
AIDS in California

Investigation sought for possible homicide

Brian Lantz, vice-president of the Prevent AIDS Now Initiative Committee (PANIC), released the following statement on Aug. 28:

A potential homicide attempt took place in the town of San Lorenzo, California, against Proposition 64 organizer Ron Taylor on Monday, Aug. 25. Taylor was attacked and bitten, causing an abrasion and bleeding, by a fanatic assailant screaming his opposition to Proposition 64, the ballot initiative that calls for California's existing public-health laws to be applied to AIDS. The facts of the incident indicate that Mr. Taylor was the object of a premeditated assault with a potentially deadly weapon while organizing in San Lorenzo. Mr. Taylor has demanded that the assailant undergo an AIDS antibodies test to determine the assailant's actual intent in the attack, and to take informed medical measures to protect his health. The Prevent AIDS Now Initiative Committee fully supports Mr. Taylor. We demand prosecution of this case as a potential homicide.

In a unique precedent-setting investigation and case for such biting attacks, on Aug. 20, 1986 in San Diego Municipal Court, Judge Raymond Edwards, Jr., ruled that the investigation of a potential crime takes precedence over existing laws prohibiting mandatory antibodies tests, and ensuring confidentiality of test results. There can be no question that a knowing, infectious carrier of the AIDS virus, in biting an individual, is guilty of attempted homicide. In the San Diego decision, a potential AIDS-infected assailant bit two police officers. Police ordered a blood test. Judge Edwards authorized the blood test. When "harmonized" with the State Constitution and Penal Code Provisions, Edwards said, AB 403 (the so-called Agnos bill) "does not prohibit the taking of the blood or the testing of blood" for AIDS antibodies under a court order, if probable cause has been shown that a crime may have been committed.

In the San Lorenzo incident, with clear premeditation, one Ernest Waltz approached a Proposition 64 organizing table, spat upon Mr. Taylor, shoved a shopping cart into him, and bit him in the ensuing fight. The bite broke the skin on Mr. Taylor's upper left arm and required emergency hospital attention. In front of California Highway Patrol officers brought to the scene by Mr. Taylor, Waltz threatened Mr. Taylor, saying, "I'm going to kill you, mother*****!" By way of explaining his biting Mr. Taylor, Waltz announced:

"They don't call me Mad Dog for nothing." Waltz stated that he was working against Proposition 64 and its sponsors, including "Bob Lantz." Belligerent with police officers, Waltz at one point declared, "If I was under arrest, you would see me fly out the door as fast as possible." Due to Waltz's behavior at the Alameda County Sheriff's station, one officer questioned Waltz as to whether he was "doped up." Waltz said he was taking medication. Waltz sports an earring in his left ear lobe and punk-styled, shoulder-length hair.

This potential homicide attempt must be viewed against a backdrop of escalating threats against organizers for Proposition 64. On Aug. 15, the Livermore office for the Prevent AIDS Now Initiative Committee received a telephone death threat, threatening that "hit teams" were being sent out to "get you." The caller stated that one tactic would be to smear AIDS contaminated blood on doorknobs. "You know, we have nothing to lose," threatened the caller. The caller alleged that the Stonewall Democratic Club had had discussion that if "64" passes, "you're going to be dead mother*****!" A report of that threat is on file with the Livermore Police Department.

On Aug. 19, on behalf of the Prevent AIDS Now Initiative Committee, I wrote to Secretary of State March Fong Eu, asking that the secretary of state investigate the Aug. 15 death threat. Now, on behalf of the Prevent AIDS Now Initiative Committee, the organizing committee for Proposition 64, I am demanding that the secretary of state immediately commence a full investigation of criminal and homicidal acts directed against the Prevent AIDS Now Initiative Committee and its supporters.



A scene from the deviants' parade in New York in June 1986.