



BRIAN KERRIGAN

A couple of Act-Up protesters accompany Pedro the donkey through Halifax yesterday.

## Anti-AIDS protesters 'act up'

By **MARK RENOUF**  
*The Daily News*

Metro's newest anti-AIDS group marched through downtown Halifax yesterday like a band of troubadours high on life, passing out condoms and calling for government action against the deadly disease.

The march by members of the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (Act-Up) was markedly upbeat compared with recent, more solemn anti-AIDS protests. The 18 protesters took along a rented donkey to symbolize what they say is the government's mulish stance on AIDS funding and programs.

True to his calling for the day, Pedro the donkey refused to budge in front of the Provincial Court building and at other points during the march, which began about 1 p.m. along Spring Garden Road.

Traffic lined up behind the placard-carrying marchers as they stepped on to Barrington Street on the way to Province House. Bustling shoppers gawked at the group, who offered an off-duty mall Santa Claus a condom.

"I saw daddy kissing Santa Claus," one protester remarked.

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The buoyant mood of the protesters rubbed off on passersby, including a menacing looking gang of men on a pub crawl whose glares turned to smiles and cheers when they were handed packages of condoms and encouraged to practise safe sex.

Organizers called the march modest, and promised more radical actions this winter. But the point of the playful protest was deadly serious.

"It's kind of a calling card. We'll be back. The House will be sitting in February," Act-Up spokesman Dan Hart said outside Province House.

Fellow activist Ken Belanger, who tried to place a condom over part of a light standard near the building's Hollis Street entrance, attacked the province for inadequate AIDS testing policies.

"This government has made no significant moves on testing. They're interested in non-nominal testing, which is just not enough," he said.

Yesterday's march was also to mark World AIDS Day. The well-travelled Names Project AIDS Memorial Quilt was unfolded at Gorsebrook School. The Metro Area Committee on AIDS sponsored the event, with donations going to services for AIDS victims.