

British population backs AIDS screening

by Mark Burdman

A nationwide television show in Britain the night of Oct. 22, "AIDS—The Last Chance," featured an appearance by noted British AIDS expert Dr. John Seale and unleashed a storm of controversy over approaches to the deadly disease.

During the program, a live poll was done, through call-ins: 76% of the callers voted "yes" for compulsory screening for AIDS, and 95% voted "yes" on the government giving identity cards to all citizens on how they tested.

However policymakers may choose to treat the AIDS plague in the United Kingdom over the next months, the popular mood is clearly one of anxiety and desire that the government take firm measures against the disease.

Dr. Seale himself has been an avid campaigner for the California, U.S.A. "Proposition 64" referendum, due to be voted on November 4. The proposition would mandate that California authorities declare AIDS a "communicable disease," and treat AIDS with the kinds of public health measures that have been utilized against epidemics in the past: Isolation and/or quarantine as well as general screening of the population.

Dr. Seale toured the United States in late September-early October, testifying before the California State Senate in favor of Proposition 64, and releasing a statement in Washington, D.C. before the National Press Club, calling on U.S. President Reagan and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to declare states of national emergency in response to history's first "species-threatening" epidemic. On Oct. 9, at a London Royal Society of Medicine press conference, he declared AIDS the "molecular-biological equivalent of the nuclear bomb." He protested efforts in the United States to persecute and suppress *EIR* founder Lyndon LaRouche and other supporters of Proposition 64.

All this obviously provoked a storm in official circles. Although the Thatcher government is still insisting that screening is "not practical," and although government AIDS authorities are sticking to the "Safe Sex"/high-risk groups propaganda about AIDS, matters have gotten so alarming that a special Health Minister for AIDS, Tony Newton, has been named, and the government has sent a leaflet on the dangers of AIDS to every household in Britain. During the week of Oct. 13, the House of Lords had its first-ever debate

on AIDS policy, and two members, Lady Lane Fox and Lady Sharples, raised questions about more urgent approaches to combat the spread of AIDS.

Almost every day, alarming stories about AIDS are reported in the press. On Oct. 24, dailies warned that the city of Edinburgh, Scotland, had become an "AIDS timebomb" under the entire United Kingdom. It also reported new cases of AIDS among women and newborn babies in the city of Newcastle, and elsewhere.

Watching California

California Proposition 64, also known as the "PANIC Initiative," has been getting feature attention in the British press, although, clearly, the newspapers are out of touch with the mood of the population.

On Oct. 21, from Los Angeles, the London *Daily Telegraph* ran a prominent, page-eight story, entitled, "Initiative that spreads public panic over AIDS." Proposition 64, it said, "would force State health officials to list the names of everyone testing positive for AIDS antibodies and immediately have them removed from food handling and school jobs."

Reporter John Hiscock, however, spent most of his news-space trying to cast aspersions on the initiative, and on Lyndon LaRouche, whom he labeled a "political extremist."

The "controversial" AIDS initiative, he wrote, not only has been "denounced by virtually all of the State's medical experts," but "has been revealed as part of a strategy to win international acceptance, and eventually the White House [for LaRouche], by exploiting public fears about AIDS."

Where did Hiscock get his evidence for these dark "revelations"? Aside from one cited opponent of Proposition 64, the rest of the evidence came from Lyndon LaRouche's own writings!

Hiscock quoted from a book published by Mr. LaRouche and associates last year entitled, *A Program for America*, in which LaRouche wrote: "The AIDS epidemic and the growing signs of a government coverup are beginning to move the majority of the citizens to a mood of political revolt. Those citizens, set into motion by the AIDS crisis, are a political army on the move." The "silent majority" of Americans would regard AIDS as the "last straw" in the moral and educational collapse of America, as AIDS would affect families across the nation, Hiscock cited LaRouche saying.

On Oct. 17, the *Daily Mail* ran the headline, "The vote to turn AIDS victims into lepers," which stated, "Now the world's eyes are turned to California, which may lead where others follow." As Sheridan noted, "California is not alone in its fear of AIDS."

The *Mail's* accompanying lead editorial was entitled: "An answer needed for AIDS," which warned that AIDS "has the potential to become an epidemic comparable with the great plagues which ravaged the world in former times." If the government did not take "reasoned and firm" action, there could be, in Britain, "panicky and extreme" reactions like those unfolding in California.