Hitt and Misses

Time to start playing Presidential hardball

October 1, 1995 By Sean Strub

POZ magazine's top four actions the President is unlikely to take:

1. Commit his personal leadership.

2. Hold a National AIDS Summit by year-end.

3. Deliver a nationally televised speech about AIDS.

4. Target prevention as a budget priority.

The new Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS, known as the Hitt Commission after its chairperson, California physician Scott Hitt, on July 28 announced several recommendations to the White House, including the four listed above.

Sadly, there is no evidence that the White House is any closer to taking serious action on AIDS. Until Bill Clinton wakes up and smells the T-cells, all the commissions and recommendations in the world just aren't going to matter. The appointment of the Commission is another pseudo-action, designed to create an impression of activity, similar to last year's World AIDS Day flurry.

The litmus test of the Commission's recommendations, that Clinton hold an AIDS Summit before the end of the year (similar to his Economic Summit and Forest Summit), was received cynically by one senior White House policy staffer. While noting relief that the Commission didn't get "too out of control," he commented, in reference to the AIDS Summit proposal, "[Clinton's] not going to do that. Never happen."

A Commission is greater than a group of people we know as human beings. They are representative of a community. And if they think their community wants them to be apologists for a hypocritical, gutless, lying President, they are dead wrong. We have to move to another level where we say we are not going to rubber stamp his re-election. Hardball politics dictates that we rally for Bill Bradley, Jesse Jackson, Arlen Specter and other Presidential candidates more willing to take action on AIDS.

In the meantime, if Clinton continues his inaction, the Commission ought to resign, en masse, in disgust.

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