

# **LGBT History Project of the LGBT Center of Central PA**

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**Title:** *PA Rural Gay Caucus Report*

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**Location:** LGBT-001 Joseph W. Burns Collection

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THE PENNSYLVANIA RURAL GAY CAUCUS

P. O. Box 1505

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17105

THE MEETING LOCATION HAS BEEN CHANGED!!!

Please note, the address of the meeting place of the Pa. Rural Gay Caucus meeting has been changed to THIS IS IT, 801 Walnut Street, Reading, Pa. This address is different from any previously announced address. The meeting will be held on Saturday, April 2nd at 1:00 P.M. The reason for the changes are that the Church of the Brethren we had hoped to obtain turned down our application for having meetings there- they have had the issue since last time the Caucus was in Reading, and failed to act on it until the 15th of March- and the apartment where we met last time is being vacated by its occupants on March 25th. Therefore, we had hastily to arrange the meeting at the bar. They accepted immediately. We must, however, finish our business by 4:00 O'clock in order for them to set up for opening to their regular business at 5:00. Following the Caucus, you are invited to spend an evening in the country with Jerry and Bill at a quaint and relatively primitive 200 year old farmhouse. There is a fireplace to toast your buns by. And food will be served at this time. If you want to bring your bed roll and stay the night. Always when we get together there there is singing to the accompaniment of an autoharp. And songsheets are provided. The last time, in fact, there was an uproariously good square dance started. And, if anyone else plays anything, you are invited to bring it along to share in the musical duties.

REPEAL HAS BEEN INTRODUCED, AND A HUMAN RIGHTS DAY IS PLANNED FOR APRIL 19th!

The bill to repeal the "voluntary Deviate Sexual Intercourse Statute" was bee introduced on March 21st sponsored by Senators Lewis (D, Bucks & Phila.), McKinney (Delaware & Phila.), Howard (R, Bucks), Gurzenda (D, Carbon & Schuylkill), Hankins (D, Phila.), Arlene (D, Phila.), Gianfrani (D, Phila.), Reibman (D, Northampton). Four Senators who had originally signed as sponsors removed their names before the bill was introduced. These were Senators Fleming, Jubelirer, Hager, and Kessinger. Most of you are probably familiar with the controversy which surrounded the signing up. The truth is that not one Senator was deceived by the nature of the Bill, nor did one person misrepresent themselves in obtaining signatures on the Bill. Whatever brand of politics was being played by these men in issuing their statements, they have damaged the cause severely by challenging the credibility of our representatives, by tipping those who oppose repeal at the very earliest stages that repeal was planned, and by nearly making the issue a political football.

The strategy for passage, as seen by the Caucus, is quick passage in the Senate supported by a first lobby event aimed specifically at the Senate (to be called Human Rights Day), and a longer haul in the House supported by a second lobby event directed at the House and a monumental letter writing campaign in which the Caucus fulfills an old pledge to have fifty-thousand letters written favoring repeal. The House is far less easy to influence with the gross number of representatives and more diffuse power structure.

If you have the time, we ask that you drop a line thanking the above listed sponsors for their support to the Senate Post Office, Main Capitol Building, Harrisburg, Pa. 17120. They need all the support they can get in order to remain firm in their commitment.

The bill has been referred to the Judiciary Committee under the Chair of Senator Louis Hill, who inexplicably does not appear as a sponsor of the Bill. You will be informed of the membership of this Committee and asked to write the members as soon as we know who they are. The fight is all ahead of us, and will tax the endurance of all of us to see this through to completion.

Please cooperate!

Human Rights Day has become largely the responsibility of the Rural Caucus. We have very little time to accomplish a big task. While work is progressing swiftly, we are pushed hard to bring it off. Mostly, we are asking your participation, and that you recruit others who are willing to take the time to lobby with us. More hands are always welcome. We get more done and a better job of it.

Training sessions for lobbyists will be held on the weekend before Human Rights Day. Lobbyists will come to a central headquarters in Harrisburg on the 19th for final instructions and to pick up materials to help in their work. A press conference will be held during the day. And we are going to try to set up appointments with legislators to see their constituents or representatives where there are no constituents.

If you are planning to partake in the lobbying effort, PLEASE send your name, address and telephone number to Sam Deetz, 549 West Chestnut Street, Lancaster, Pa. 17603.

#### SENATE BILL 33

This bill has received its second reading in the Senate and minor revisions have been made which do affect to force of the bill. The only significant change was that "or inclined to" was removed from the definition of homosexual. Apparently the effort to have the bill taken into the Appropriations Committee for hearings on the costs has failed. It needs only the third reading for passage in the Senate. We will, of course, fight again in the House.

#### Allentown Human Relations Ordinance

The proposal to have sexual orientation and/or preference added to the Human Relations Ordinance is apparently doomed to failure. The clause has not been added in the recommendations to Council. Therefore, the issue will have to be raised when Council considers the whole amendment on April 6th. Joe Burns and Dixie White, V.P. of Lehigh Valley NCC, spent Sunday Evening, March 27th talking with two Councilpersons about the issue. Neither would support the issue now and do not see the possibility of it being taken up by Council at this time. The head of the Human Relations Commission has promised to rewrite the entire ordinance and include the sexual orientation clause in the rewrite. The Councilpersons believe that passage will stand a better chance if included in the whole, rather than brought separately before the Council.

Dixie and Joe, at least, will address Council on behalf of the gay rights amendment. Le-Hi-Ho has not been as active in the effort as it could have been. But it is expected that they will become more involved and committed before the 6th.

#### SOME DATES FOR RURAL GAYS

EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEETING- 11:00, April 2nd at 616 Locust Street, Reading, Pa.

RURAL CAUCUS- 1:00, April 2nd at THIS IS IT, 801 Walnut Street, Reading.

DIGNITY, CENTRAL PA. will be sponsoring a Passover meal in combination with MCC, Harrisburg and a disco dance to follow at 7:30, April 2nd, in the Friends Meeting House in Harrisburg, 6th and Herr Streets.

GAY WATCHBOARD of HARRISBURG- 7:30, April 3rd. They have changed their schedule to have only one meeting a month. Call (717) 234-0528 if interested.

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING- 1:30, April 9th at 1717 North Second Street Harrisburg, Pa.

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY- LOBBY YOUR LEGISLATORS IN HARRISBURG on APRIL 19th.

G. G. S., READING-general meeting at 6:00, April 17th, at 143 N. 10th Street

LE-HI-HO- general meeting at 2:00 on April 24th at the Unitarian Church of the Lehigh Valley, Lechauweki Avenue on the Fountain Hill Section of Bethlehem.

MCC- any Sunday at 8:00 P.M., 1001 N. Spring Street, K&K Apartment I-2, Middletown, Pa.

An edited account of the Penna. Rural Gay

Caucus minutes

The regular meeting of the P.R.G.C. was held at 3002 Marietta Ave., Lancaster, Pa. on 3/5/77. It was called to order by co-chair, Joe Burns at 1:45 p.m. An agenda culled from those present included (1) more on Senate Bill # 83 (2) concern for Central Pa. Gay Youth (3) the Florida Citrus issue. This was the largest attendance ever at a Caucus as there were over thirty persons present at one time or another. Mary Nancarrow arrived shortly after the agenda was taken. She gave a report on the work of the Education Committee.

The Ed. Comm. did not meet in the past month due to problems in the Dep't. of Ed. and the general inability of the members to attend. The pamphlet that we have worked on so hard has been restricted to usage by internal personnel. It was reported that Bob Hendershot, the acting Sec. of Ed. would like to see the Department take a more active role in gay rights.

Sam Deetz, chair of the Legislative Comm. said that Sen. Lewis of Philadelphia has agreed to be the main sponsor of the sodomy repeal and criminal code revision bill. People who wish to voice support for this bill may call the Gov.'s Action Line or a special number in Barry Kohn's office- 237-7351 (215). It would also be a good idea for everyone to contact thier own representatives on this issue and get thier support. Sam also suggested working with local chapters of A.F.S.C.M.E. to add the 'sexual and affectional preference' clause to union contracts.

Bob Woods, chair of the Communication Comm., reported on the progress made on a letter asking for support of Lobby Day. He also outlined the operation of the telephone tree which some new members asked about. The telephone tree (1) gathers group consensus in emergency situations (2) disperses information from the co-chairpersons to the membership between regular meetings and alerts non-voting members to inflammatory situations (3) facilitates the spread of legislative and media alerts.

Sue Butler, convener of the Youth Comm., gave the following report. The purpose of the committee is to help and advise on complaints of discrimination recieved from high school and college youth. Dale Masters stated that an autnomouse group has formed called Gay Youth of Central Penna., and that she was its acting head.

The Health Concerns Comm. report was given in the absense of the convener, Ray Stickles, by the chair. The 1976 report of Gay Concerns in Health Delivery Systems is now available. Four persons from gay organizations are now on the committee for the state.

Mary Nancarrow read the letter from Senator McKinney supporting criminal code revision and sodomy repeal. He is also not supportive of S. B. #83.

Sam Deetz-- motion

'That the Rural Caucus support the demonstration on 3/14/77 in Harrisburg'

'That the Rural Caucus Banner be carried in the parade to the front of the Capitol Building by members of the Caucus.'

The two motions were seconded and unanimously affirmed. Sam then presented another motion--

(minutes cont')

'That the Rural Caucus hold a press conference on 3/10/77 concerning Senate Bill #83.'

It was also seconded and passed unanimously.

Arnold Hutchings of the Harrisburg area M.C.C. read a letter he wrote to the Gov. and the reply he received from the office of the Governor. The reply suggested that members of Pa.'s Gay community meet with their representatives before a vote is taken on S.B. #83. Arnold also wrote a letter to Sen. Nolan, the prime sponsor of S.B. #83, decrying his inhumanity and poor concern for the economic fate of an estimated 10% of his constituency. Nolan's answer was predictable. He feels that employment of gays is morally wrong.

Further discussion was given to gay youth. Jonathan Smith-Cousins proposed a motion that "The Youth Committee of the Rural Gay Caucus sponsor an event to help establish a Gay Youth Center in Central Pa. (Harrisburg area) for educational and social reasons". After some discussion of direct vs. indirect involvement of other members of the Caucus, the motion was seconded and affirmed. There were two abstentions. This was followed by a recess at 4:00 p.m. for refreshments.

The meeting was reconvened at 4:30 p.m.

Martin Rock gave an updated version of his employment situation and a motion was received from the membership "That the co-chairpersons of the Caucus write a letter to his (Martin's) employers supporting him in his fight for continuing employment". It was immediately seconded and unanimously accepted.

Mary Nancarrow attacked the Health Concerns Committee issue. The committee has already gone past the time for a permanent convener to be selected. It was brought out that the Dept. Of Health of Penna. and the Dept. of Justice have cases on file of discriminations against Gays in health delivery systems. They include restrictions on family visitation which do not apply to gay couples. Lovers are considered outsiders by the health professionals, rather than close family members. VD Clinics often discriminate and dehumanize gay clients. A poll of those persons present showed that a lot of interest existed in keeping the Health Committee viable. A motion was received to "Table discussion of the Health Concerns Committee until next month", and those persons who expressed a desire in working on that committee will be contacted by a chair-selected convener.

Joe Burns reported that Allentown has a Human Relations Bill pending before town council. It does not include a clause covering Gay Rights. A representative from NOW (Nat'l Organization of Women) has suggested to the council that a gay non-discrimination clause be inserted. The Bill will be voted on within two or three weeks. It would be helpful to have a study at hand to show the council whether gay discrimination in areas of employment and housing exists in the Allentown area. A male and female volunteer is needed to answer classified notices in the newspapers to see if suspected gays can obtain employment and if single same-sex couples can rent housing.

A member from the Harrisburg area suggested contacting Jerry McEntee, A.F.S.C.M.E. Pres., in Pa. re: discrimination against gays in state employment. The Council on Sexual Minorities has already done this and the A.F.S.C.M.E. is not supportive of S.B. #83-type legislation. They have suggested that Local Union Chapters insert a "Sexual of affectional preference" clause into their bargaining contracts to offset any anti-gay administrative action.

(minutes cont'd)

Sam Deetz, after passing around a bag of mutilated oranges, brought up the Florida Citrus Issue. A motion was received "That the Penna Rural Gay Caucus send a letter to the Dade Co. Coalition for the Humanistic Rights of Gays supporting their stand against Anita, et al, and another to the Florida Citrus Growers Association opposing the stand they have taken for Anita". The Dade County Coalition for the Humanistic Rights of Gays, Box 33414, Miami, Fla., 33133 is in direct opposition to the Citrus Growers and Anita. The motion was seconded and accepted in the affirmative by unanimous consent.

Additional action and announcements:

Shippensburg State College has passed a non-discriminatory clause. It was supported by the Commonwealth Assoc. of Students and passed by the Students Senate.

The hat was passed to help subsidize the cost of our monthly newsletter and netted \$23.00.

Our treasury now has a total of \$137.05.

A petition was circulated protesting the passage of or even the existence of S.B. #83. It was signed by everyone present.

Jonathan suggested the creation of a Third World Committee to institute outreach to Negro, Chicano, and Native American Gays in Penna. Due to time considerations, further discussion was tabled until next meeting.

The July meeting will be on 7/9/77 at Williamsport. The address is 659 Beeber St.

The meeting was closed by a motion for adjournment.

Respectfully submitted,

Sam Edmiston, Sec.

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COMMITTEE NOTES

Members are again reminded that membership on all the Committees of the Caucus is open to any person whether or not they are members of the Caucus. One need only to participate.

Membership is especially invited for the newly formed Health Concerns Committee, being convened by Linda Salpino of Williamsport. We have received a letter from the former convenor, Ray, that he cannot, regrettably continue with Health Concerns at present.

Also, Johnathan Smith-Cousins has been elected to co-chair the Youth Committee of the Caucus, as Sue Butler has indicated that she did not feel she could carry the whole responsibility for the Committee.

The Legislative Committee remains short handed for the enormous work load it has to carry on Repeal. While realizing that everyone wishes to become involved "politically", this aspect of our work as it is now may well be the most important of our activities.