

Briefly noted

Compiled by W.C. McRae

Free to read in London...

The British Government has dropped all charges against Gay's the Word, a London gay and lesbian bookstore. In 1984, the Crown seized some 800 imported (mostly from the US) titles from the store, alleging they were "indecent or obscene," and brought charges against the nine directors of the store. According to Paul Hegarty, one of the directors, Customs realized "they would have a hard time" proving their case, since many seized titles were legally available in British editions.

But not in Tennessee.

In Greenville, Tennessee, parents have filed suit against their school district, alleging that teachers use books steeped in humanism, evolution, pacifism, the supernatural, and other such secular heresies. In testimony before U.S. District court, one of the parents objected to such stories as "Goldilocks"; the Wizard of Oz; a story wherein a boy cooks while a girl reads; a tale of an Indian boy going against his father's wishes.

The witness complained that present textbooks emphasize the imagination too much, and instill humanist moral values. "I didn't think I was sending my children to school to be taught moral judgment," she said.

Safe sex is working

The rate of AIDS transmission in San

Francisco has plummeted since 1984. According to a study from the University of California School of Public Health at Berkeley, in 1985 the rate of gay men testing positive the first time for antibodies to HTLV-III was three to five percent. In 1984 the corresponding rate was 18 percent. The study also speculated that an estimated 51 percent of gay men in SF are HTLV-III antibody positive.

AIDS: the straight epidemic?

The Center for Disease Control is reclassifying those men and women with AIDS who previously were said to have "no known risk" as "heterosexual contact cases," reports the *Village Voice*. This new category includes only men and women whose sole risk for AIDS is sexual contact with a member of the opposite sex who is at risk for, or already has, AIDS.

From September 1985 to March 1986, the number of American men thought to have acquired AIDS through heterosexual contact tripled, and the number of women doubled. While actual numbers of cases appear insignificant compared to numbers of cases from other risk groups, striking trends are developing.

During the same six month period female heterosexual contact cases in New York City jumped 80 percent. HTLV-III has recently been isolated in vaginal and cervical secretions, allowing the virus to be transmitted to males during intercourse with approximately the same risk factor, female to male, as for syphilis. Heterosexual sex partners of men and women who have contracted AIDS from blood transfusions are seropositive at a rate of 30-60 percent.

In a recent study, 3.4 percent of heterosexuals screened at a Manhattan VD clinic were seropositive for HTLV-III. In a similar study in Atlanta, 1 of 100 tested positive for exposure to AIDS.

"We now know that the seropositive rate among homosexuals a decade ago, just before the major outbreak of cases, was one in a thousand," says Dr. Robert Redfield, an infectious disease specialist at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research. "Well, we are starting to see seropositive rates of one in a thousand among heterosexuals. Yet we are doing nothing, really. It makes no sense to me."

AuCoin addresses benefit

On July 12, the Right to Privacy PAC held a benefit for Les AuCoin. During the course of the afternoon, AuCoin restated his continued support for gay and lesbian rights (AuCoin is co-sponsor of the national gay rights bill), for women's freedom of choice on matters of abortion, and an end to the arms race and American military adventuring.

On the subject of AIDS, AuCoin noted that "one of the most gripping monuments in Washington is the Viet Nam War Memorial." On it are 91,000 names of Americans who died in that conflict. But, stated AuCoin, "by 1995 the number of deaths from AIDS will equal deaths in Viet Nam." AuCoin also revealed that the Appropriations Committee, of which he is a member, is funding AIDS research to the full limit of the budget.

Health officials call for contact tracing

The Association of State and Territorial

Health Officials, headed by Oregonian Kristine Gebbie, has recommended that State health agencies do away with anonymous HTLV-III testing, and pursue sexual contact tracing. In Oregon, anonymous testing is provided at private, not state, facilities.

Pigs 'n AIDS: the latest

A sampling of blood drawn in 1984 from 500 Floridian pigs, has tested "slightly positive" to ELISA tests, which are usually used to determine exposure to the AIDS virus. Earlier this year, African Swine Fever Virus, thought to be related to HTLV-III virus, was reportedly found in pigs in Florida. The USDA later denied the finding. ASFV has never been confirmed in the U.S. However, according to the *New York Native*, sources in the U.S. Animal and Plant Inspection Service report that ASFV has been detected on more than one occasion in North America, and that its presence has been covered up. Indications are that AIDS is a human form of ASFV.

And it's not just pigs...

A study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* from the VA Medical Center in Cincinnati indicates that some hepatitis patients, and patients with alcoholic liver disease yield false positive results when tested for HTLV-III antibodies. Researchers state, "This is important lest the patients be falsely labelled as having previous infection with the AIDS virus and suffer the consequences of this diagnosis."

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