



## Top marks for Govts abstinence thrust

Saturday, June 12 2004



*"The safe sex message is not working and is killing our young people. Abstinence has no failure rate. It has been the answer then and is still the answer now. — Gail Dignam, Co-ordinator, Louisiana Governor's Abstinence Programme*

**Once again, I must say, as unequivocally as possible, that the most responsible and meaningful initiative ever embarked upon by any Government in TT, with respect to addressing the problem of sexual activity and STDs among our young people, is the current abstinence drive by the combined effort of the Ministries of Education and Health. Ten students from various secondary schools in TT were sent by the two ministries (under patron Mona Rahael), to the Louisiana Governor's Convention on Abstinence which was held from April 4-6. The programme has had an impressive record of success. The reports from the students on their return, as well as the feedback from Mrs Rahael who travelled as chaperone, were splendid. Mrs Rahael had announced then that the next step would be the training of students at secondary school level to establish "abstinence clubs" in the schools.**

We felt the sincerity in the announcement at that time, but I believe most people may have still been a bit pleasantly surprised by the alacrity of the Ministries in summoning not only students but principals, teachers counsellors, religious leaders, social workers and representatives of various NGOs to an intense, well-organised workshop on the abstinence programme. A total of 300 was in attendance. The workshop, which was conducted by experts from the Louisiana programme, was held between May 25 and 28 at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, Mt Hope. Another training programme is carded for late August.

I believe every red-blooded parent in this land would be extremely thankful that Education Minister Haze Manning (and the Health Minister) did not attempt to play the treacherous "politically correct" game, or go pandering to "the liberals," secular humanists and commerce-driven predators by announcing some kind of so-called safe sex approach for schools. The Ministry of Education has decided upon a no-compromised position — abstinence only. How praiseworthy! Thank God for a Minister of Education with a conscience and a heart that's clothed with a genuine concern for the lives of our children. On the opening day of the TT workshop, co-ordinator of the Louisiana programme, Gail Dignam, put it in these succinct words: "The safe sex message is not working and is killing our young people, Abstinence has no failure rate. It has been the answer then and is still the answer now."

I'm sure readers of this column would find those words sounding quite familiar. This writer has repeatedly made the same point over the years. There is simply no other honest, sober responsible way. The horrifying statistics of the safe sex hype face us like a horror movie turned real. In sombre tone, Dignam, who is here to help formulate the curriculum of the abstinence programme for our schools declared, "The sexual revolution, 'if it feels good do it,' has brought untold evil to our young people and I apologise to the youths of today for the hurt that my generation has caused." This is the kind of clear-headed and transparent approach we need, if we must make any meaningful difference.

Another point that Pentecostals have been hammering for years, came out loud and clear at the Mt Hope workshop. It has to do with the deadly Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) and condom-use. HPV, which scientists continue to research, has caused 99.7 percent of all cervical cancer worldwide. It also causes vulvar cancer, anal cancer and cancer of the penis. There is no cure for HPV, which also manifests itself in genital warts. In several ways, HPV is even worse than HIV/AIDS. There are some 42 million people living with HIV/AIDS worldwide whereas in the US alone, there are 40 million people infected with HPV.

But the thing to note is that this highly contagious disease is passed from person to person by mere skin-to-skin contact of the genital region. Condoms can in no way prevent the spread of this killer. The American Cancer Society has clearly stated, "No scientific data supports condom use for genital HPV prevention." But, of course the condom pushers and their partner predators never reveal this in their safe sex promotions.

They dangle the condom carrot before the eyes of the vulnerable youths, so as to ensnare them with their cruel web of deception. As the Bible warns, we must be ever aware of ravaging wolves, including those who come

robed in the sheep's clothing of "scientific and philosophical thought." Under this guise, they seek to mutilate the minds and destroy the morality of our invaluable youth resource. They declare humanistic war on our traditional value systems and theistic foundations.

While science is fantastic, the stark reality is that men have always used it for good, as well as the most atrocious of evils. Our binding divine obligation mandates us to defend our sacred belief systems by evaluation and refutation of the diabolical tenets of devious elements that attempt to annihilate all which we hold dear. The challenges, both current and future, call for godly, clear-minded men and women, who are able to marshal the will, courage of conviction and co-operative skills to address the needs of the present and lay foundations for the fashioning of a desirable future.

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