## AIDSgate?

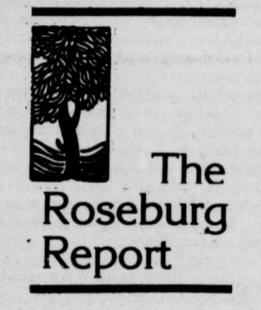
## by Billy Russo

I was surprised a couple of months ago when I opened issue number 117 of New York Native to the full page headline: AIDSGATE BEGINS [followed by] SHOULD GALLO & ESSEX BE IN JAIL?

In a searing editorial, publisher and editorin-chief, Charles L. Ortleb accuses Dr. Robert Gallo of the National Cancer Institute and Dr. Max Essex of the Harvard School of Public Health of falsifying test results and other scientific fraud.

Ortleb bases his allegations on the following:

 ... that Gallo's lab 'stole' the discovery [the HTLV-III/LAV controversy] from the French, after ignoring the French discov-



ery for over a year, thereby setting treatment and vaccine research back immeasurably.

 That the linking of an AIDS-associated virus with HTLV-I and HTLV-II was a deliberate attempt to confuse scientists and the public, to enjoy acclaim, and to obtain grants and other benefits ... Ortleb goes on to support his allegations with the following facts: through his position at the National Institutes of Health, Gallo has imposed a high level security clearance on the virus, which eliminated many scientists from doing research. Secondly, samples of the virus are available to other researchers only through Dr. Gallo. And lastly, only papers co-authored by Gallo may be published from work done on HTLV-III, giving Gallo total censorship power.

Ortleb accuses Dr. Essex of collaboration.

On the surface most of this may seem irrelevant; however, as Ortleb points out, "... the crucial decisions we make about our own health, and the decisions our doctors make, are life-and-death decisions — they cannot be based on fraudulent science. We cannot tolerate inertia on the part of scientists and public health administrators who feel they can look the other way while scientists steal viruses and push them into phony categories."

In another editorial entitled "Waltzing With Mathilde," Ortleb attacks Dr. Mathilde Krim, founder and chairperson of the AIDS Medical Foundation, for moralizing at our expense. According to Ortleb, Krim stated during a television interview that AIDS is an epidemic not because of the total number of cases but because of the rate at which it was replicating itself among the degenerate and unrepentent. She concluded that the entire population of the earth conceivably could perish within the next 60 years.

I don't think that the New York Native's aggressive posture regarding this epidemic is especially unreasonable. Over 1,900 people have died of the disease in New York City alone. And anyone in the gay community who defends the national scientific/political response to this plague is either uninformed or a blatant Waxed Fruit. When I received my copy of issue 118 and saw letters from many gay activists defending the above mentioned scientists I was aghast at all these condescending Waxed Fruits (Waxed Fruit is a label members of the Faerie movement assigned to gay (Incle Toms). Ortleb wasn't too impressed, either. In response to their letters supporting Gallo, Krim, et al, he calls the executive director of the Lambda Defense and Education Fund a hypocrite, the head of the National Gay Task Force "wimp of the year," and Nathan Fain of the Gay Men's Health Crisis "the Uncle Tom of the homophile movement." Ortleb is fighting mad, and he isn't taking any shit.

And how can he expect fair treatment with people like Dr. James O. Mason in charge of The Centers for Disease Control? Mason was formerly head of health care for the Mormon Church; his office supervised the church's cure for homosexuality — aversion therapy by electric shock.

At best our nation s leaders are pleased that they can get away with pointing an accusing finger at the queers and say we're responsible for the century's worst epidemic; however, I fear that they have something much worse in store for us.

The Native's AIDSGATE stance is commendable. Ortleb has nothing to gain by

speaking out against the establishment's mediocre response to this life-and-death issue. And we'd be a stronger community today if more of our nation's activists took such personal risks and focused more of their energy on bringing the homophile community together instead of using their positions to further their personal careers.

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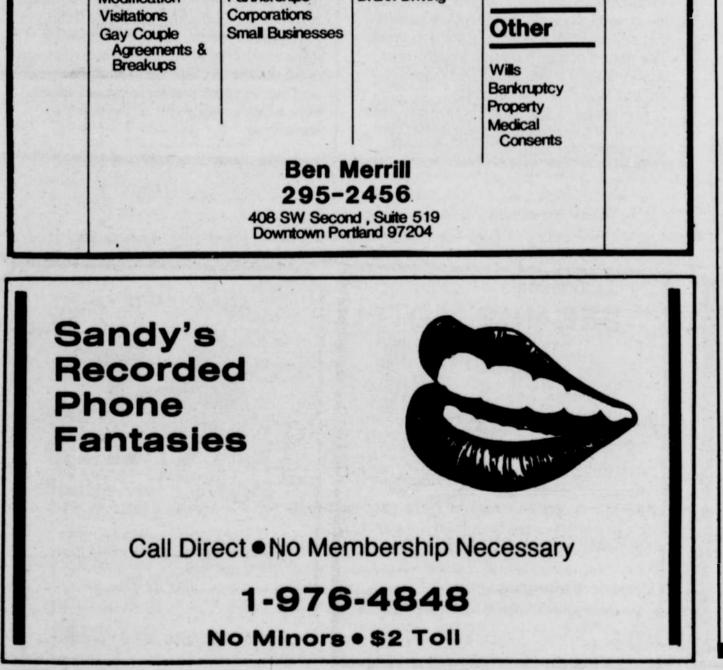
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