a mindset where they think, 'if condoms don't work, then well, I might as well not use them at all.' "

Pinsky concurred, "[GHAP's] concern about talks which increase guilt is that we feel that high levels of guilt are associated with greater difficulty in thinking about sex carefully and practicing safer sex."

In regard to the properties of condoms, a fact sheet compiled by the Center for Population Options (CPO) stated, "Standard tests assure that latex condoms do not allow for the passage of water, HIV, or sperm."

Former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop once proclaimed, "The greatest problem with condoms is that many people do not know how to use them." According to Kantor, the theoretical condom failure rate is one percent. It is human error that causes this number to rise to approximately 13 percent.

The CPO sheet, entitled "Condom Efficacy and Use Among Adolescents," also conveys, "Laboratory tests indicate that latex condoms used with a contraceptive spermicide during vaginal intercourse have a projected effectiveness rate of 97.5 percent in preventing pregnancies, 99.90 percent in preventing transmission of STDs, and even slightly higher for HIV."

There, now you have the facts. So please, don't let one very biased presentation endanger your well-being. One last thing Kantor had to say was, "While a condom doesn't confer 100 percent protection, your protection is 10,000 times higher as compared to unsafe sex."

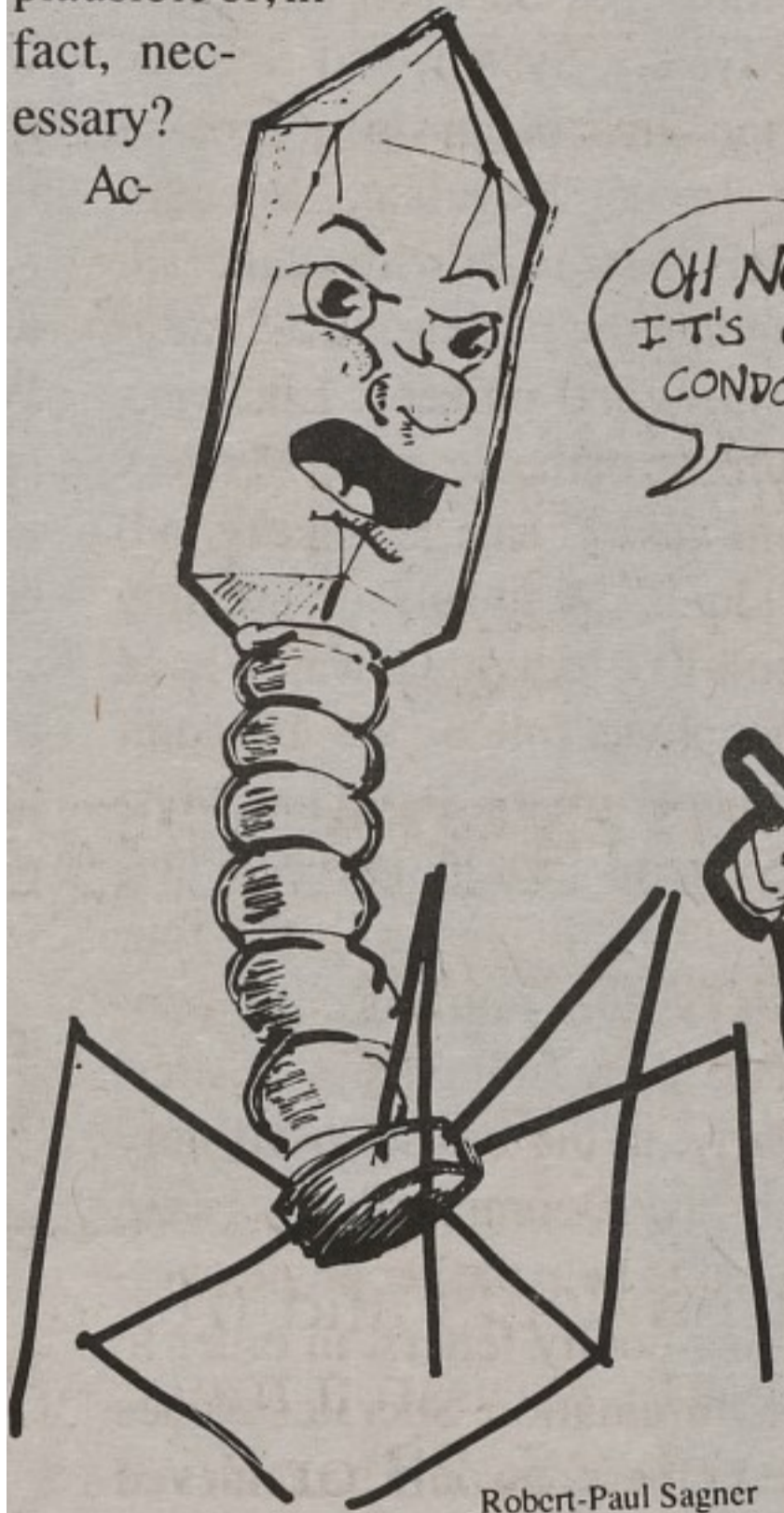
Decide for yourself.

Depeche Monde

Depeche Monde by Conor Ryan, CC '96, will appear on alternate Thursdays.

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Robert-Paul Sagner

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