

## Deukmejian decision shows: budget-cutters spread AIDS

by Nicholas F. Benton

In a dramatic development, the governor of California, George Deukmejian, announced on Sept. 2 that he opposes California Ballot Proposition 64, which is coming before the state's voters next November. The reasons, according to the governor, are financial.

Proposition 64, the first of its kind in the United States, simply calls for the state of California to classify AIDS as a "communicable disease," and the condition of carrying HTLV-III, the virus associated with AIDS, as a "communicable condition." By placing AIDS on the state's official list of such communicable diseases and conditions, Proposition 64 would mandate that state health authorities apply the same public health measures that one would apply to tuberculosis, polio, etc., screening, isolation of victims, and treatment.

Deukmejian's statement came on Sept. 2, when the governor of California announced how he was going to vote on the various Proposition issues on the November ballot. It broke his silence of over two months since the Proposition was certified as having qualified for the ballot, with a total of nearly 700,000 signatures by California citizens.

Governor Deukmejian stated the following reasons for his opposition to Proposition 64: "With a greater the 700% increase in funding in four years, California's commitment to the fight against AIDS far exceed that of any other state. Protecting the public health, contributing to research directed at finding a cure, and providing compassion and care for AIDS victims have been and will continue to be the hallmarks of our policy.

"Given this commitment, Proposition 64 is wholly unnecessary and unwarranted. Dr. Ken Kizer, director of the state's Department of Health Services, has reported to me that the medical and public health communities of California are virtually unanimous in their opinion that Proposition 64 is not needed and should be defeated. It forces the public to make complex, sensitive medical judgments about various medical conditions which are best left in the hands of medical experts.

"Health officers already have the tools they need to pro-

tect the public, and to take the necessary actions to minimize the spread of this deadly disease."

The sanctimonious statements about California's funding for AIDS were belied, however, by the fact that just one week before his announcement that he would oppose Proposition 64, Governor Deukmejian cut \$20 million, or 40%, from the AIDS research budget proposed by the California legislature!

Proposition 64 was authored by a group of public health officials and physicians cooperating with Lyndon LaRouche, who were convinced that the causes of AIDS—the most deadly disease ever known to human history—lie in economic breakdown, and particularly its non-linear effects on the biosphere as a whole.

Ironically, the homosexual community, which has been most devastated by the spread of AIDS, and would benefit most from the measures proposed in Proposition 64, has been whipped into an irrational frenzy against the ballot initiative. They have been induced to believe the lies of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (based in Atlanta) which insist that AIDS is a sexually transmitted disease, which only strikes the so-called high risk groups, homosexuals and intravenous drug-users. In fact, as the summary of scientific evidence presented elsewhere in this issue shows (see page 10), although these "high risk" groups are getting the disease *faster* than the rest of the population, it is merely the rate of communicability that differs—not the potential for getting the disease, particularly not under current conditions of economic breakdown.

The California decision compounds these causes and reflects severe problems within the Reagan administration. Deukmejian's decision, as his own statement makes explicit, was purely and simple a fiscal one. It was made under pressure from those of President Reagan's economic advisers who accompanied the President on his California vacation, including Chief of Staff Donald T. Regan and Treasury Secretary James Baker II, who have also been the key figures in pushing the President to sacrifice military defense to the Gramm-Rudman budget-cutting law.