

Q-Notes

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AIDS Coalition Responds to New Disease Law

By Bob Johnson
Q-Notes Staff

The North Carolina AIDS Service Coalition met Friday, November 13, in Charlotte at Metrolina AIDS Project (MAP) offices to discuss the proposed rules which will accompany North Carolina's recently proposed communicable disease law. The head of North Carolina's AIDS Control Program, Dr. Rebecca Meriweather in conjunction with Ronald H. Levine, M.D., State Health Director have scheduled statewide public hearings to obtain comments and/or criticism on the proposed rules.

The proposed rules are calling for mandatory contact notification. This means that when an individual goes to the health department or to his/her private physician and has the HIV antibody test done and the results are positive, he/she MUST provide a list of sexual contacts for the previous year. The outcry over this provision is coming from city, regional and statewide leaders in the gay community, as well as from various social service representatives and civil liberties activists.

"The main problem," said Les Kooyman of MAP, "with this program is that individuals will shy away from being tested because they will not want to list their sexual partners." Kooyman went on to say that "the fear of providing such a list will prevent people from being tested and thus hinder the attempts to better understand how widespread this disease is."

The proposed rule changes concerning AIDS Control Measures reads as follows:

(d) The following are the control measures for the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection:

(1) Infected persons shall:

(A) refrain from sexual intercourse unless condoms are used: exercise caution when using condoms due to possible condom failure;

(B) never share needles or syringes;

(C) not donate or sell blood, plasma, platelets, other blood products, semen, tissues, organs, or breast milk;

(D) have a skin test for tuberculosis;

(E) not breastfeed;

(F) notify future sex partners of the infection;

(G) if the time of initial infection is known, [shall] prepare, on a form prepared by the Division, a list of previous sex and needle partners who would have been exposed; if the date of initial infection is unknown, prepare, on a form provided by the Division, a list of sex and needle partners for the previous year; the infected person shall place the list in an envelope, seal the envelope and give it to the attending physician; (emphasis added.)

Of course, the first question is to whom and where does this list go? Per the statute, the doctor is to inform you of the above-mentioned control measures and then the rule continues as follows:

(2) The attending physician shall:

(B) obtain the list required by (d)

(1) (G) from the patient; the physician shall sign the envelope and forward it to the Division of Health Services; the Division of Health Services shall retain the list until the Division has undertaken to notify the partners; the patient may notify the partners prior to the Division undertaking to do so;

C. Everette Koop, the US Surgeon General has made no secret of how he feels on the issue of MANDATORY testing. It's recorded in the Congressional Record and in his 1986 Surgeon General's Report on AIDS. This report for one of the first times, was written in public health terms, with no political innuendos, overtones or partisanship. In part, he felt that compulsory identification of virus carriers and any form of quarantine would be useless in fighting the disease, Koop concluded. His extensive research led him to some inevitable findings. Mandatory testing would do "little more than frighten away from the public health establishment the people most at risk for AIDS," the people who most "needed to be tested."

He stressed again what health officials had been saying for almost two years: "large scale testing would not be feasible until people did not have to worry about losing their jobs or insurance policies if they took the test. A push for more testing should be accompanied by guarantees of confidential-

ity and nondiscrimination. Koop is on record as having said that such antidiscrimination laws for people with AIDS or the AIDS virus were tools with which the epidemic could be fought.

Randy Shilts says in his book, *And the Band Played On: People, Politics and the AIDS Epidemic*, "The testing issue allowed conservatives to seize the AIDS issue as their own with rhetoric implicitly arguing that those thoughtless homosexuals were so awful that they should be forced to submit to testing, to protect all the good people who weren't infected with the virus. Public opinion polls shows most Americans favored massive AIDS testing."

Mr. Shilts goes on to say that Koop, accepting an award from Elizabeth Taylor of AmFAR (American Federation for AIDS Research; started by Rock Hudson's \$250,000 donation), at the awards dinner closing the 3rd Annual International AIDS Conference in Washington last May, glanced at the president when he, Koop, endorsed "voluntary" testing with guarantees of confi-

dentiality and nondiscrimination.

The following explains the North Carolina AIDS Service Coalition's concerns and outlines an alternative program to mandatory testing:

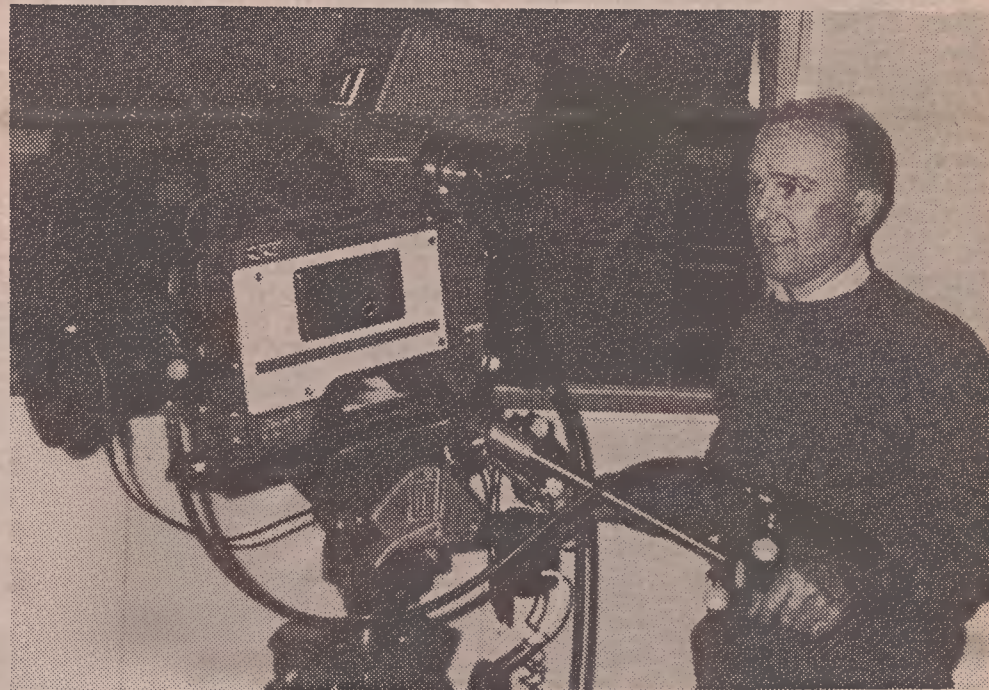
Overview: The North Carolina AIDS Service Coalition believes that a comprehensive and adequately funded program can control the spread of AIDS in North Carolina. Such a program should include education, counseling, anonymous testing, effective contact notification, protections against discrimination and care in alternative settings. Adequate funding for a comprehensive program must be made immediately by the Governor.

The General Assembly must appropriate sufficient funds to sustain a comprehensive program in future years. The NC AIDS Service Coalition has proposed a six-point program to control AIDS.

Education: A thorough, scientifically-based and objective statewide AIDS education program should be the state's first

See Coalition, page 7

Gay TV In Charlotte



Al Carwile, of Gay and Lesbian Forum, operates a studio camera at Cablevision.

In a studio at the facilities of Cablevision of Charlotte a group of men and women gather. They are the elements which make up Closet Buster Productions. They are here with a purpose: to reach out to the gay and straight communities through education and communication and enlighten them to what it is like to be a lesbian or gay man. Closet Busters is a voice with a homosexual perspective, out to break stereotypes and present the wide varieties of same sex lifestyles. Additionally, Closet Buster Productions is an informational service for gays and lesbians.

Closet Buster Productions has taken advantage of public access television. Their show, "The Gay/Lesbian Forum," is aired on the fourth Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m. on local cable channel 3. This prime time slot has brought the group many good responses and has the potential of reaching a far wider audience than the printed page. Ironically, restrictions placed on them by Cablevision disallows the promotion of homosexuality. Also, Closet Buster Productions may not ask for funds on the air; therefore, they seek funds in more traditional manner. Recently, they received funds from Queen City Coordinators.

Closet Buster Productions is presently soliciting volunteers who are interested in any phase of broadcasting. Each volunteer has the opportunity to fill any capacity within Closet Buster Productions. There are many behind-the-scenes responsibilities, so volunteers may, but do not have to, appear on camera, and no names are required. Cablevision requires a one-day training seminar for each segment of production in which a volunteer wishes to be involved, such as camera operation, remote operations, or directing. Once a volunteer has been through the appropriate training, he or she may become a camera person, part of the writing staff, or even a director or producer. If you are interested in volunteering, contact Closet Buster Productions at (704) 376-1490.

Some topics of recent shows have been: homosexuality and religion, the goals and directions of MAP, the lives of gays and lesbians, coming out, same sex relationships, parents of gays and lesbians, local theatre, and counseling available for families and children of homosexuals. Tentative shows will deal with lesbian issues, the black homosex-

See Gay TV page 5

QCQ Election To Be Held In January

Just as national political elections are holding the spotlight in the national press, you also have a local responsibility with QCQ.

For those who don't know, QCQ is the local gay answer to the United Way. This is the group of people who raise funds to help local organizations. QCQ is administered by a board of directors who are elected from the local community. What makes this board position so important is the fact that the people who are elected will decide where the money is raised and how it is spent. It is the board that decides the direction to be taken by the organization in the following year.

Jim Yarborough, this year's president, has asked that all persons interested in being nominated or interested in nominating someone to be on the ballot, please contact him at: QCQ, PO Box 221841, Charlotte, NC 28222 or call 339-0679.

Please don't treat these nominations in light fashion, as QCQ raises much money every year and decides where to

spend it. Expenses include the Gay and Lesbian Switchboard's phone lines (at the commercial business rate from Ma Bell) and they are the publishers of this newspaper (they pay the bills) and distribute it for you as a public service to the greater Charlotte gay community.

The elections proper will be held at the January meeting of the board and will be held at The Carolina Community Projects building at 2300 East 7th Street. Exact time and date will appear in the January issue of Q-Notes. So, keep an eye peeled for that info next month.

Once again let me emphasize how important the nominations and elections are. These people run the organization. They raise the money. They decide where to spend it. You are one of the "theys," but only if you get involved. If you don't get involved, then you don't have the right to bitch next year when things don't go your way.

If I've prodded you to get involved, please contact Jim at the address above or give him a call.