

**NOTES ON ACCOUNTABILITY**  
**AAN! POLICY MEETING**  
**TUESDAY, APRIL 2, 1991**

These are notes that represent the various views that were expressed at our first policy meeting. They aren't statements that everyone necessarily agreed with but those things that we seemed to agree on, I've highlighted. Some directives also came out of this meeting; these I've also highlighted.

**Does AAN! represent "the HIV/AIDS community"? Do we/ Can we represent specific communities involved in AIDS/HIV work?**

- we noted that majorities within collective bodies tend to speak for everyone, that people have a right to speak for themselves
  - we asked how to include "groups" (i.e. other than GWM, I suppose) in AAN!-- this led to discussion of feedback mechanisms that would help us determine how AAN! speaks for the community and how individuals speak from within AAN!
  - our basis of unity document stresses our accountability to the gay and lesbian communities
  - we are accountable through AIDS Action News!, through our AGM, through community forums, and through the media
  - it was felt that AAN! can't represent more than its membership
  - we felt that we consult other groups inconsistently when developing our policy papers, but even though we do this inconsistently, we probably do it better than other organizations
  - AIDS Action News! could begin to include highlights of Steering Committee meetings, so that the membership felt more informed and also, we could indicate that members are welcome to attend steering committee meetings
  - questions were raised about how the Media Committee works
  - the way that we report through Xtra! could be improved
  - we looked at the constitution of the HIV community and decided that it was scarcely a community at all-- HIV+ people are all over the place, they can't be constituted
  - we asked about the extent of our obligation to tap into the HIV community through places like the pentamidine clinic, etc.
  - we do our best to be visible and if people are interested they'll join in
  - lots of people do come out to AAN! events at critical points eg. the Schabas rally, the Gigantes forum
  - the question to ask is: "do we make a reasonable effort to advertise ourselves, to find out what people want?"
  - we could do joint demos, joint fundraisers, more lively demos, have more points of contact, social events to include more people
  - in general meetings, reports from AAN! could take more priority
  - do we make enough contact with PWA, ACT and other AIDS service organizations?
- we felt that our links are weak and that we need to figure out a way of keeping in touch with these organizations--- it would be good to assign one person to keep in contact with major AIDS service organizations, to give them information about our issues and

**to hear theirs and report back on them as necessary**

- at steering committee we hear a lot of community issues--- in fact we scarcely ever get to the "issues raised by members" part of the agenda because we get so tied up in those issues
- **we could advertise the availability of the Steering Committee better:** that we want people to drop in to raise their issues (call the chairs first) and we want people who can sit on the Steering Committee
- would sending minutes of our Steering Committee meetings to other organizations be a good idea or just another piece of paper?
- we want the community to let us know their issues but at the same time, we're not a service organization, we're equipped to deal with systemic problems, not with individual problems
- **we don't have a phone number and an address anymore, we're not CATIE---** this is something we need to bring up at steering committee

**How are our representatives accountable to AAN!?**

**1. let people at AAN! (preferably Steering Committee) know what's coming up and what's on the agenda, if possible**

**2. ask for input about AAN!'s position**

**3. report back**

- **especially when AAN! policy is unclear, the onus is on the representative to raise the issue and get feedback**
- there can be confusion about when we are members of AAN! and when we are just members of the community
- **caucusing beforehand is a good idea---** the OAAC reps. might think about caucusing with the Provincial Committee to determine their strategy prior to meetings
- **members of the steering Committee need to meet on issues that we don't get into thoroughly at Steering Committee so that we all know what the issues are, where we stand**
- co-optation is a danger, especially when individuals are singled out for special invitation--- we felt that inviting individuals to conferences, etc. rather than asking AAN! to send a representative was off the mark
- we should always ask ourselves whether there is the implication of AAN! being attached to our name
- so often we have to come up with positions on the fly--- it makes it difficult to understand the process of taking an AAN! position
- **written reports are useful and Dave is willing to get them out to people**
- **sub-committees should come to Steering Committee with CLEAR recommendations--** this raised the issue of the accountability of sub-committees
- to much sub-committee work gets done at Steering Committee, the Steering Committee needs more time to develop positions
- **when an issue comes up, ideally it should be sent to a sub-committee to digest, then that sub-committee presents its recommendation at Steering Committee**
- but for three years we've been working towards these goals, the real fact of the matter

is that things come up fast, that things fall through the cracks of sub-committee work

- we need records on paper; our history is important

**When can AAN! members take initiatives?**

- a person with an interest should bring it to AAN! to clear it and then work on it
- people should be encouraged to take initiatives by bringing them to steering committee and making it an AAN! issue--- we can give lots of support but the person who raised the idea should also be prepared to do work on it
- AAN! members shouldn't stand up in meetings appear on radio, or write letters on things that aren't policy that we've worked on collectively
- **there exists a body of AAN! policy, members should feel free to defend it, but new policy is another story**
- **the bottom line is : whenever possible, consult!**
- **new issues outside standing policy: vet through steering committee**
- we should work on handling contradictions in a way that keeps people in AAN! rather than excludes them