

Will PANIC stop AIDS in California?

by Marla Minnicino

The Prevent AIDS Now Initiative Committee (PANIC), a California citizens' action group, has announced a crash effort to place on the ballot in the June 3 primary a referendum requiring state authorities to add Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome to the list of diseases considered infectious under present statutes, and to take emergency public health measures to prevent its spread. "There is no better way to rid the state of California of the rock-drug-sex counterculture which started in Hollywood and Haight-Ashbury, than to back this initiative," said Brian Lantz, candidate for the Democratic nomination for U.S. Senate and a co-sponsor of the PANIC initiative.

Lantz is heading a slate of 125 candidates backed by the National Democratic Policy Committee (NDPC), a political action committee which supports the programs of Lyndon H. LaRouche. The candidates, including 18 for Congress, 12 for State Assembly, 78 for Democratic Central Committee, and 19 for Republican Central Committee, are campaigning to force a rational public health approach to AIDS, to restore basic morality to politics, and to effect a shift in cultural values away from the "Age of Aquarius" outlook.

Many of the Democratic incumbents being challenged by NDPC congressional candidates in California personify this "Aquarian" tendency in its worst form. Representatives Ron Dellums, Henry Waxman, Sala Burton, Fortney Stark, Leon Panetta, Mel Levine, Julian Dixon, and Mervyn Dymally are among those whose policies have not only contributed to the destruction of the U.S. economy and threatened America's defense capability, but are now posing a threat to the population's health and welfare, through their refusal to confront the danger posed by the AIDS outbreak.

The NDPC-backed candidates, on the other hand, have deemed AIDS a "worse threat than nuclear war," charging that unless the Gramm-Rudman budget-cutting legislation is repealed and a program implemented to build up urban and rural infrastructure and increase the standard of living in both Africa and the United States, the whole world is "at risk" from AIDS and other pandemics—not only homosexual and drug addict populations. The NDPC candidates have made

the success of the PANIC ballot initiative an integral part of their election campaigns.

Two AIDS-related bills have recently been introduced into the California state legislature. The first would require universal screening for people applying for marriage licenses. The second would require screening for all prisoners detained longer than three days in a penal institution. Public hearings on the bill, scheduled to occur within the next four to six weeks, are expected to open the door for a full-scale discussion of public health measures to combat AIDS, as the NDPC has been urging since 1985.

At press conferences in San Francisco, San Diego, and Sacramento March 12-14, PANIC spokesmen announced that they have collected over 100,000 of the 393,385 signatures required to place the initiative on the statewide ballot in November. According to PANIC co-sponsor Khushro Gandhi, West Coast coordinator of the NDPC, the petition-gathering effort is the result of a grass-roots campaign to force public health officials to deal with the AIDS crisis. Over 1,000 churches and at least 100 other civic organizations throughout the state are collecting signatures to help put the initiative on the ballot. In February, the newsletter of the Police Officers Research Association of California (PORAC), read by 50,000 law enforcement officers, ran a two-page spread calling attention to the initiative and the need for public health measures to combat AIDS.

Gandhi and Lantz were joined at the press conferences by John Grauerholz, M.D., F.C.A.P., medical coordinator of EIR's Biological Holocaust Task Force, and co-author of EIR's new Special Report, *An Emergency War Plan to Fight AIDS and other Pandemics*. Dr. Grauerholz presented previously unreleased documentation of the role of environmental factors, including insect transmission, as a mechanism in the transfer of AIDS. His remarks provoked hysteria from California health officials, who are, like the Atlanta Centers for Disease Control, trying to cover up such data and squelch fears that non-"high-risk" groups may also be vulnerable.

The head of the California Medical Association's AIDS Task Force, attending the PANIC press conference in San Francisco, tried to downplay the role of environmental factors, such as sanitation, nutrition, and insect vectors. He attempted to explain away the 10 million AIDS cases in Central Africa by attributing them to unorthodox sexual practices!

The AIDS issue has become such a political bombshell in California, that State Health Department officials are accusing the organizers of the PANIC initiative of acting entirely for political reasons, and the large and vocal homosexual community is reportedly mobilizing against the referendum. On March 6, the *San Francisco Chronicle* ran an op-ed by political analyst Larry Liebert reporting that "gay leaders from around the state have been meeting secretly," mapping plans to move against the initiative if it qualifies for ballot status.