

Reagan sides with LaRouche on AIDS testing

by Kathleen Klenetsky

President Reagan took an important first step toward formulating an effective policy for dealing with the AIDS disaster, by calling for a vastly expanded program of "routine" HIV testing May 31, in his first major policy statement devoted exclusively to the AIDS epidemic.

Speaking on the eve of the third international AIDS conference in Washington, the President warned that the disease is "surreptitiously spreading throughout our population," since most infected individuals don't know they carry the virus. Because of this deadly lack of knowledge, he said, testing must be significantly expanded: "It's time we knew exactly what we are facing."

Reagan delivered his speech to a \$10,000-per-plate Washington fundraiser sponsored by the American Medical Foundation for AIDS Research (AMFAR), a group headed by Liz Taylor and financed by Soviet agent Armand Hammer. Reagan drew boos—and some applause—from his audience when he announced that he has decided on the following measures:

On the federal level, the President disclosed that he had requested the Health and Human Services Department to add the AIDS virus to the list of contagious diseases for which immigrants and aliens seeking permanent residence in the United States can be denied entry. He said that he has also asked the Department of Justice to "plan for testing of all federal prisoners," and that, in addition, he has requested a review "of other federal responsibilities, such as veterans hospitals, to see if testing might be appropriate in these areas."

Reagan also said he wants to encourage the states to expand their AIDS testing, to include routine testing for those who seek marriage licenses and for those who visit sexually transmitted disease or drug-abuse clinics, and to require testing for prisoners.

"Not only will testing give us more information on which to make decisions," the President declared, "but in the case

of marriage licenses, it might prevent at least some babies from being born with AIDS."

Reagan appealed to AIDS carriers and others to recognize the "moral obligation not to endanger others." If a person has reason to believe that he or she may be a carrier, "that person has a moral duty to be tested for AIDS," he said. "Human decency requires it. And the reason is very simple. Innocent people are being infected by this virus, and some of them are going to acquire AIDS and die."

Vice-President George Bush signed on to the President's policy in an address the next day to the opening session of the international AIDS conference. "AIDS is spreading and killing in every corner of the world," he said. "It does not discriminate. It is an equal opportunity merchant of death. . . . Ultimately, we must protect those who do not have the disease. Thus, we have made the decision that there must be more testing."

LaRouche policy wins out

By firmly endorsing widespread AIDS testing, the President has resolved the bitter factional battle that has been raging within his administration over how to deal with AIDS. That battle has pitted a vocal group, led by Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, HHS representatives, and the Centers for Disease Control, which has promoted sex education and condom use, against Secretary of Education William Bennett and his allies, who have urged mandatory testing to stem the epidemic's wildfire spread.

Reagan's embrace of testing also means that he has effectively adopted, at least in part, the approach to AIDS advocated by *EIR* founder Lyndon H. LaRouche. LaRouche was the first prominent political leader in the United States to identify mandatory AIDS testing as a crucial component in the battle against the disease.

In formally declaring his candidacy for the 1988 presi-

dential nomination on Oct. 4, 1985, LaRouche identified AIDS as the leading threat to the continued survival of the American—and world—population, and called for the immediate implementation of public health measures, including testing, as the first line of defense against the epidemic's onslaught. LaRouche was promptly labeled a "fascist" who wanted to "lock up homosexuals in concentration camps," by various liberals.

LaRouche's policy prescriptions were subsequently incorporated into Proposition 64, a referendum urging the application of standard public-health measures to the AIDS crisis, which appeared on the ballot in California last November. Prop 64, or the "PANIC" initiative, as it was known, was defeated by a lavishly funded campaign of lies and slanders orchestrated by AMFAR—the same group before which Reagan unveiled his pro-testing policies May 31. During the months preceding the November vote, AMFAR president Dr. Mervyn Silverman had issued one denunciation upon another against Prop 64, charging that its backers were extremists and that mandatory testing and related measures were unnecessary.

For the President to choose AMFAR as the forum for declaring his support for expanded AIDS testing is political—as well as medically—significant.

If the President really wants to stop AIDS, his next step must be to adopt the rest of LaRouche's policy: a national commitment, amply funded, to a "Biological Strategic Defense Initiative," which will explore the frontiers of science to develop new treatment and ultimately, a cure, for the virus. In his speech to AMFAR, Reagan congratulated his administration for planning to spend \$1 billion next year on AIDS. But this is woefully inadequate to the task at hand, especially given that only \$413 million of this figure will be allocated to research.

Controversy

Predictably, Reagan's speech has enraged the homosexual lobby and the ACLU types, who have insisted, against all reason, that mandatory testing, contact-tracing, and other tried-and-true methods for stemming epidemics cannot be permitted in the case of AIDS, because they infringe on privacy and civil liberties.

"I find it very distressing that the administration has reached a conclusion that is contrary to the best public-health thinking in this country," Kristine Gebbie, chairman of the AIDS Task Force for the Association of State and Territorial Health Officers complained to the June 1 *Washington Post*. "I am very concerned that they're using 'routine' to mean 'mandatory,' and I really object to the lack of informed consent." Jeffrey Levi, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, termed the President's speech a "typical Reagan administration response. Instead of showing leadership and demonstrating how this epidemic can really be contained, he's following the simple path."

The day after the President spoke, a large contingent of

homosexuals demonstrated against his policy near the White House. Sixty-four protestors were arrested by police wearing rubber gloves for protection.

Moreover, *EIR* has received information suggesting that the CDC is quietly lobbying state governments to reject Reagan's proposal for expanded testing. The state of Virginia has already announced that it will reject the President's advice.

Nevertheless, as AIDS spreads into the non-high risk populations, popular demand for mandatory testing and other public-health measures to stop the disease is growing by leaps and bounds. A recent ABC poll showed that 90% of Americans support some form of mandatory testing. As President Reagan's domestic policy adviser, Gary Bauer, told the June 1 *Wall Street Journal*: "Not only has a consensus developed in this administration on this idea of routine testing, but I think a consensus is building in the medical community, too. Six months ago this might have been considered a right-wing position, but that's changed."

The AIDS issue has also come to dominate the 1988 presidential elections—a development predicted by LaRouche in 1985. As a campaign issue, AIDS is "like molten lava, very hot and out of control," Democratic pollster Peter Hart told the June 1 issue of *USA Today*. AIDS has rapidly become "an important, second-rank issue, just behind the economy and ahead of foreign policy,"

Democratic presidential candidate Bruce Babbitt told the same newspaper that the AIDS issue has become "very intense. With a large group, it's the number-one issue. I hear about it as much in Phoenix as in New York." According to California pollster Charles Rund, "By this time next year, there will probably be 100,000 cases nationally, and everyone's going to know someone who's been touched by it. That forces it into the mainstream." "It's as emotional as abortion, and it's still unfolding," says Bob Goodman, a GOP consultant. "When the three hospital workers got it from handling blood, it was a real bombshell in terms of propelling the issue. People said it wouldn't happen that way."

The May 31 London *Sunday Times* made a similar assessment: "There is now strong pressure for some degree of compulsory AIDS testing," in the United States, as "public fears have . . . increased."

Revelations coming out of the international AIDS conference that nearly one in 30 American males between the ages of 20 and 50 are carrying the virus, are sure to magnify those fears, and spur the movement toward testing and related public-health measures.

Reagan's shift to endorsement of testing will have international ramifications. AIDS was already slated to be a top agenda item at the Venice summit June 8-10, and the President's May 31 speech guarantees that mandatory testing will be debated there. Should the leaders of the other major industrial nations agree that widespread testing must be implemented, the outlines of a potentially winning strategy against AIDS will begin to emerge.