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Red Cross in bloody controversy

BY ANDREW SIMPSON

The Red Cross blood donor clinic paid a visit to the McInnes room in the Student Union Building (SUB) on Monday and Tuesday this week, and brought with it some controversy.

The problem centres around the Red Cross' donor health assessment questionnaire, which gay rights groups have accused of being homophobic.

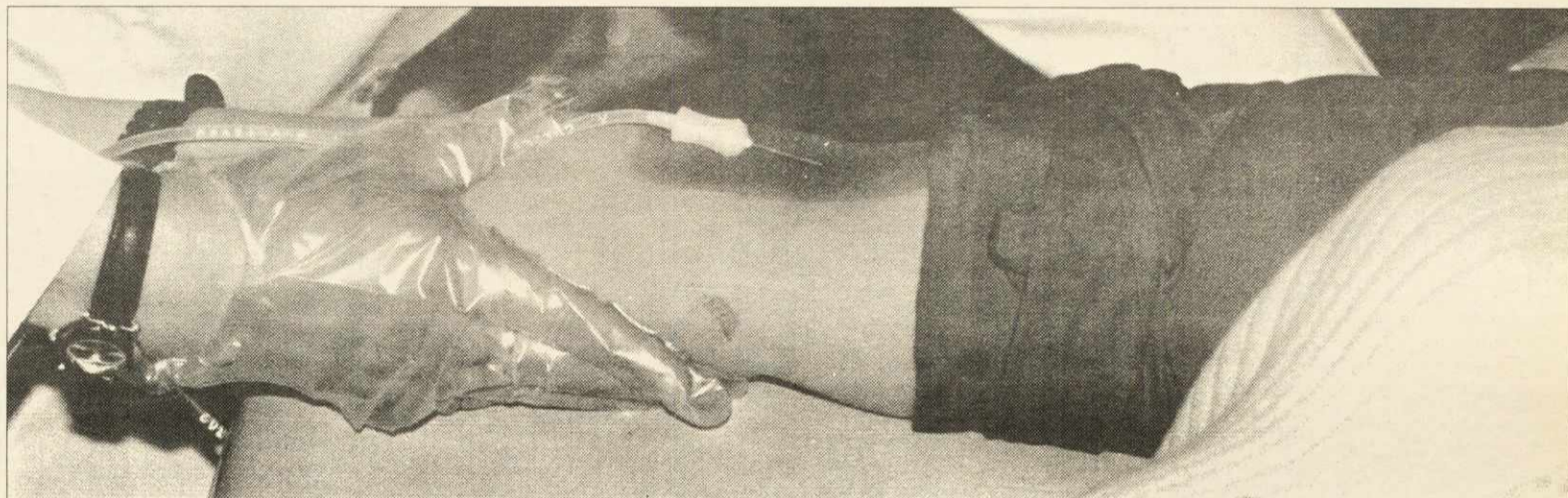
Here at Dalhousie, members of Humans Against Homophobia (HAH) feel that the questionnaire needs to be revised.

The part of the questionnaire deemed to be homophobic is article 14. It excludes males who have had sex with another male even once since 1977 from giving blood.

Aaron Poirier, a representative for HAH, is concerned that the Red Cross is labelling homosexuals as a high risk group, when they should be labelling the sexual act — anal intercourse — as a high risk activity.

"The impression they give with all this talk of high risk groups is that only certain groups are in danger...most people don't know that the fastest growing group of people testing positive for HIV are heterosexual women," said Poirier.

Poirier said that he is sad homophobia has been allowed to exist in the name of protecting the



GAZETTE PHOTO BY DANIELLE BOUDREAU

blood supply. He hopes that Red Cross can be convinced to re-write their questionnaire.

"I think we need to make people aware that this is unacceptable, but at the same time I don't want to discourage people from giving blood," he said.

In a brief interview on Monday in the McInnes room, Charge Nurse Barbara Cunningham defended the Red Cross questionnaire. She said that because of the six month incubation period before HIV can be detected, and because of the limited shelf-life of red blood cells, it is necessary to eliminate those people whose HIV may be undetectable by using the questionnaire.

When asked whether she thought the question was in place because homosexuals are high

13. In ... received

14. The following activities put you at risk for AIDS.

- if male, having sex with another male, even once
- receiving regular treatment with blood or blood products
- accepting money or drugs in exchange for sex
- being the sexual partner of someone who has taken part in any of the above activities or who has contracted AIDS or has tested positive for AIDS.

Since 1977, have you participated in any of the above activities?

15. a) Have you even once, shared needles or ...

risk, or certain acts are high risk, Cunningham's conviction wavered.

"The activity itself is a high risk...it's where they think AIDS

all began," she said. "...I know it was one of the groups identified as where it all began and it is a high risk activity...they figure that it's a homosexual activity."

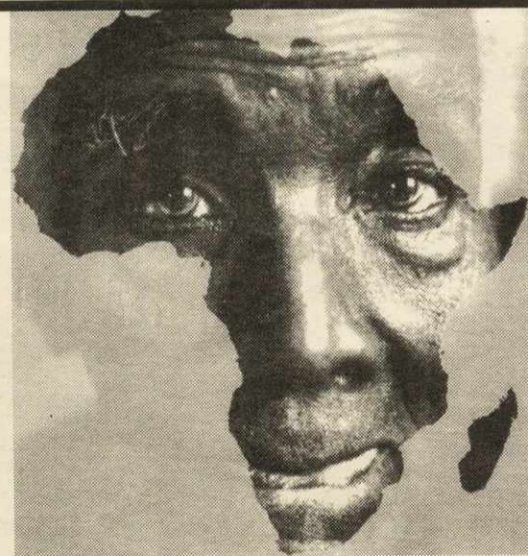
Cunningham did explain that answering yes to article 14 does not mean that a prospective donor would automatically be turned away.

"We would really have to sit down and get into it with them before we made a decision," said Cunningham.

The clinic reported that things were quieter than usual on Monday, but neither HAH nor Red Cross felt it had anything to do with the controversy.

The clinic will be spending the second half of the week accepting blood from donors at St.Mary's.

▲ Human rights groups continue to protest against the wording of article 14 in the Red Cross donor questionnaire.



BY PATTI WALLER

"A time of year for people to come together" is the dominating theme for this year's Black History Month.

In a brief meeting and amidst arranging the final details for this month's activities, Eric McRae — president and council representative of the Dalhousie Black Canadian Students Association — forecast the special events planned.

The Harambee party is the first of many events. Starting at 8 p.m. on Feb. 16, it will showcase everything from fashion shows to traditional African music and a selection of African and West Indian cuisine. The night's festivities — which officially kick off the month's events — ends with a dance.

This is only the start, however, of what is sure to be an educational and enjoyable symposium. Booths and seminars will provide informa-

February is Black History Month

tion on a diversity of subjects ranging from social issues, economics, and politics that affect Nova Scotia's black communities. These issues will be highlighted by a keynote speaker who will provide a more global perspective. This event is being held in conjunction with Transition Year Program professors; its exact time and location are to be announced.

McRae said the most important goals and objectives for Black History Month were "educating other people about the cultural differences and diversities and as much as possible, making other cultures, outside of our own, feel very comfortable with us."

When asked if this month has an even greater educational importance in face of budget cuts that will severely affect organizations like the Black United Front, McRae reflected, "that is very unfortunate...but it makes it even more important in these times for communities to come together and pool their efforts, and pool their ideas so that they can have some sort of a base where they can draw information from."

More information on all events can be obtained through the Dalhousie Student Union Information Line and through the info booths that will be set up during the month. Interested persons may also contact the Black Students Association Office in Room 120 in the SUB or at 494-6648. The Gazette will also be publishing a Black History Month Supplement which will appear in next week's issue.

Residence house t-shirts destroyed

BY KRISTIN MCNEILL

"Never trust anything that can bleed for four to five days and not die," was the slogan intended for the '95-'96 Cameron House t-shirts.

The shirts were destroyed shortly after they were delivered to Cameron House in response to complaints about the sexist sentiment expressed by the slogan.

Staff of the Dalhousie Women's Centre were busy with complaints about the shirts this past week. Kelly Redmond, the Volunteer Coordinator and Office Manager of the Women's Centre said that the centre found out about the t-shirt after a phone call. "A woman called the centre concerned about the ramifications about what the t-shirt would bring," she said.

Redmond's responsibilities include investigating concerns of sexism. Despite the fact that the t-shirts were promptly destroyed, Redmond explained, "Our outrage stems from the fact that this idea was even conceived; the fact that the shirts were even created," she

said. She added that in this case, she was "pleased that action had been taken" before the Women's Centre needed to get involved.

She said action had been taken swiftly and effectively, and judging from the number of calls to the Women's Centre, she was pleased with what she views as a concerned community which feels strongly about issues dealing with sexism.

The idea for the t-shirt originated in Cameron House of Howe Hall. Action on the part of the administration and residence council was not taken until after the shirts were produced.

Several Howe Hall sources indicated their bewilderment that the t-shirts were made. Initially, talk of the design and creation of the shirts was not taken seriously.

John Killam, President of Howe Hall Residence Council, said his council did not have any part in the design or production of the t-shirts.

"We heard that statement [the slogan on the shirt] kicking

...cont'd on page 5: "T-SHIRTS"