

NEWS BRIEFS

The B.C. Council of Human Rights ruled in October that AIDS is a physical disability. The ruling also proclaimed that people who test HIV positive, those perceived as belonging to an AIDS-affected group, and those who associate with people living with AIDS, ARC or HIV infection are all covered by human rights protection. In a province where there is no sexual orientation protection and where quarantine legislation was passed last year this is an important step forward. The decision arose from a case launched by Peter Biggs and his roommate after they were evicted from a West End Vancouver apartment in 1986. While they did not win their case, because the chair of the tribunal found there was not sufficient evidence to prove AIDS discrimination, it did provide the occasion for this ruling. This precedent setting case may affect other human rights cases across the country.

A week after the University of British Columbia (UBC) board of governors decided that the Gay Games and Celebration '90 (Gay Games III and a simultaneous lesbian/gay cultural festival) were not to be allowed to use UBC facilities, the board apparently reversed its decision. The Gay Games organizers are claiming victory. Following the decision to deny the use of the facilities and residences to Celebration '90 there was a storm of controversy on the campus. On October 11, Svend Robinson (an honorary director of Celebration '90) and directors Ken Smith and Betty Baxter met with the UBC board. Following this meeting the board agreed to continue discussions with the organizers and it appears likely that permission to rent the requested facilities will be granted.

After months of planning and after overcoming the many obstacles of the Secord government, B.C.'s first free-standing abortion clinic opened on November 4th. The clinic is located in a residential east-end neighbourhood in Vancouver. While hundreds of anti-choice people protested the opening outside, NDP MP Margaret Mitchell gave a speech inside the clinic supporting women's right to choose. The next day hundreds of pro-choice activists marched through the rainy streets of Vancouver to show their support for the clinic.

The Office of the Vice-President in charge of Research for the University of Toronto (U. of T.) has replied to an AIDS ACTION NOW! complaint about the double-blind placebo trials for aerosolized pen-tamidine (AP) which are underway at the university. AANNI says the trials are unethical. The response from Prof. J.F. Keffler defends the trials, stating that "Such tests are standard for most drug trials, including those involving a number of life-threatening diseases." The letter also argues that there is no proven therapy for AIDS-related pneumonia (PCP). This contradicts American research and experience, and suggests that the lives of PLWAs and those who test HIV positive are to be sacrificed to bureaucratic scientific procedures. The letter also defends U of T's policy of not making public the protocols in such drug trials. This suggests that U of T puts the interests of drug companies and medical researchers ahead of those presently living with AIDS. AIDS ACTION NOW! is replying to this letter by reiterating its demand that the double-blind study be stopped as unethical and that AP be released for all who need it.

Get Your New Safe Sex Lit. The Prostitutes' Safe Sex Project has produced a new brochure called "How To Have Safer Sex". On the theme of "Safer Sex—Make It Your Business," it is very informative and humorous. For copies write to ACT, at Box 55, Station F, Toronto, Ont., M4Y 2L4 or call (416) 926-1626. Available from the same address is a new pamphlet for gay men about oral sex complete with hot photos. It tells us that "Sucking...is safer than we thought." A hot poster with the same theme has also been produced. And a new informative, pocket-size brochure by Theresa Dobko called "Women and AIDS" is also available from this address.

New Brunswick's human rights commission has reserved decision on an application by Blue Cross to be exempt from the provincial Human Rights Act's prohibition against discrimination on the basis of physical disability. An AIDS support group in Fredericton told a meeting of the Commission that it would be discriminatory for insurance companies to require applicants in groups the companies designated as "high-risk" to indicate whether they had tested HIV positive or not.

On November 4, Mr. Justice David Watt, an Ontario Supreme Court Judge, upheld the constitutionality of the repressive law which criminalizes "communication for the purposes of prostitution." This was a setback in the struggle to get this section of the criminal code repealed. This decision is binding on lower courts in the province. However a number of constitutional challenges to this law are on their way to the Supreme Court of Canada. The first of these will begin on December 1. The Ontario court rejected arguments that the law infringes on freedom of speech and other rights guaranteed under the Charter. Watt argued that the state has a right to pass restrictions to fundamental freedoms in the interests of a "decent" society. The law has been upheld in Alberta, Manitoba and now Ontario. It was ruled unconstitutional in Nova Scotia.

News Credits: *Angles*, GO INFO,
Gay Community News, Info EGALE,
Vancouver PWA Coalition Newsletter, Xtra.

Black PLWAs poorly served by both government and services

TORONTO - In Canada AIDS is not thought of as a Black disease. At a forum on AIDS and the Black Community held in Toronto during AIDS Awareness Week, panelist and pediatrician Clyde Cave said that the issues AIDS raises for the Black community in Toronto are "conveniently ignored" because the number of Black people who are HIV positive is low. The situation throughout the rest of the world is significantly different.

In the global context, Cave said, the majority of people with AIDS or who are HIV positive are Black. Figures show that the epidemic is most severe in the Caribbean, particularly in countries that rely on tourism as an economic mainstay. While Canada has about 75 cases of AIDS per million of the population, Bahamas has 1070 cases. But while the actual per capita figures in countries with predominantly white populations are lower than those in Black countries, the funds available in the former are considerably greater.

Doug Stewart, an AIDS support worker with the AIDS Committee of Toronto said that because AIDS is not recognized as a concern of the Black community, existing services do not adequately meet the needs of Black people in the city who are HIV positive. It's also the case that Black people who need AIDS services may not know about existing services or may not feel they can take access of them. He says that many of the Black people he sees in his work are coping behind closed doors. As long as AIDS is perceived as a "nasty white man's disease" it's hard for Black people to admit they are being affected.

A member of the Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention spoke from the audience to say that agencies in the community are afraid even to look for funding to bring AIDS into their programs. Stewart added that an effective response to AIDS has to come from all kinds of agencies, from all parts of the community. He said part of the problem in or-



Doug Stewart of ACT says Black PLWAs cope behind closed doors.

ganizing this broad response is a reluctance to cross ethnic barriers within the Black community. He also stressed the importance of not isolating certain groups within the community like Black gay men: "If we are going to deal with this issue we have to work on feelings of fear that are limiting action."

Many people spoke of the limited effectiveness of existing educational materials in reaching the Black community, particularly those produced by the province. Cammie Orridge is the director of patient services for Home Care, a Toronto nursing agency. She says she was surprised to hear her teenage children's views on AIDS. Because they aren't white, they aren't gay and they don't use drugs they figured, based on what they had seen and heard in the media and at school, that AIDS wasn't their concern. Orridge stressed the need for people to do AIDS education in their homes and in familiar places in the Black community. Youth worker Tony King reiterated Orridge's points, adding that there's no time to wait for someone else to do AIDS education work for the community.

Sex maligned in Yukon

WHITEHORSE—The Yukon government recently issued a pamphlet entitled "AIDS Information for Yukoners." This pamphlet, like many of the AIDS information attempts made outside the gay community, takes an anti-sex position and includes information that can be very dangerous. It also works to make gays and lesbians invisible in the Yukon. At least one activist has written to the Yukon government and suggested changes that would make the pamphlet much better in reaching the people who need it most.

The pamphlet starts off with an introduction that says: "When we first began to hear about AIDS, it was thought that only people of so called 'high risk' groups such as drug users and homosexuals could contract the disease. But today, because of the way the virus is spread, we know that you or someone you care about could get AIDS." The problem with this statement is its

failure to reach out to gay men and instead, only to those people who are not in the "so called high risk groups." In addition, it talks about "homosexuals" when it means gay men and it talks about "drug users" when it means intravenous drug users.

When talking about how we can protect ourselves, the pamphlet states that "sexual activities that include the mouth or anus are dangerous." What about the vagina? Not mentioning vaginal sex might easily lead women to think that there is little or no risk from it. The pamphlet comes back to this in the conclusion when it says that "unplanned sexual activities" are "Dangerous if they include unsafe practices, such as anal sex or unprotected sex." Aside from the fact that the Canadian AIDS Society has removed oral sex from its high risk category (see *Rites* last issue), this implies that anal sex is always dangerous. Mention of con-

After Orridge talked to her own kids about AIDS, they suggested she hang out with them at the Twilight Zone, a popular club, where she could talk to other young people as well. With this suggestion they identified the kind of community-based, popular approach that has been effective in the gay community for spreading the message about HIV and its transmission and about safer sex and drug use. The task now at hand is to get people talking about AIDS, about sex and about sexuality. On top of all the other issues the Black community has to deal with—racism, apartheid, sexism and homophobia—AIDS can seem like one thing too many. But, as Doug Stewart said, it's crucial to act before the statistics change, before the effect of AIDS on the Black community becomes undeniable.

Organizers of the forum, the AIDS Committee of Toronto and the Black Coalition Against AIDS, hope that the event will be the first in a series of efforts to initiate discussion about AIDS in the Black community.

Mary Louise Adams

doms is done only in a very grudging manner and even then is only suggested "if you aren't sure about your sexual partner." There is no mention of the safe record of mutual masturbation or other forms of sex that do not include penetration. In addition, people are offered the choice of no sex as their first option in avoiding AIDS. The second option offered is "to have only one sexual partner." This is the most dangerous part—as we all know, one sexual partner can be unsafe if you don't practice safe sex and your partner is HIV positive.

We can only hope that the Yukon government will attempt to get advice from the gay community before they reissue this pamphlet so that they will be able to issue one that is be more relevant to the lives of the people that they need to serve.

Patrick Barnholden