

Prisoner fights for AIDS treatment

TORONTO - The situation of People Living with AIDS (PLWA's) in prison came to the forefront in the past several weeks when Kyle Downey went to the press to tell them of his plight. Downey told the Toronto Star that he had been so sick that he was unable to eat for ten or eleven days and the jail refused to send him to the hospital for treatment.

Shortly after this Kyle contacted AIDS ACTION NOW! to ask for help. AANI then began a flurry of activity in an attempt to get care for Kyle and others in the prison system. They contacted Members of the Provincial Parliament, the Ministry of Health, prisoners' rights

called for a charge of attempted murder to be laid against Kyle. This obvious ignorance about how AIDS is transmitted made it very clear that the guards are in need of some education on AIDS. Later, after being told that no one could get AIDS from a bite, the guards asked for prisoners with AIDS to be removed from the Don Jail and for adequate facilities to be supplied. They also asked that staff be adequately trained to deal properly with people who are HIV antibody positive.

A couple of days later the police could find no evidence of this incident occurring and accused the guard of making up the story as a



Patrick Barnholden

system in a negative light.

During all this media hype Kyle still has not received any treatment, may now be losing his sight and has not eaten in three weeks. As the situation got no better for Kyle or any other prisoner needing treatment, AIDS ACTION NOW!, with the support of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU - the union that also represents the guards) and the AIDS Committee of Toronto, decided to make demands on the correctional institutions. A demonstration was held at the Don Jail on February 11 attended by about 75 people. Spokesperson Michael Smith summed up what needed to be done with a rousing speech on the complete incompetence of governments around dealing with AIDS in the prison system. He pointed out that some U.S. cities and the Netherlands have much better policies on AIDS. Tim McGaskell, chair of AANI, said, "If the Minister does not act now he is responsible for the spread of AIDS in the prisons and he is responsible for unnecessary suffering. Wake up David Ramsey - time is running out!"

The demands put forward by AANI include the right of prisoners to be seen by their own physician and to proper testing, treatment facilities and counselling. At present there is no government policy on inmates with AIDS and services vary across the province. AANI is asking the provincial government to participate in a policy-making conference between the Ministry of Health, trade unions, community AIDS organizations and prisoners' rights groups. AANI also



Tim McGaskell and Michael Smith of AAN speak at Don Jail demo.

believes that acceptance of the Royal Society's call for condoms and needle sterilization kits to be distributed in prisons would go a long way to preventing AIDS and avoiding a lot of the problems being faced in the United States.

AIDS ACTION NOW! and other groups will continue to put pressure on governments and oth-

ers to get the human rights that prisoners with HIV deserve. Hopefully Kyle Downey will not have to become a martyr because of the murderous policies of the Don Jail and the Ontario Ministry of Correctional services.

Brent Southin

City of Toronto contemplates adopting AAN policies

TORONTO - AIDS ACTION NOW! took their seven point program (published in the November issue of Rites) to Toronto's Board of Health in an attempt to have them adopt it as city policy. Glen Brown of AANI brought the proposal to the Board with support from Stephen Manning of the AIDS Committee of Toronto.

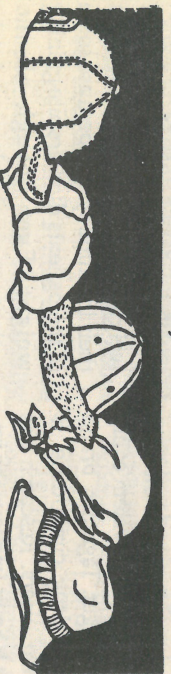
After a one hour discussion a decision was made to send the first three points (catastrophic rights, placebo testing and anonymous testing) to the medical officer of health. The final four points

play in management/union negotiations. On February 10 the guard was charged with assaulting Kyle. The story was reversed. This was one positive step in the whole fiasco and was likely influenced by all the press coverage that showed the

(PLWA's on all boards and committees, National Treatment Registry and hospital and home care) were sent to the Board's AIDS sub-committee to deal with, comment on and make up their own policy. They are to return with decisions in one month. Glen Brown was quite disappointed with this result, "The delay was unnecessary," he said, "these issues have been studied over and over again, after all this is an emergency situation."

Brent Southin

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ACOMBATS

STAND STRONG! STAND UNITED!

Don't turn your backs on Black prisoners with AIDS. Join forces with us to COMBAT this disease.

COMBAT demands:

- ✓ respect for medical and human rights of prisoners with AIDS and HIV infection
- ✓ access to: 1) HIV physicians of their choice as often as necessary
2) tests and all treatments available to people on the outside
3) ongoing counselling and support
- ✓ a conference composed of AIDS community organizations, prisoners' rights groups, representatives of OPSEU, and representatives from the Ministry of Corrections
- ✓ comprehensive AIDS education for prison personnel and inmates
- ✓ recognition of People Living With AIDS (PLWAs) special health needs, including proper nutrition, adequate clothing and bedding, and the right to rest or be active as needed
- ✓ implementation of The Royal Society's recommendations on AIDS for the distribution of condoms, needles and bleach in prisons
- ✓ no forced HIV testing of inmates

COMBAT is committed to educating the Black Community about AIDS.

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COMBAT
Community Organizations Mutually Battling AIDS Together