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Title: Governor's Council for Sexual Minorities Meeting Minutes

Date: May 4, 1977

Location: LGBT-001 Joseph W. Burns Collection

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MINUTES OF
PENNSYLVANIA COUNCIL FOR SEXUAL MINORITIES

May 4, 1977

Absent: Judy Block, Joseph Bongiovanni, Jeanne Boydston, Sam Deetz, Paul Gehris, Dianne Gigler, Barbara Gittings, David March, Karen Martin, Lyman Ogilby, Bob Rains, Dan Sawyer, Mark Segal and Lisa White

1. Program: Don Borbe - "Inclusive Ministries-Disabled Gays, Alcoholic Gays and Older Gays"

Reverend Don Borbe, Pastor of the Metropolitan Community Church of Philadelphia, described the problems and needs of disabled, alcoholic and older gays. Don discussed employment problems arising from discrimination and from indifference. Very often gay groups use space or rent facilities without considering the needs of handicapped gays. A lack of elevators or toilet facilities will almost always work to exclude disabled people.

At present, disabled people are organizing. Groups such as Disabled in Action and individuals have begun to draw attention to the needs of handicapped persons. Gloria Sorenson and others are fighting to have alcoholism programs recognize the needs of gays. Borbe also suggested that gay organizations recognize the needs of alcoholic gays and support their efforts.

Don described the fine efforts of MCC, Philadelphia in addressing the problems of disabled gays and had some suggestions for our Council:

- a) A Task Force on Disabled Gays be appointed by this Council;
- b) We request that agencies established for the handicapped deal with the needs of disabled gays;

- c) Work with organized disabled to deal with gay related issues;
- d) Demonstrate positive interest in the needs of the handicapped by sponsoring workshops and meetings; and
- c) Publish our reports in Braille, send gay bibliographies to institutions for the disabled and consider the needs of the disabled in scheduling facilities and planning for signers at public speaking events.

Discussion

Council members discussed the issues raised by Reverend Borbe and were in agreement that serious problems existed and that they were being ignored by the gay movement and certainly by state government.

It was decided that Tony would send out a press release announcing a meeting between himself and disabled gays in Philadelphia. The goal of the meeting will be to discuss in detail how the Council could begin to seriously deal with the problems of handicapped gays. All Council members are invited to this meeting. Please be in touch with Tony.

2. Announcements

- a) Travel vouchers for Council meetings before June 30 should be submitted before that date. A new fiscal year begins on July 1st. If vouchers are late, payment will be delayed and perhaps withheld.
- b) Reaction to our Annual Report has been favorable. People who work within bureaucracies seem to appreciate it most of all.
- c) Janet Cooper is cooking up plots for her book and sponge cakes and other desserts for the Railroad House, a Marietta eating place with a gourmet reputation. With Barry and Janet, the Council may be able to meet some financial needs with a Bake Sale.
- d) Registration for the International Women's Year meeting in Pittsburgh on June 24 is open. Forms can be obtained from Marie Keeney, Pennsylvania Commission

For Women, 512 Finance Building, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania or call 717-787-3821.

- e) Madeline O'Hair will be debating the issue of Gay Religion at an MCC panel on May 9, at 8:30 p.m., Gay Community Center, 326 Kater Street.
- f) Ray Roedell, a librarian from Norristown, Pa., has agreed to serve as archivist for the Council.

3. Employment Committee Report

Christ Zervanos, Director of Labor Relations for the Commonwealth, has told the Council that the Commonwealth will take the initiative in union negotiation. The following is an update.

AFSCME - has not committed themselves to include protective language. Negotiations begin in a year.

FOSCEP - has sexual and affectional orientation in their contract.

PSSU - has sexual and affectional orientation in their contract.

RETAIL CLERKS - are in negotiation. Walter is exploring.

MENTAL HEALTH PHYSICIANS - are in negotiations. Tony is in touch.

PSEA - Tony will be meeting with teachers on June 1st.

Harry has been working to have the issue of gay rights brought up at the AFL-CIO convention in Philadelphia next month. PFT and PSSU may work to have the issue on the agenda.

4. Legislation Committee Report

Senate Bill 83 has passed the Senate by a vote of 32-12. This lopsided vote does not necessarily reflect Senate sentiment. A vote to send the bill back to committee and thus delay or end hopes of passage failed by one vote, 23-22. This vote made it clear to Senators that passage was imminent. Some who opposed

the bill saw little purpose in voting against it, since it would obviously pass and so the lopsided final vote. It should be noted that the Nolan, anti-Gay bill of last year was only opposed by two Senators. We have ten more this year.

Senate Bill 83 is presently in the House Judiciary Committee chaired by Representative Berson, a member of our Council. Barry advises us to watch this bill carefully since it could be reported out if twelve committee members petition for it.

Senator Craig Lewis, a vocal opponent of 83 and the chief sponsor of sodomy repeal is receiving much mail in opposition to his position. Barry urges all Council members to write to Senator Lewis expressing support, having our organization send him supportive letters and having friends and associates also write or call. Mail can be sent to Senator Craig Lewis, General Assembly of Pennsylvania, Main Capitol Building, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120.

Senate Bill 531, sodomy repeal - The bill is in the Senate Judiciary Committee chaired by Senator Hill. We expect that the bill will be voted on in the Committee in late May or early June. Barry and Ken have sent memoes out on the tactics needed in support of 531. If you need information contact either of them.

Coalition of Human Rights in Pennsylvania is forming in Pennsylvania. It is a group composed of prominent Pennsylvanians who support repeal of sodomy. Spencer Coxe, Kay Whitlock, and Walter Lear are some of the sponsors of the group. The groups will send letters to over 500 organizations in Pennsylvania, asking for support of 531, as well as putting out a booklet on support of the bill for the legislators. Council members are asked to seek out potential sponsors for the group, as soon as possible.

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY - MAY 24 in HARRISBURG. A day for lobbying and educating legislators on the need for S.B. 531. Please make every effort to attend and spread the word among your friends and political supporters.

Harry reports that Fitzpatrick, District Attorney candidate in Philadelphia, has promised to send a letter of support for S.B. 531. He also promised to raise the issue at the state conference of District Attorneys of which he is chair of the Legislation Committee.

5. Reorganization of Committees

- a) It was decided to table the discussion of dissolving the Community Relations and Human Relations Committees. The general feeling of Council was that certain functions of both committees should be carried out and assigned to specific people before there be any dissolution. Of special concern were the issues of arranging training sessions for the Human Relations Commission, increasing communications with Gay groups in the Commonwealth in a consistent and organized way.
- b) The Council unanimously agreed to establish a speaker's bureau. The responsibilities of the bureau would include organizing and training speakers to run sensitizing sessions for governmental bodies. Where possible, agencies will be requested to offer stipends to the speakers. Care will be taken to avoid infringing on the activities of speaker's bureaus of current gay groups. Dr. Kenneth George was appointed to convene the bureau.
- c) It was decided to table the discussion of merging the State Police, Correction and LCB Committees. The Correction Committee cannot function until a Council member agrees to attend the committee meetings. Anyone interested, please be in touch with the chair.

6. Attendance

The issue of staffing committees lead to a discussion of low attendance and a drop off of interest among certain Council members. Members expressed serious concern about the future functioning of the Council without increased participation and about the tying up of travel funds by those who do not attend.

Among the reasons suggested for low attendance were job pressures, overcommitment, being burned out, travel problems and agency pressures for certain state workers.

It was decided that all sexual minority members who have not attended the last two meetings be contacted by the chair and continued membership in the Council be discussed. State agency representatives who have not attended the last two meetings also be contacted. If necessary, there should be a follow-up with the agency head or the Governor's Office. The strong consensus of the Council was that resources are too

scarce and work too great for lack of interest in the Council to continue.

7. Nominations for Steering Committee

Dolly Shuster who has been active in the Council since its beginnings, who served on the Governor's Task Force, and who served as a member of the Steering Committee, is leaving the Human Relations Commission and moving to the Department of Health. Since she is a state representative, she can no longer serve on the Council. Tony thanked Dolly for her active and consistent support of all Council activities. He expressed the sentiments of all Council members in wishing Dolly success in her new job and in hoping that once settled in she might find a way to renew her ties with us.

The following persons have been nominated to the Steering Committee:

Judy Block
Marilyn Hewitt

Walter Lear
Sam Deetz

Council members are urged to nominate others or to self-nominate by phone or letter to Tony. Nominations will be closed on May 21st. Ballots will be sent out on that day and the deadline for return will be June 3rd.

8. Jonathan Smith-Cousins announced that he is resigning from the Council

He expressed frustration over the racism towards black males from gay organizations. He expressed the fear that discrimination against black gays will result in a permanent split within the gay movement.

9. Future programs were discussed

Barbara Ruth spoke of a need for a program on S&M because of widespread ignorance and embarrassment over the issue within the gay community. She also read a letter from Dennis Rubini arguing that S&M is not simply a sexual technique but a life style, deserving of our attention. It was decided that the Special Minority Concerns Task Force will formally present a series of questions to the Council on its policy in the area.

10. Barbara Ruth has published a book of poems .

"From the Belly of the Beast", a Roaz Press Publication. Copies may be obtained from Barbara or at Alexandria Bookstore and Giovanni's Room for \$4.00.

11. Patrick Bryant was appointed to the Finance Committee by unanimous vote.

The meeting adjourned at 4:15.