

NEWS BRIEFS

As reported in the last issue of *Rites*, the B.C. Health Minister criticized the AIDS Vancouver pamphlet "Revised Safer Sex Guidelines for Gay Men" and threatened to withdraw all provincial funding from the group in the future. As a result, the Board of AIDS Vancouver decided after some discussion to distribute the remaining copies of the brochure to the bars and baths and to let it go out of print. AIDS Vancouver is apparently preparing a more "sanitized" pamphlet for gay men. This goes against all we have learned about safer sex education which shows that the most effective literature is in the language of gay male desire and sex.

Opposition continues to build across the country to the federal government's anti-porn legislation (Bill C-54). A resolution condemning the legislation was passed at the International Poets, Essayists and Novelists (PEN) club meeting in Switzerland. The Writer's Union of Canada at its conference in late May called for opposition to the bill and for the Union to take a leading role in fighting the sexual censorship legislation. The Union also called for the scrapping of custom's officials broad powers of seizure of books coming into Canada. A meeting of provincial attorneys-general in St. Andrews, New Brunswick, feeling the heat of opposition to the bill, came out against its provisions banning depictions of sexual intercourse between consenting adults. At the same time they supported the other sections of the bill, including the denial to young people of access to explicit sexual information and the category of "degrading pornography" that would include consensual SM depictions as well as safer sex materials calling for people to ejaculate onto another person's body. Plans for co-ordinated cross-country opposition to the bill for the fall are currently being planned by many groups across the country including the Coalition for the Right to View in Vancouver and the Coalition Against Bill C-54 in Toronto.

The committee set up by the Frontenac School Board (Kingston) to study human sexuality curriculum has just completed its public hearings. (see *Rites* April, 1987) Controversy surrounded the appointments to the committee because one of the members appointed was a right-wing minister. While the committee received many right-wing presentations, none of them made very clear recommendations. On the other hand, the pro-lesbian and gay submissions made clear proposals for the integration of positive teaching towards human sexuality and lesbian and gay sexuality into the school curriculum. The committee of the Board is currently examining the recommendations it has received and will submit a report to the board with recommendations by October. Meanwhile an anti-fascism campaign has begun to be organized in the schools.

The federal Tory government has rejected an Armed Forces "study" which recommends that the current policy of not employing homosexuals in the Canadian military be continued. In a statement before a House of Commons Committee, Defence Minister Perrin Beatty announced that despite the report he would institute two changes to defence policy regarding lesbians and gays. These are an end to "the obligation of members to report suspected homosexuals" and "the continuing exclusion of homosexuals will be based on conduct or behaviour rather than on orientation alone." The Government interprets "conduct or behaviour" to mean total celibacy for lesbians and gays. Beatty says the government is prepared to defend celibacy in the courts as a "reasonable limitation" for lesbians and gays. For this he depends on the military's own heterosexual study which the government has said it is rejecting (see *Rites* April, 1987 issue). This points out once again why lesbian and gay activists must continue to fight for our complete equality in the military (including our right to have sex while in the military) and the need to include coverage of the armed forces in any sexual orientation clause in the federal human rights code.

Ottawa's lesbian and gay community held a weekend long celebration in honour of this year's Gay Pride Day (June 21 in Ottawa). On June 20, a mammoth indoor yard sale, took place at the GO Centre. On Sunday a grand community picnic was held at Strathcona Park.

The Third Canadian AIDS Conference will be hosted by AIDS Vancouver October 23-25, 1987. The conference is open to anyone involved with the AIDS health crisis: people with AIDS, caregivers and medical support staff, volunteers, education workers, researchers, friends and other interested people. Visitors will be offered home billeting. For further information, or if you are interested in helping work on the conference please contact Ken Mann at the AIDS Vancouver office—687-2437 or at 509-1033 Davie St., Vancouver, V6E 1M7.

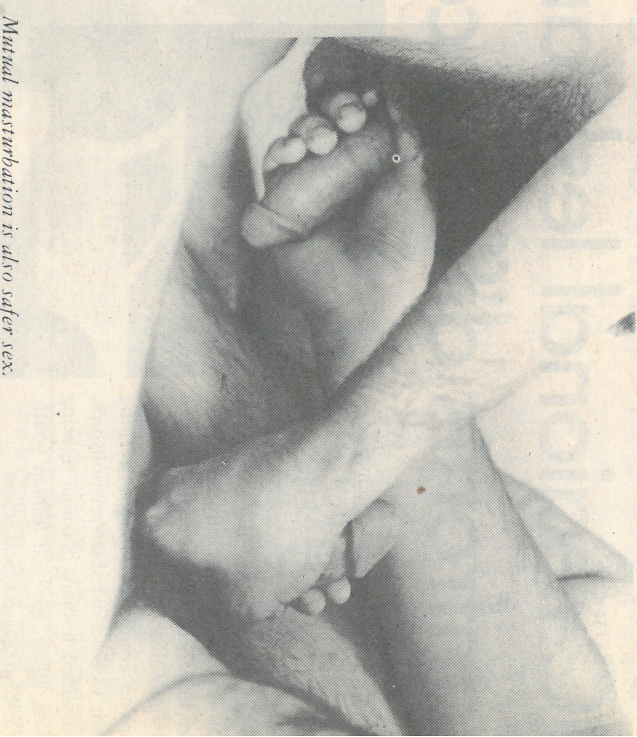
A candlelight vigil to honour those who have died of AIDS and to support those who are fighting AIDS and ARC was held on May 25th in downtown Vancouver. This fourth annual vigil in Vancouver was a part of an international day of vigils and events around the world in more than 12 countries and was organized by AIDS Vancouver. More than 200 attended.

As part of Toronto's AIDS Awareness Week, a tribute to June Callwood, a humanitarian writer and civil libertarian, was held on June 5. More than 1,000 people attended raising more than \$100,000 for Casey House, the Toronto hospice for people with AIDS which is scheduled to open this fall. Callwood has been very active in the organizing and fund raising for Casey House.

Liberal's push abstinence

TORONTO—Recently released Ontario government guidelines for the study of AIDS in the schools push abstinence from sex as the best way to avoid AIDS. Education Minister Sean Conway said AIDS study will become part of the curriculum early in the new school year, and will be taught from Grade 7 to the end of high school. Any parents who believe that "any component" of the AIDS school curriculum "is in conflict with their beliefs" may apply to exempt their child from the program.

While the guidelines rarely discuss the use of condoms and where they do it is usually to stress they are not 100 per cent safe, they state that "sexual abstinence is the most effective means of prevention of the spread of AIDS." Rather than educating about safer forms of sex we have an anti-sex program. As Kevin Orr, a dissenting member of the committee who designed the proposed curriculum and a member of the AIDS Committee of Toronto said, "The document has to prepare young people for living in the real world and part of that is having sex. . . . At some point kids will want to have sex, and, at that time, the best thing for them to know is how to use a condom." Orr suggested the guidelines could lead to students rejecting the advice to abstain from sex, and since it does not detail safer forms of sex, lead to young people contracting AIDS.



Manual masturbation is also safer sex.

The guidelines suggest that it is sex itself which leads to the transmission of AIDS rather than some forms of unprotected sexual activities that allow for the AIDS virus to be transmitted into the blood stream. It provides no real education on safer sex except to stress that young people should say no to sex. While abstinence is certainly one choice that people may make in the face of AIDS it is not the only one. The Ontario

Gary Kin

More on AIDS drugs

In the June issue of *Rites* we discussed current drug therapy used to treat the infections to which people with AIDS (PWAs) are vulnerable. None of these drugs address the underlying immune deficiency that exists in persons with ARC/PLS or AIDS. Substances which can positively affect the immune system are known as Immuno-modulators, and this article deals with four such chemicals.

Alpha-interferon is a substance produced by white blood cells which in earlier experiments has been shown to have anti-viral, immune enhancing and anti-cancer effects. In tests at the National Cancer Institute (NCI), USA, on PWAs having Kaposi's sarcoma the incidence of the cancer was reduced and even disappeared in some cases. These

people, receiving 36 million units of

alpha-interferon per day, also experienced a dramatic reduction in production of the virus.

Gamma-interferon has also been the focus of experiments but no success has been reported because of its toxicity, in the U.S.A. However, a recent report from the Biogen Medical Research company in Geneva, Switzerland shows that the immune systems of two PWAs have improved after an eight week course of gamma-interferon treatment. It should be noted that this was an extremely small study and that no firm conclusions can be made about this chemical.

Interleukin-2 is also a substance produced by white blood cells. At the NCI, experiments carried out with PWAs over an eight week period caused a decrease in HIV production, reduction

of Kaposi's sarcoma lesions and increase in production of white cells. However, the low T4 cell persisted.

Thymic Humoral Factor (THF) hormone derived from the thymus gland has been used by Israeli scientists in experiments on gay men who did have AIDS but had low T4-cell counts and other abnormal T-cell conditions. A significant increase in the total blood cell count occurred when the THF was administered. The scientists suggested that THF may have a role in preventing people from developing AIDS.

Sean H.

AIDS vigil: Never turning back

TORONTO—A candlelight vigil was held in Cawthra Square Park on June 11 as part of AIDS Awareness Week in Toronto. The vigil was held to mourn

the loss of friends, lovers, family members and community members who have died of AIDS-related illnesses. As a light rain fell, several hundred people gathered to listen to a half dozen speakers talk about their own experiences, memories and feelings, as well as the past, present and future in the fight against AIDS.

Tony Souza talked about the toll AIDS is taking on all of us. After admitting his profound tiredness, Tony was still able to encourage us to struggle on. He also reminded us that we should not forget the terrible toll that AIDS is taking in the Third World.

Jim St. James, who was introduced as Canada's longest surviving PWA, having been diagnosed 3½ years ago, spoke about living with AIDS. Several other people spoke of their experiences, including a woman whose brother died of AIDS-related illnesses and a man who described himself as antibody positive.

In between the speakers we were led in singing songs such as "Carry It On" and "Keep On Walking Forward."

Theresa Dobko, the last speaker, reminded us that the fight against AIDS must include fighting for the full human rights of PWAs and lesbians and gay men. Acknowledging the exhausting nature of the fight against AIDS, she enjoined those volunteers already fighting to train two new volunteers before

they move on. As hundreds of candles were lit and held aloft in the night we felt the sorrow and the strength standing together in this fight.

P.B.

ACT blasts feds

TORONTO—At a news conference to kick-off the 4th Annual AIDS Awareness Week in Toronto, the AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT) blasted the federal government for its "appalling" contribution to the promotion of public awareness about AIDS. Phil Shaw, an ACT spokesperson, said that Ottawa has done relatively little to make the public aware of AIDS. "There's been little response from Ottawa for community group support. They have a plan

but it's really underfunded." Shaw argued that the federal government needs to commit tens of millions of dollars adequately mount an AIDS information campaign. Shaw did note that information about AIDS is getting around and that AIDS hysteria has lessened, and pointed to the general helpful role played by the City of Toronto. The Metro Toronto government and Ontario government in AIDS aware

Robert Champ