

## Battle over AIDS turns U.S. politics upside down

by Nancy Spannaus

When traditional Republican conservatives in the United States begin to call for strong federal government intervention in the local community, and even demand the spending of more money on social services, it is clear that there is a revolution going on in politics. That's precisely what's happening in the U.S. political scene right now.

And all signs are that this is only the beginning of the biggest upheaval and realignment in U.S. politics since World War II. While the leadership of the Democratic Party, captured by the liberal hedonists in the early 1970s, is still clinging to policies of gay rights, in opposition to the fundamental principles of public health, the days during which that leadership can command the masses of Democratic Party are numbered as well.

And all this is happening despite the fact that the bulk of the mass media in the United States, continues to promote the coverup line of the Centers for Disease Control, that AIDS is a disease of homosexuals and drug users, rather than of economic and biological holocaust. Indeed, American distrust of the Eastern Establishment media, which has been screaming at them not to panic, may be operating to accelerate the concern. Recent polls in California and in Texas, have shown over 70% of the respondents extremely concerned that more be done on the AIDS issue.

Among the most singular events in the emerging realignment on the AIDS issue in U.S. politics are:

1) the introduction of five bills in the U.S. Congress on Oct. 30, which would ordain various immediate public health measures required to reduce the spread of AIDS;

2) the Oct. 24 decision by the Department of Defense to screen for AIDS every new recruit, and existing enlisted man, in the U.S. armed forces;

3) the campaign by Republican New York City mayoral candidate Diane McGrath to get emergency public health measures, including improvement of social services, implemented, in order to deal with the AIDS crisis;

4) tentative moves by members of the Democratic Party in Texas to treat AIDS as the major public health threat which it is, despite the official position of the Democratic Party; and

5) the formation of a committee on Oct. 24 to put a Citizens Initiative on the ballot in California, which would mandate screening and appropriate health measures for AIDS patients.

### A bipartisan effort

The loudest and most active force on the U.S. political scene which is moving for emergency measures to deal with the AIDS epidemic, is the National Democratic Policy Committee, and the campaign for the 1988 Democratic presidential nomination of Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. School board, city council, and mayoral candidates, mostly Democrats, endorsed by the NDPC around the country, have been addressing city councils, school boards, and state legislatures on the need to screen for AIDS, keep AIDS victims out of schools and service jobs, and launch an all-out public health campaign, to prevent the further spread of the disease.

The NDPC has found Democrats warmly receptive to its approach, and totally alarmed at the "do your own thing, no

matter whom you harm" attitude of the official Democratic Party. However, among what might be called "established" politicians, it is the Republicans who have picked up the issue, and have

On the national level, the leader of the anti-AIDS battle is Congressman William Dannemeyer (R-Calif.). Dannemeyer's five pieces of legislation, each with 5 to 11 co-sponsors, would mandate the following action:

- 1) make it a felony for a member of a high-risk AIDS group to donate blood;
- 2) bar AIDS victims from working in health care delivery systems;
- 3) authorize health care professionals to wear protective garments when treating AIDS patients;
- 4) close public bath houses that create a public health hazard; and
- 5) urge school districts not to allow children with AIDS to attend classes, and to make alternative arrangements for such students to receive education.

At a press conference in Washington, D.C. on Oct. 30, Dannemeyer said that the "impetus for this legislation" stemmed from "the inadequate action of the states and the public health service to take necessary practical measures to protect the public and our health care professionals from the threat of this deadly disease."

Dannemeyer was understating the case, if anything. In the major cities of his state, Los Angeles and San Francisco, the "health" authorities have adopted measures which literally prevent basic screening and isolation of AIDS victims from positions in which they can pass on the disease. In other school districts around the country, the authorities are being equally irresponsible, by insisting that children with AIDS be allowed to attend public schools.

As rational as Dannemeyer's approach is, as a beginning, it does not encompass three major necessary components for legislation on AIDS: the need for massive public research, for screening of all service workers, and for emergency economic upgrading of the centers of dismal poverty, where AIDS is most predominant. This was the most extraordinary aspect of the Oct. 1 statement (*see below*) issued by Republican mayoral candidate Diane McGrath, who is challenging the mayor of the United States' leading Sodom and Gomorrah, Mayor Edward Koch.

It took a lot of courage for McGrath to stick to her program, since her view was immediately opposed not only by Koch, but by Governor Mario Cuomo, and leading New York Republicans, such as William Simon of Kissinger Associates. The Republican National Committee then decided not to grant her the funds which she had requested for her campaign. It was only one week before the election, Oct. 28, that Vice-President George Bush, who just formed his own pre-election campaign committee, decided to express his support for McGrath, by sending a donation to her campaign.

There is little question that the policy debate on AIDS is

only in its early stages, and is not going to go away. This can be seen, among other places, in the state of Texas, where the campaign for mayor of Houston is being dominated by the AIDS issue.

Both leading candidates in the mayoral race are Democrats, but one, former mayor Louie Welch, has made AIDS the leading issue of the campaign, while incumbent Mayor Kathy Whitmire, has stuck to a "gay rights" approach. The third candidate for mayor, Susan Director, a Democrat backed by the NDPC, along with a slate of candidates for City Council, has taken a major role in publicizing the roots of the AIDS pandemic, and the necessary measures to deal with it. Although the media are claiming that Welch, who is also backed by the Republicans, is losing support through an "extremist" anti-homosexual approach, local political organizers report just the opposite.

There has so far been one result more permanent than political polarization. The State Health Commissioner, Robert Bernstein, a Democratic political appointee, said on Oct. 22 that he will recommend that AIDS be added to the state's list of quarantinable diseases.

Resolutions approaching the AIDS problem from the standpoint of the NDPC program have already been passed in three city councils in the United States—Buffalo, New York; Clairton, Pa.; and Pittsburgh, Pa. A resolution is also pending in the Ohio state legislature.

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## Documentation

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*The following is the full statement by Republican mayoral candidate Diane McGrath, issued Oct. 1, 1985:*

Diane McGrath, Republican-Conservative candidate for Mayor of New York, today called upon the City to "recognize and deal with the nation's number one health problem. The AIDS epidemic has been characterized as our most serious threat to health by Margaret Heckler, Secretary of Health and Human Services. But New York, with a disproportionately large share of the AIDS population, has no real policy and no adequate program to treat the victims or protect the health of the rest of the population."

"The problem is twofold," McGrath pointed out. "There is the long range necessity to rebuild New York City." Many scientists believe epidemics are associated with a general breakdown in housing, sanitation, nutrition and water supply. "Belle Glade, Florida is a startling example of the truth of that theory. The collapse of its economy and infrastructure over a period of years, left it vulnerable to epidemics."

"Rat infested houses, filthy sewage and impure water helped spread AIDS. An astonishingly high proportion of the people of Belle Glade are AIDS victims although they are not members of the established high risk groups: homosexuals, intravenous drug users and hemophiliacs. The long range

bleak prospects for our deteriorating New York are obvious.”

“If you think I exaggerate the possibility, even probability of an AIDS epidemic among the general population, there are some statistics from the City’s Board of Health worth thinking about. Tuberculosis, once thought to be all but eradicated, is staging a remarkable comeback in New York. It is a disease often associated with the urban poor who lead substandard lives. The plain truth, according to the Board of Health, is that there was a slight decline in the incidence of tuberculosis among whites from 1979 to 1984, but a sharp increase among blacks and hispanics.

“Clearly we are leaving ourselves open to an epidemic of AIDS as our own living standards decline, especially since the City has so far refused to initiate any real programs to forestall this looming disaster.”

### **AIDS virus has no civil rights**

“Among the immediate steps that must be initiated are: Bathhouses frequented by homosexuals, theaters, bars and porno bookstores, that encourage promiscuous sexual activity on their premises, must be closed. They are a clear and evident menace to the health of their patrons. It is our duty to protect these people from themselves, if we are forced to.

“Full scale, explicit education programs must be instituted about what activities actually transmit the AIDS virus. Information concerning safe sexual activity and all other preventative measures must be widely disseminated.

“Persons who deal with others in an intimate way so that they may be obvious potential carriers must be tested for AIDS antibodies. This would include food preparers and servers, doctors and nurses, teachers and others. If their test for AIDS antibodies comes up positive twice, they can no longer be permitted their normal functions. This is a harsh measure and I recognize and regret it. On the other hand, the AIDS virus has no civil rights.

“AIDS patients in city, state and other hospitals must be segregated from other patients for their own, and their fellow patients’ comfort and safety. The fear of contagion is very high; the possibility of actual contagion is not completely known. Rather than closing city hospitals, we should study their possible use as AIDS centers and also their conversion to AIDS research and treatment facilities, or hospices.

“AIDS-infected children must not be permitted to attend the public schools. There are two principal reasons for this; the children themselves are vulnerable because of their immune deficiencies, to all kinds of diseases the other children may be carrying. Secondly, far too little is known about how the disease is transmitted to put thousands of well children at risk. Prostitutes who are arrested for any reason must be given a test for AIDS antibodies. They are an obvious source of infection and a strict policy toward prostitute carriers must be worked out and put into operation quickly.”

Only last Thursday, Sept. 26, Dr. James O. Mason, Acting Assistant Secretary for Health in Washington told Con-

gress “AIDS research is woefully inadequate.” He called for an additional 70 million dollars next year. At the same hearing, Dr. William Haseltine, a leading AIDS researcher at the Harvard Medical School, declared that perhaps “a million people in the United States have already been infected with the AIDS virus, even though a small percentage has become sick. We must be prepared to anticipate that the vast majority of those now infected will ultimately, over a period of five to ten years, develop life-threatening illness.”

McGrath asked, “Can there be any doubt that our present funding of AIDS research is woefully inadequate. The prestige and power of the Office of Mayor of the City of New York must be behind effective efforts to pressure the federal, state, city governments and private industry to underwrite the cost of greatly expanded research. As Mayor of New York, I intend to do just that, in addition to the measures I have outlined,” McGrath said in conclusion.

*Excerpts of Ballot Initiative on AIDS submitted to the Office of the State Attorney General of California. 393,000 voter signatures will place this on the 1986 ballot.*

### **SECTION 1.**

The purpose of this Act is to:

A. Enforce and confirm the declaration of the California Legislature set forth in Health and Safety Code Section 105 that Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is serious and life-threatening to men and women from all segments of society, that AIDS is usually lethal, and that it is caused by an infectious agent with a high concentration of cases in California;

B. Protect victims of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), members of their families and local communities, and the public at large; and

C. Utilize the existing structure of the State Department of Health Services and local health officers and the statutes and regulations under which they serve to preserve the public health from Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

### **SECTION 2.**

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is an infectious, contagious and communicable disease, and the condition of being a carrier of the HTLV-III virus is an infectious, contagious and communicable condition, and both shall be placed and maintained by the director of the Department of Health Services on the list of reportable diseases and conditions mandated by Health and Safety Code Section 3123, and both shall be included within the provisions of Division 4 of such code . . . and all personnel of the Department of Health Services and all health officers shall fulfill all of the duties and obligations specified in each and all of the sections of said statutory division and administrative code subchapter in a manner consistent with the intent of this Act, as shall all other persons identified in said provisions.