

/C

FREEZY
53 LOW 37 — A14

The Washington Times

WASHINGTON, D.C., SATURDAY, MARCH 19, 1994 ★

PHONE: (202) 636-3000 25
SUBSCRIBER SERVICE: (202) 636-3333

Elders calls gay sex 'wonderful,' 'healthy'

By Joyce Price
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders says Americans need to know that sex is "wonderful" and a "normal . . . and healthy part of our being, whether it is homosexual or heterosexual."

In an interview in this month's issue of the Advocate, a magazine for homosexuals, Dr. Elders also:

- Endorsed homosexual adop-

- Called the Boy Scouts' ban on homosexual Scouts and Scout leaders "unfair."

- Said school-based health clinics should address the needs of homosexual, as well as heterosexual, students.

"We can't just write off 10 percent of our student population," she said in the interview. "We need to make sure our teachers are educated about sexuality and that

counselors know how to address the issue in a sensitive manner."

Recent research has found that homosexuals make up only 1 to 2 percent of the total U.S. population.

As she sometimes did during her embattled six-year tenure as director of the Arkansas Health Department, Dr. Elders chided religious conservatives.

"I think the religious right at times thinks that the only reason

for sex is procreation," she said. "Well, I feel that God meant sex for more than procreation. Sex is about pleasure, as well as about responsibility."

Her comments are similar to those made by Kristine M. Gebbie, the national AIDS policy coordinator.

In a speech in Washington in October, Miss Gebbie said the United

see ELDERS, page A6

ELDERS

From page A1

States needs to start viewing sex as an "important and pleasurable thing." Until that happens, "we will continue to be a repressed Victorian society," she said.

In the Advocate interview, Dr. Elders lamented that "society wants to keep all sexuality in the closet. . . . We need to speak out to tell people that sex is good, that sex is wonderful."

Gary Bauer, president of the Family Research Council, observed: "A large number of Clinton administration appointees have a rather unusual obsession with sex. Every time we turn around, they are talking about some other aspect of it. Has anyone told these folks that the '60s are over?"

He said the surgeon general's support for homosexual adoptions and her criticism of the Boy Scouts' exclusion of homosexual members indicate "she's once again staked out positions that can only be described as 'fringe.'"

The Advocate article pointed out that President Clinton refused to denounce the Boy Scouts' homosexual ban during his 1992 campaign because the Scouts is a private group entitled to set its own policies.

However, Dr. Elders told Advocate writer Chris Bull she believes the ban has a negative effect on the mental health of homosexual youth and promised to oppose it publicly.

Richard Walker, national spokesman for the Boy Scouts of America, declined to respond directly to Dr. Elders' published



AP

Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders

comments. "We are not discriminatory," Mr. Walker said. "Since 1910, one of the roles of the Boy Scouts has been to provide positive role models."

Parents, he said, "overwhelmingly tell us" that homosexuals are "not desirable role models."

As Arkansas health director, Dr. Elders antagonized conservatives opposed to her push for condom distribution in schools

In the Advocate, she chastized conservative religious groups actively opposed to homosexuality and homosexual rights, saying, "You have to wonder how much love that people who hate gay people have in their hearts."

The Rev. Louis Sheldon, chairman of the Traditional Values Coalition, a group involved in many ballot initiatives opposing homo-

sexual rights, said: "We have never said we hate anyone. We are tolerant toward any people, but we reserve the right to discern between what's morally right and what's morally wrong."

When the "top medical officer of the nation advocates and promotes unhealthy sexual and social practices, one has to question her credibility," Mr. Sheldon said.

Paul Cameron, chairman of the Family Research Institute, a group that has described homosexuality as "public enemy one," agreed.

"That woman would be a sorry joke if she didn't occupy such an important post," he said. "Elders agonizes about secondhand tobacco smoke, yet gives the green light to sexual practices that are inherently dangerous, strongly associated with AIDS, hepatitis and a host of other diseases."

As for homosexual adoption, Dr. Elders said the sexuality of parents "has nothing to do with" the sexuality of their children.

Attempts to get a White House response to the Elders interview were unsuccessful. Several months ago, when Dr. Elders called for studies to determine if legalizing drugs would reduce crime, Mr. Clinton opposed her remarks.

"This is an old game. . . . The president stays above the fray, while his appointees advance a radical agenda. The American people aren't going to buy it," Mr. Bauer said.

Mr. Sheldon put it this way: "The president will have all of Joycelyn Elders' actions fall at his feet like Whitewater. He must be held accountable. He's the boss."