

## Public Health Policy

# British expert backs Calif. AIDS measure

John Seale, M.D., F.R.C.P., F.R.S.M., the noted British venereologist, gave a formal statement of endorsement for the AIDS ballot initiative in California to *EIR* on July 17. The measure (see *EIR*, July 18, 1986, pp. 30-37) was placed on the November state ballot after nearly 700,000 signatures were gathered on petitions calling for declaring AIDS a communicable disease, subject to existing public health laws. It has polarized the political life of the state. The so-called gay lobby violently opposes this initiative as an alleged threat to their lifestyle.

The California ballot initiative has received the endorsement of the *EIR* Biological Holocaust Task Force, which has published two special reports over the past year ("Economic Breakdown and the Threat of Global Pandemics" in July 1985 and "An Emergency War Plan to Fight AIDS and Other Pandemics" in February 1986). The *EIR* group's publications contain the only proposal for a global effort to wage war on the disease, and are coherent with the approach of the California AIDS initiative.

Dr. Seale's statement of endorsement follows:

"I wish to express my strong support for the Initiative in the state of California to mandate that normal public health measures be applied to persons infected with the AIDS virus.

"I speak in the capacity of a physician whose practice is in London, who has specialized in the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of sexually transmitted disease for the last 25 years, and who has taught medicine at the University of London.

"The AIDS virus is the first, entirely new, highly lethal virus to spread as an epidemic throughout mankind, since the origins of modern medicine over a century ago. The infection with the AIDS virus is now known to be more deadly to people today than infection with either smallpox or yellow fever viruses were to their grandparents, and far more deadly than infections with the bacteria causing tuberculosis, cholera, typhoid, or syphilis.

"The unique danger of the AIDS virus to our civilization is that all people infected with it remain well, but are poten-

tially infectious to others for several years before the illness develops. Once illness supervenes, there is a slow deterioration to death. These are the characteristic features of a slow virus disease.

"Modern scientists and modern doctors have had no previous experience of combatting the epidemic spread of a slow virus disease amongst humans. Nor have they any experience of treating people infected with viruses similar to the AIDS virus. At present, all the technological wizardry of modern science is useless in producing a vaccine to prevent infection or a medicine to cure it. Every competent scientist who has studied the virus and the disease it causes privately admits that there will be no widely available vaccine or cure before the year 2000 at the earliest.

### Prevailing view is wrong

"The prevailing view that AIDS is only a disease which affects homosexuals, drug addicts, prostitutes, and people who are sexually promiscuous, is a grotesque misrepresentation of the facts. The AIDS virus is transmitted with devastating efficiency by people whose sexual pleasures include repeated contact with the lower intestinal tract of numerous other people and by those who inject themselves with drugs. However, once thousands of people are infected by indulging in these extraordinary activities, it is inevitable that a virus which persists for years in the blood, saliva, and other bodily secretions of those infected, will also be transmitted with increasing frequency in the family, the school, and the hospital, unless steps are taken to stop it.

"The only means whereby the spread of the AIDS virus can be halted is by identifying those who are carrying the virus and by society's using whatever powers are appropriate to ensure that they (those infected persons) transmit the virus to no other person. This will require a national effort throughout the world by all governments and by all people, of a magnitude and cost comparable to waging a prolonged war of survival against a powerful, skillful, and devious enemy. There will be no easy victories, no glory, and terrible suffering. But there is no alternative.

"It is truly remarkable that so many scientists and doctors who have studied the virus and the disease in depth have lacked the courage to spell out, in simple language, to politicians and people, the catastrophe which so clearly threatens to overwhelm mankind. The kindest response is to remember the universal disinclination of all of us to think and speak the unthinkable.

"This Initiative, which has been put forward by the citizens of California, and which is so shocking in that it has to be put forward at all, will, if it receives an overwhelming vote in its favor, galvanize leaders of your state and of your country to act wisely but firmly. In so doing, it will undoubtedly persuade other people and their governments also to act. If Californians make the right decision, not only will all Americans come to praise them, but so will the rest of the world."