

Excerpts from “In the White House” episode of The West Wing

Part 1

Sir..Sir you have interrupted me again

My apologies Mr. President

How can you tell us this isn't about profit maximization? Why do you sell Amprex for half the price lower than you do in my country?

I don't think that's the issue.

Let's make it issue.

Toby...

Let's make it the issue, for the moment.

You can't compare prices worldwide, Toby.

Sir, excuse me, Sir?

Yes.

I was the one who asked you the question. I'd appreciate it if you directed your answer to me.

Pres. Mbala. When you sell to small pharmacies as we do in Norway, a different price is set.

Norway, \$10 per unit US. My country: \$23 per unit US. (rejection; reject argument)

Retail markup, taxes, pharmacy discounts... these things vary widely.

Not to mention the fact that we don't even know if the drugs are getting to your citizens.

You are implying corruption and incompetence.

We do have reports of that Mr. President.

You talk to me about corruption. What are your annual sales of f.... alone? A billion dollars.

I don't understand your point Sir.

I think Mr. Mbala is saying there's more money in getting a white guy an erection than curing a black guy of AIDS.

Sir, my company has given away over \$120 million worth of free drugs a year, including free doses of zylclozin which is one of two drugs in your country curing eye infection right now...

They're not dying from eye infections, Alan. (rejection; reject logic or validity)

Well they're not dying cause of me either, Toby. And I'd like not to be talked to this way.

Alan, if it was 26 million Europeans dying we'd have had a solution yesterday.

How much would it cost for you to provide free drugs to the Saylese Republic, Kenya and the Republic of Equatorial Cunda.

I have no idea.

Why not? We're talking about 130,000 patients, 200 mg pills three times a day, every day, what's the X factor?

We don't know how long they'll live.

We know where... let's take a break

Part 2

I think there's a more fundamental problem than marginal cost. We've been at this for four days, and I still think we haven't talked about the fundamental misunderstanding in Africa over the basic facts of AIDS.

I don't think there's a misunderstanding.

A week ago, you people stood up and said that AIDS has only a casual relationship to HIV.

I'm not certain to whom you're referring when you say you people. But it was President V... of Africa who said that. And not anyone in this room.

I think Mr. Danson has brought up a hard truth that should be faced.

What's that?

If tomorrow we made AIDS medication free to every patient in your country, as much as they needed for as long as they needed it, it would likely make very little difference in the spread of the epidemic.

Why?

Anti-HIV drugs are a triple cocktail. It's a complicated regimen that requires 10 pills to be taken every day at precise times. Two protease inhibitors every eight hours two combination RTI pills every 12 hours.

What's the problem?

They don't own wristwatches. They can't tell time.

We agree that something must be done. But we don't think we're culprits and we don't think there's an easy or obvious solution. And we think you should be aware of the dangers involved in some of the proposals made here today. (accept point of view but not argument)

Mr. President, may we speak with you alone, please?

Part 3

I'm going to put a deal together. And I want you to agree to it.

What am I agreeing to?

I can get them to lower their prices but you have to commit your military your customs bureau and your ministry of health...you have to commit them to stopping the influx of black-market HIV drugs from Korea and Pakistan and from where ever else they're coming.

85.8% of our population is infected. 60% of our hospital beds are occupied by people who are HIV-positive. Our institute of policy analysis says in the coming decade 50% of all households in my country will have at least one member infected with HIV. To think I would care about international patent law at a time like this is unrealistic.

Mr. President, the US Department of Commerce will put your country on a watch list. That's the first step toward trade sanctions. Our Congress could end all aid to your country.

Or you can agree to what we're saying. In exchange for which we believe we can get Congress to forgive the debt on all your past development loans, and we believe the export/import bank will offer a billion dollars in loans to finance the purchase of American AIDS medication.

Congress wouldn't approve the law.

Congress won't have to Sir. The treasury and the State Department will review it. But if we spread the loans out over several countries in your region on a case-by-case basis, and if none of the loans exceed hundred million dollars, we don't need congressional approval. That law might change soon.

It's a terrible thing to beg for your life. Terrible. My father was a proud man. He'd build homes. He wouldn't like what I came here to do.

Yes he would Mr. President. Swear to God he would.

Thank you sir.