

AIDS ACTION NOW! Annual General Meeting

AIDS ACTION NOW! held its first annual general meeting on October 5th, with about 75 people attending at Toronto's 519 Church St. community centre. Items on the agenda included a report on progress (see p. 2); a seven-point program for policy direction (see p. 4) and the election of a new steering committee.

The meeting opened with greetings from organizations doing different kinds of work around AIDS issues. Art Wood, the chair of the AIDS Committee of Toronto, brought congratulations for the political work that AAN! does and said that he sees the work our two groups do as "complementary." Jeff Braff, the newly elected Chair of the Board of Directors of the Canadian AIDS Society/Société canadienne du sida, gave a short history of the CAS stressing that it sees its role as providing "strength of unity without taking away from the autonomy of individual community groups" that make up the CAS (of which AAN! is a member). Pointing out that AAN! demonstrations show that "activism equals life," Braff said that we had a real effect on the federal government. Jake Epp's recent announcement that he was setting up a working group to look at AIDS issues is, according to insiders, a direct result of heat resulting from AAN!'s earlier actions—including our burning of the

minister in effigy. This working group, with Braff as one of its members, will be reporting directly to the minister and will not, in Braff's words, "be a white-wash."

George Smith then gave a talk stressing that AAN!'s most important task is to focus on treatment and that this means early intervention. Said Smith: "You get AIDS when you become infected with HIV. Early intervention improves results."

Things that AAN! has to do in the immediate future include (1) organizing around the consensus conference in December, (2) dealing with the federal election in which all three parties have agreed that AIDS should not become an issue and (3) waging a public campaign against the use of placebos in the recently announced trials of five AIDS treatments.

An important part of the meeting was the point at which we heard some stories of the terrible care and treatment that people living with AIDS are continuing to receive. Ned Lyttleton, a counsellor with ACT's AIDSsupport, said that "PLWAs are treated in hospitals as if they were already dead." Although he hears some good stories about care people receive, Lyttleton says that there is no hospital with a universally good reputation. PLWAs face constant "subtle and not-so-subtle homophobia," he said. Chuck Grochmal then described a new watchdog Citi-



zens' AIDS Review Committee that has just begun and will be looking into some of the intolerable conditions existing in hospitals.

After adopting the seven-point policy program, the meeting went on to elect a new steering committee. The new executive is composed of Tim McCaskell as chair, Russell Armstrong as secretary, and James McPhee as treasurer. At-large members of the steering committee are: Max Allen, Dennis Conway, Bernard Courte, Renée Duplessis, Chuck Grochmal, Sean Hoscine, Michael Hulton, Gary Kinsman, George Smith and Roger Spalding. Each of AAN!'s five committees (Public Action; Press and Media; Research and Development; Lobbying; and Fundraising Events) will also send a representative to the Steering Committee.

Patrick Barnholden

*Pictured above is Tim McCaskell, newly elected Chair of AIDS ACTION NOW!
Photo by Chuck Grochmal.*

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HOME CARE

In conjunction with the national treatment registry and better hospital care we need to establish a comprehensive approach to home care. The needs of PLWA's can often better be met at home than in the hospital with the help of their primary care physicians. In addition, it must be clear that people being released from hospitals are being released to situations where their needs are being fully met. It is nurses who will be able to do the most to make home care a viable alternative for most people. This will require more education for nurses about dealing with PLWA's and a recognition of the importance of this work by health care workers.