

AIDS ACTION NEWS!

ACTIVISM CAPTURES THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE



Photo: Philip Hannan

For the first time the voices of people living with AIDS/HIV took centre stage at an international AIDS conference in Montreal from June 4-9.

More than 300 activists from Réaction SIDA in Montreal, AIDS ACTION NOW! in Toronto and ACT UP New York City were joined by others in taking over the opening ceremonies. The protest was aimed at the marginalization of people living with AIDS/HIV from active participation in the conference and at

Brian Mulrone, who was to speak that afternoon.

Tim McCaskell of AAN! welcomed the delegates and opened the conference "on behalf of people living with AIDS in Canada and around the world." McCaskell and Eric Smith of Réaction SIDA protested the inaction and neglect of the Canadian government and called for the firing of Alastair Clayton, head of the Federal Centre for AIDS. Chants of "History will recall, Mulrone did nothing at all" filled the huge confe-

rence room. The opportunity was also used to release le Manifeste de Montreal — an international declaration of the rights and needs of people living with HIV disease. Delegates received both the protesters and the manifesto with cheering.

Kevin Brown Remembered

Kevin Brown, a founding member of the Vancouver PWA Coalition (now the PWA Society), had been invited to speak - the first time a PLWA was to have addressed the opening ceremonies. Kevin Brown died on May 9 but left behind a video that dealt eloquently with his struggle against AIDS and his involvement in establishing groups of PWAs such as the Vancouver Coalition. Unfortunately Kevin Brown's and the Coalition's fight against the Mulrone government to get AZT released in Canada was not mentioned. Even though this video was no substitute for a political speech by a PLWA, activists and other audience members joined in giving the video a standing ovation in recognition of Kevin's achievements.

When Brian Mulrone began to speak hundreds of activists turned their backs on him to protest his government's criminal neglect. A banner reading "Mulrone — You've Left Us To Die/Tu Nous As Laisés Créver" was unfurled by AAN! supporters. Mulrone's speech was repeatedly interrupted by boos and hisses as he tried to get the Canadian government off the hook by stressing the need for private fundraising initiatives to fund research. When he finished his speech Mulro-