

## Canadian government's abysmal record to be targeted AIDS activists plan to shake up WHO conference

TORONTO—AIDS activists from Quebec, Canada, the USA, and other countries around the world will be among the thousands of AIDS "experts," government bureaucrats and the hordes of media people who will descend on Montreal June 4-9 for the Fifth International AIDS conference. The conference is organized by the World Health Organization (WHO) and is titled "AIDS: The Scientific and Social Challenge."

At least two major rallies and demonstrations are planned. One on June 4 the opening day will highlight the inaction and criminal neglect of the Canadian government in responding to AIDS. The Canadian government will be trying to showcase itself to the world through the conference and its support for it. The second major action will focus on international issues and will be held at the con-

ference site on Thursday June 8. Through these activities and the establishment of a media action centre a loose network of AIDS ACTION NOW! (AANI), Montreal's Reaction SIDA, ACT-UP New York City, and the ACT NOW coalition in the US, AIDS activists are planning to ensure that the voices and needs of people living with AIDS (PLWAs) and HIV-positive people are heard and that the concerns of AIDS activists are made clear to the world media.

### THE CAS CONFERENCE

From June 2-4 the Canadian AIDS Society (CAS) is sponsoring a conference for non-governmental organizations with the theme of "Opportunities for Solidarity." This smaller conference could be an excellent time to broaden protest activities during the WHO con-

ference. Unfortunately, some of the board members and staff of the CAS have been recently trying to distance themselves from activism to attempt to shore up their "respectability", when speaking to government officials. A workshop at the CAS conference, facilitated by a member of AANI, on Saturday June 3 will nonetheless discuss AIDS activism and help to plan activities during the WHO conference.

### MORE PARTICIPATION BY PLWAs

Unlike previous WHO AIDS conferences where PLWAs have been made invisible there will be a PLWA speaker at the opening ceremonies of the 5th International AIDS conference along with the heads of state. A PLWA will also address the Monday plenary session. This greater participation by PLWAs is the result of the struggles of a number of groups, including the Vancouver PWA Coalition, who have fought all down the line to ensure more participation for PLWAs in conference preparations. PWA Coalitions and AIDS activists have been arguing that people living with AIDS/HIV must be a fundamental part of the policy making process regarding AIDS on a national and international level and within the WHO itself.

The WHO conference will include 180 sessions and close to 800 speakers. While there will be more recognition of PLWAs than ever before as a result of our struggles, the dominant voices will still be those of government officials, health bureaucrats and the medical authorities. It is hoped that AIDS activism during the conference will be able to turn this dynamic around by seizing control of the media agenda to highlight the needs and concerns of people living with AIDS/HIV around the world.

### ACTIVIST PLANS

On June 4 the target will be the Canadian government. As Tim Mc-

American PWAs that Canadian Customs and Immigration officers may harass them, detain them and refuse them admission to Canada.

Lewis contacted MP Svend Robinson, who called the manager of Vancouver Airport's Immigration office, Paula Bennett. Bennett confirmed the statements of the customs officer. She said anyone with a "communicable disease" is subject to being refused admission to Canada as a visitor.

A senior immigration officer then continued the questioning explaining, "We

are under a lot of pressure from the provincial governments to keep people like you out of the country, as you are a drain to our health care system."

When Lewis intervened and called the officer on his homophobic and AIDSphobic attitude, he was told to shut up and was threatened with a refusal of admission to Lansdowne. After providing a proof of medical insurance and a return ticket, they were allowed to pass through customs.

The Harvey Milk AIDS Education Fund in San Francisco has warned



BEN THORNBERRY

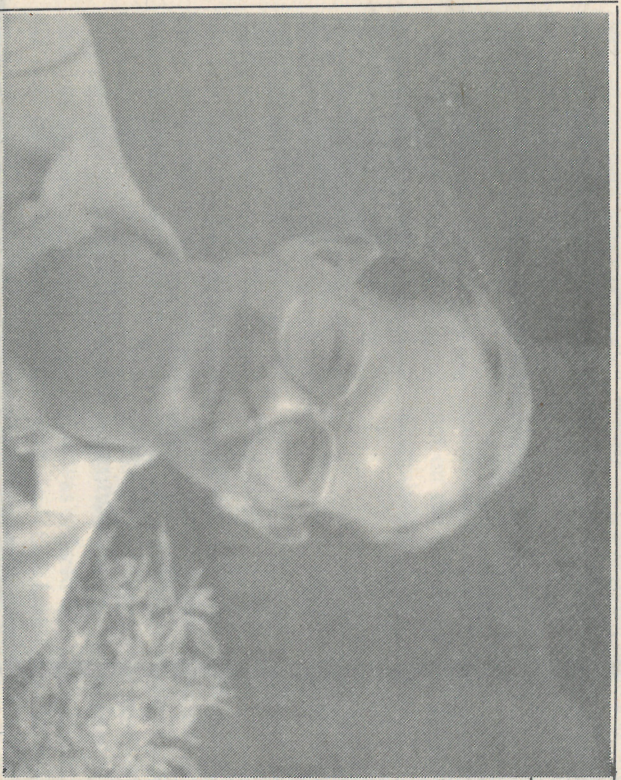
**Activists from ACT UP New York City will be among thousands in Montreal at World AIDS conference in June.**

## PLWA harassed at Canadian border

VANCOUVER-- A San Francisco man was grilled by Customs officers at Vancouver International Airport on April 11, after declaring himself to be a person with AIDS at the customs counter for the disabled.

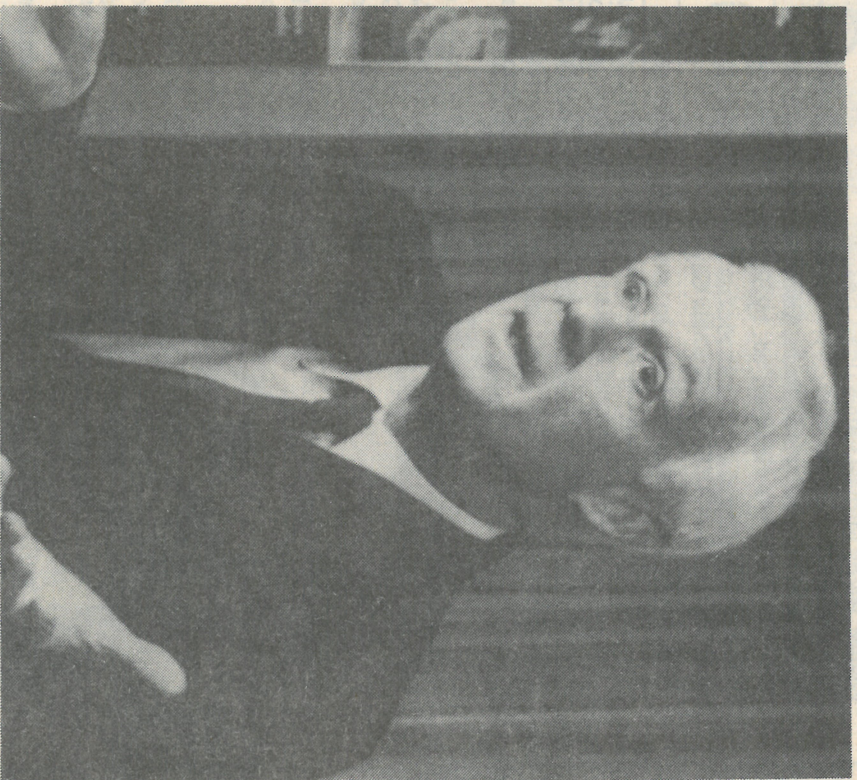
Jim Lansdowne arrived for a vacation accompanied by David Lewis, a board member of AIDS Vancouver. The two approached the counter for people with a disability and faced questions such as "Why are you coming here if you are so ill?"

Kevin Brown, founding member of the Vancouver PWA Coalition and advocate for the rights of people living with AIDS, died on May 9. Four hundred people attended a memorial service for him in Vancouver.



SCOTT FERGUSON

**Alastair Clayton's obstructionism at the Federal Centre for AIDS has fueled calls for his resignation.**



Caskell of AANI says, "the Canadian government will be trying to blow its own horn. It is up to us to make sure that the real bunched up record of the Canadian government is on the record." The focus of this action will be on the need for the immediate and complete restructuring of the Federal Centre for AIDS so that it can coordinate and develop new AIDS treatments; support for community-based research initiatives; the need for condoms in prisons and more research funding; and that all of the communities affected by HIV/AIDS, including Native people, women, Blacks and other people of colour have a real input in determining AIDS policies.

On June 8 a large international demonstration will take place with representatives from many countries around the world. Activists will be demanding the world-wide recognition of AIDS as

a chronic but manageable condition through access to treatments and the redistribution of resources to third world countries. An international bill of rights for PLWAs will be proclaimed and the action will also call for the international co-ordination and development of treatments and research through the WHO, and the international condemnation of double-blind placebo trials as immoral and unethical.

A series of other actions will take place throughout the conference week highlighting issues like the need for anonymous testing and different national and regional struggles. AANI is reserving a bus to take protesters from Toronto to the June 4 demonstration in Montreal.

Silence = death, Action = Life  
Vive la vie, agissons aujourd'hui!

Gary Kinsman