

Academics Debate Sex Amid Controversy

by Ray O'Loughlin

San Francisco's debate over the role of gay sexual activity in transmitting AIDS moved to a new venue last week. A group of medical and behavior modification experts convened last weekend at the University of California at San Francisco.

Under the auspices of UCSF's AIDS Clinical Research Center, the two-day conference was intended "to bring together experts in various fields and develop a consensus on risk factors in contracting AIDS," said conference chairman Dr. Marcus Conant. From that it was hoped to find ways of persuading gay men to alter risky behavior. Attending the meetings were medical, behavioral psychology and media representatives from around the country including the federal Center for Disease Control.

But as word about the high-powered conference filtered through the community, controversy grew around it. Attention was attracted from as far away as New York City with the Gay Men's Health Crisis sending an observer. Critics pointed out that the participants included few gay people, no people with AIDS and no ethnic minority members. Also left out were representatives from the many gay

organizations that have been working with the AIDS crisis such as the San Francisco AIDS Foundation and Bay Area Physicians for Human Rights (BAPHR).

The conference was broken into four panels — risk factors, health and behavioral psychology, gay identity and health education. Although working sessions were closed, discussion periods were open to observers who quickly organized themselves into a fifth "observers" panel. The observers caucus prepared its own recommendations — mostly criticisms of the conference — and injected some lively debate into the public discussion of issues considered by the "participant" panels.

Conference organizers say that their intent was not to exclude the community but that access was limited so that the sessions could be working sessions that produced consensus and usable documents.

"Community representatives were invited and are involved," said Conant referring to a few last minute additions to the panels. "We wanted experts on the panels, people recognized by their peers, to get their opinions on issues of risks and on modifying behavior." He said that "physicians have been too

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SENTINEL, USA's new owners Tom Murray, editor; and Charles R. Roberts, Jr., publisher.

Gay PAC Kicks Off Drive

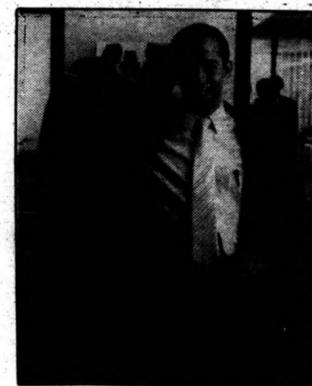
The Human Rights Campaign Fund, the only national political action committee devoted exclusively to lesbian and gay rights, kicked off its 1984 Bay Area fundraising drive May 7. Organizers hope to raise at least \$30,000 in San Francisco as part of a nationwide effort with a goal of \$1 million.

This year's drive — "Show Our Strength 1984" — is the most ambitious grassroots fundraising effort ever undertaken in the national gay community, say organizers. With the local effort under the direction of attorney Law Wilson, the organization is looking to enlist new supporters. A major push is planned to reach those who have never contributed to HRCF and to involve them in the political process in order to raise gay political clout. To do this, individuals will be asked to donate a target sum of \$19.84.

Kerry Woodward, HRCF co-chair explained that "although the figure is low by political giving standards, one of our major goals in this drive is to involve persons who have not been involved in politics previously. We set the figure more with them in mind rather than our regular givers."

Money raised by HRCF goes to selected candidates for federal office who support equal rights for gay and lesbian Americans. In 1982, the group raised \$600,000. Over 80 percent of the 119 candidates who received funds from the gay PAC won that year. The result was a boost from 50 to 73 co-sponsors of the gay civil rights bill in the House of Representatives.

"We've demonstrated," commented John Laird, Santa Cruz's gay mayor, "that people haven't suffered because of their support for gay rights." He said gay clout at the polls is needed to



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be backed up with money.

Supervisor Harry Britt told reporters that "the basic rights of gays and lesbians depend on the use of the ballot and use of money. The system responds to money," he said. He spoke of the need not only to make it in the interest of politicians to support gay causes but also of the need to "pay back past support" given to the gay community.

Organizers plan to raise the money by July through a variety of means — from house parties to direct mail solicitations.

Atlas Savings Expands into Financial District

Atlas Savings & Loan Association will open a new, uniquely designed branch in the Financial District this summer. Atlas' third office will be at 110 Bush Street, near two popular downtown gay bars. Announcement of the new branch follows on the heels of a recent stock split by the prosperous gay-owned, two-and-one-half-year-old savings bank.

The new facility will depart from standard banking in that no teller windows will be used. In their place will be three automatic teller machines available 24 hours while "account representatives" will be in semi-private desk alcoves for more complicated transactions. The architectural firm of Neeley/Lofrano, who designed Atlas' new headquarters now under construction, has designed the interior for 110 Bush as well.

Branch manager for the new office is Mark Fulham who moved to Atlas from United Bank after the latter's 18th Street office was acquired by Atlas.

"The new Financial District office is designed to serve Atlas' many customers in both the gay and non-gay community who work downtown and

will appreciate the convenience of banking where they work," said Atlas board chairman John A. Schmidt. He expects that Atlas will now attract new depositors from the Peninsula, East Bay and Marin who work in San Francisco.

In light of the recent collapse of Castro Street's Western Community Money Center, Schmidt defended Atlas' move. "The step to expand to the Financial District at the same time as we open a new headquarters on Castro Street was taken very carefully by our board of directors. Atlas is very sound financially, is making a profit and is guided by a strong, conservative board of directors made up of experienced gay business people."

He also pointed out that all accounts at Atlas are insured by the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation (FSLIC) for up to \$100,000.

Since it opened in November 1981, Atlas' assets have multiplied from \$2.5 million to nearly \$100 million. Profits for 1983 are estimated at \$1 million following a 1982 loss of nearly \$75,000. Only last month shareholders were offered a three-for-two stock split with stock selling — prior to the split — at \$26 per share, double its value from 1981.

In addition to the downtown office, Atlas will maintain its original office at Market and Duboce streets. The busy 18th Street branch will be moved to the new headquarters at 444 Castro Street when that building is completed later this summer.

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