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Title: *PA Rural Gay Caucus Report*

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Pennsylvania Rural Gay Caucus

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The June meeting of the Pennsylvania Rural Gay Caucus will convene at 1:00 P.M. at 1001 North Spring Street, Apt. 1-2, Middletown, Pa. (south of Harrisburg), on June 4th, Saturday. We will be considering a protest action against a newspaper in Harrisburg. The situation of SB 531 as revealed by Human Rights Day, a proposal for a conference of Rural Groups in the Fall, and anything else placed on the agenda. There is not much old business, so, it is a good time to be considering new proposals. Come and make one. Also, we will be doing a wee something for Gay Pride and Celebration such as eating watermelon on the grass together.

MAY MINUTES

The Caucus was held in Room 307 of the Hetzel Union Building, Penn State Campus, State College. Twenty persons were present.

The meeting was called to order by Co-Chair, Joe Burns.

Human Rights Day Flyers were distributed by David Leas, and extra copies were made available for statewide coverage.

An agenda was culled from the members present and included interest in SB83, SB531, the Third World Committee, and nominations for a new Secretary. (Sam is resigning effective with the June Caucus--NO EXTENSION.)

Reading of the minutes of the previous Caucus by Sam was approved as read.

The Treasurer was absent and the April balance of 159.24 was accepted and approved.

Communications and Legislative Committee Reports

A group, the Coalition for Human Rights in Pennsylvania, has been formed to coordinate Human Rights Day and to endorse the passage of pro-civil-liberties legislation (inclusive of gay rights) in Pennsylvania. All interested groups such as local N. O. W. chapters, A.G.L.U. locals, and others are enjoined to send endorsements of gay rights (SB531) to the following address: Mr. Barry Kohn, Coordinator of the Coalition, 1740 Addison Street, Philadelphia, Pa. 19146.

Human Rights Day, set for May 24th and beginning at 9:00 A.M. will be headquartered at the Friends Meeting House, 6th and Herr Streets, Harrisburg. Workshops will be held at various locations the weekend before to train persons in lobbying technique. There will be no picketing or demonstration planned beforehand. A list of our Representatives and Senators will be on hand with information on their views re: gay legislation to assist in approaching them. Legislative sessions begin at 1:00 P.M. so everyone is urged to see their representatives in the early morning, before they leave for lunch. If not, accost them in the Cafeteria.

Youth Committee Report

The committee is working closely with M.C.C., Harrisburg, and met last on 5-8-77. A motion was made to release the number and name of the P.R.G.C. Checking Account (Bank of Deposit) to World's Finest Chocolate, Inc., 2521 W 48th Street, Chicago, Ill. 60632 for legalities associated with the purchase of candy for the Youth Committee. Properties on Market Street, Harrisburg which are available for a Gay Youth Community Center must be 90% paid down upon signing the papers by M.C.C. Since the Church cannot own property outright (before being chartered in Pennsylvania), a private owner must sign in the name of M.C.C. Property formerly owned by the Diocese of Greater Harrisburg is being considered, and 6,500 Dollars is needed for down-payment by 5-31-77. It is in Center city, in a commercial zone. Are there any wealthy gay or straight philanthropists within reach of this newsletter willing to

underwrite the cost?

SB 83

Our sincere apologies to Craig Lewis whom we erroneously reported as supporting SB 83. He voted against it. A letter of contrition has been posted. The bill is currently being held in the Judiciary Committee of the House, having passed the Senate. 12 member support in the committee is needed to make it a viable issue and at present such interest is not present. The Chairperson of this committee, Representative Norman Berson, feels that the bill is a 'hot potato' politically and is content to let it die in this session. If the bill is not out of committee during this session it will have to be re-submitted under another number during the next session. (1978)

Tony Silvestre suggested that letters of support be sent to Lewis Hill for his adept handling of pro-gay legislation in his capacity as Chairperson of the Senate Committee on SB 83. The committee is evenly split over interpretation of the bill. It is a non-partisan issue.

Certain adverse publicity by the press in regards to SB 531 (decriminalization of sodomy and repeal) because of some senatorial statements that misrepresentation was used by gay groups has been seen as a form of political football. This is a fact of life in the political arena and should not daunt our efforts. That is the hoped-for-effect and we gays should not stoop to such easy defeat.

Nomination for Secretary
No one accepted the nomination at the Caucus and we are currently without a candidate. Nominations will remain open until the vacancy can be filled by election.

Budgets of Committees

They are due with the treasurers beginning with the May meeting. The costs of pamphlets for Human Rights Day have been covered by an anonymous donor, but, mailing costs remain. A motion that "50.00 dollars be given to the Human Rights Day Committee by P.R.G.C. to cover the costs of mailing flyers." It was seconded and carried. HOPS can donate the needed envelopes.

Tony said that AFSGME, APSCUF, PSEA, and other state unions would appreciate letters from union members supporting the inclusion of "sexual and affectional" preferences" clauses in their bargaining contracts.

Anti-abortion legislation

Mixed reaction by some of the membership. It is a moral issue and potentially explosive, as is gay rights. A motion "resolved that the Caucus oppose HB 71 (right to life bill). Seconded and carried. It should be noted that the membership was male, only two women present. Further discussion is encouraged by both the pros and cons of the issue. It is hoped that many more women will feel free to speak on this subject.

Next meeting is June 4th in Middletown at Arnold Hutchings.

3rd World Committee

Need is not seen since all persons have to make a moral choice of what human rights and dignity are, and following of our conscience makes its existence unnecessary. Our attitudes, we hope, leave room to meet the needs of all peoples. We could move forward into consciousness raising sessions by inviting outside speakers of other civil rights movements to our caucuses.

After an intelligent and sensitive speech by Dale Masters on it it is like to be a young lesbian and an equally beautiful speech by a member from Williamsport on the feelings of a male diabetic, we all gained a deeper understanding of our brothers and sisters. The stigma and oppression that we all face must be explored and resolved toward a furtherance of our collective development.

Motion for adjournment received and seconded. Adjourned at 4:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

S. Keith Edmiston,
Caucus Secretary

Beginning with the next newsletter, we will be making some significant changes in it. Suggestion and criticisms are welcome.