

COMBAT attacked at Toronto city hall

Toronto Sun fans racism against black AIDS group

TORONTO—A Black AIDS education group has been viciously attacked by the Toronto Sun's City Hall columnist. In her March 28th column, Christie Blatchford quotes a Feb. 4 letter from COMBAT (Community Organizations Mutually Battling AIDS Together) to the Toronto Board of Health in which COMBAT protested news that their funding might be interrupted.

Blatchford chastises COMBAT for referring to "the prevailing racial climate in Toronto" and warning that an interruption of their funding "will be seen as more evidence that the political system in Toronto does not hesitate to perpetuate Black deaths." Right-wing Parkdale councillor Chris Korwin-Kuczynski is quoted: "We'll never know—are we giving the money to them because we believe in fighting AIDS and what it's doing to the black(sic) community? Or are we giving it to them because we're afraid of them."

Blatchford continued the attack

the following day, charging COMBAT with making "threats, accusations of racism and intimidation its modus operandi."

But most importantly, Blatchford badly misinforms her readers and slanders COMBAT's ongoing campaign to get the Board of Health to trace the race, sex, age and date of those AIDS cases in Toronto now reported as "race unknown". As of the end of 1988, there are 329 of these as compared to 176 Caucasians and 1 Black. This statistic is a lie and a sham—it's quite apparent to COMBAT and other AIDS activists and service workers that there is far more than one Black person in Toronto sick with AIDS, and many who have already died. In fact, included with the Feb. 8 letter that Blatchford refers to in her March 29 column were 204 signed petition letters pressing the Board of Health to do the back-tracking. But despite the petitions (which had been circulating for only 2 weeks at the time), and 20 letters of

support from Black churches and community organizations, Blatchford pressed on with her slander, contrasting COMBAT's demands for race-specific AIDS statistics with those of Black groups who criticized Metro Police "for keeping crime statistics on the basis of race and releasing some that showed a high percentage of Black crime in Jane-Finch." Obviously Blatchford misses the difference between police racism and provocation of a community and the demand of that community for information about its health.

Contrary to Blatchford's slander, participation in COMBAT is open to individuals of any race who support the group's goals and are willing to participate in its work. Sue Kaiser of the Board of Health's AIDS Prevention Program has observed a COMBAT community educational. She says "COMBAT, like every other grant project are responsible for submitting monthly reports to the Board of Health", and



Combat threatened by racist bureaucracy

that they have fulfilled this responsibility.

In its communications to the Health Department, COMBAT argues that "there is a distinct and unique pattern involved in the transmission of AIDS among Blacks" and offers in evidence the 1:1 ratio between female and male PWAs in Africa, the statistical shift toward a similar ratio in the Carib-

Nova Scotians rally for sexual orientation protection

WOLFVILLE - Nova Scotia's governing Tory caucus discussed proposed amendments to human rights legislation, including sexual orientation protection, on April 12th. At the same time, outside Province House (the provincial legislature building), more than 200 of us - noisy lesbians, gay men and our

supporters - pushed for the government to immediately bring forward its human rights proposals and to include sexual orientation protection in them.

The noon hour crowd was mostly young, with more lesbians than gay men, and a number of placards announcing the presence



Doug Weatherbee

Gays and lesbians protest outside provincial legislature

of the Nova Scotia Persons with AIDS Coalition. We heard and sang songs of protest and struggle that included "We Are A Gentle Angry People" and "We Shall Not Be Moved," and heard from a number of speakers. We also expressed our strong support for the adoption of other proposed human rights amendments that are included in the draft legislation. They include an end to discrimination on the basis of previous experiences of mental illness and on the basis of "marital status" which has often been used to deny housing to single-parent families.

The demonstration was organized by Lesbian and Gay Rights Nova Scotia (LGRNS) which has been leading a highly successful letter-writing and lobbying effort for sexual orientation protection. Brenda Richard of LGRNS pointed out that the provincial government continues to deny the rights of more than 87,000 lesbians and gay men in the province and declared that "we are here, we are staying and we want our human rights." A representative brought the support of the Students Unions of Nova Scotia and the Canadian Federation of Students to the rally. This

was the largest demonstration yet in the province for sexual orientation protection and left LGRNS spokesperson Anne Bishop feeling "really happy" but with a "let's wait and see" attitude about how the Tories will respond to the public action.

A press conference was held the day before by LGRNS to focus public attention on the provincial government's inaction on the human rights front. At the conference, the Status of Women Coalition, a coalition of 60 groups across the province, spoke out in support of sexual orientation protection and for an end to discrimination against single-parent families. Anne Bishop pointed out that sexual orientation protection was badly needed because of the violence and hatred directed against lesbians and gay men. As an example she displayed a poster of Gays and Lesbians at Dalhousie (GLAD) that had been defaced by anti-gay individuals to read "Come On Out And Kill A Fag."

The Minister responsible for human rights, Tom McInnis, has publicly stated his personal support for sexual orientation protection. He confirmed that the human

rights legislation has been re-written but when confronted by demonstrators would not confirm whether sexual orientation protection would be included in the legislation. He said that the Tory caucus would make its decision within the next few weeks. At the same time, rumour has it that Premier Buchanan has recognized that sexual orientation protection may be inevitable but he does not want it to be introduced while he is still premier. Whether this means that the whole human rights package will be ditched for now or whether they will introduce legislation that does not include sexual orientation protection is still unclear. It is hoped that enough pressure can be brought to bear to force the government to introduce human rights reforms that include sexual orientation protection. If sexual orientation protection is not included, the struggle will rally be on.

LGRNS can be contacted at P.O. Box 7067 North, Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3K 5J4. A message can be left on the group's answering machine at (902) 455-5729.

Gary Kinsman

Mayor Eggleton "uninvited" Names project quilt committee in Toronto

TORONTO—A group in Halifax has organized a cross country tour of the Names Project quilt this spring and summer. A number of problems occurred with the organization of this project, especially in Toronto. The timing, participation of gay and lesbian groups, and the inaccessibility of the Toronto organizing group were all questionable.

Last fall the group arranged for the quilt to arrive around Lesbian and Gay Pride Day, this coming June. Few had knowledge of this

until late February, and this caused

major problems. The timing of the event to coincide with LGPD, thus having two events on the same day and splitting up the crowd, was considered to be negative for our celebration of pride. Second, the AIDS memorial project was already planned and this had more of a Canadian focus than the quilt.

There was also the problem that very little time was given for people to make their own additions to the quilt; only two months to include our own lost lovers and friends. The

committee had also decided to in-

voke the mayor of Toronto, Art Eggleton, to read out the names at this event. Art Eggleton has been for years very homophobic and was a major hurdle in the early attempts by city council to obtain AIDS funding. This was considered by many in the community to be an insult to those who have died of AIDS.

AIDS ACTION NOW! was requested to try and mediate the situation so this event, which everyone considered worthy, did not become a farce in Toronto. They

called together a meeting of the different community groups to try and reach a consensus as to what should be done. The groups included ACT, AANI itself, the PWA foundation, CLGRO, LGPD, and the MCC. The unified results of this meeting were the suggestions that the quilt showing should be postponed, that Art Eggleton should be uninvited unless he recognized Lesbian and Gay Pride Day, and that the event be lesbian and gay oriented.

This position was brought to the committee that had arranged the

Toronto part of the tour. At this meeting it was decided by the committee that postponing the event was out of the question, but they would uninvite Art Eggleton. A management committee was formed that included the groups from the lesbian and gay community. It was also decided that the quilt be shown on June 22-24 and not on Lesbian and Gay Pride Day. As well, the committee recognized the AIDS Memorial project.

Brent Southin