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The Pennsylvania Rural Gay Caucus

P. O. Box 182

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The January Meeting of the Pennsylvania Rural Gay Caucus will convene on Saturday, January 8, 1977, at 1:00P.M., in the Hertz Union Building²¹⁷ on the main campus of PennState University, at State College, Pennsylvania. Among the issues to be taken up is the tremendously important one of repealing the laws relating to voluntary deviate sexual intercourse (better known as the "sodomy statutes.") Sam Deetz, convener of the Legislative Committee, will again be leading the efforts for a Gay Lobby Day. A social Hour will follow the meeting.

DECEMBER MINUTES

The December 4th meeting of the Rural Caucus was held at the beautiful old Railroad House in Marietta, Pennsylvania. The meeting was called to order at 3:00 P.M. by chairpersons Mary Nancarrow and Joe Burns, after a quorum, as required by the constitution had finally arrived.

It was regretfully announced that Chris Poorman would not be able to continue as Secretary for reasons of Personal difficulties. Nominations were held immediately for elections to the office of Secretary to be conducted at State College. Sam Edmiston is at present the only nominee.

The Co-people were given permission to write a letter approving the opening of a bank account for the Rural Caucus to Jan Sweat (treasurer).

It was decided that a permanent mailing address would be established in Harrisburg.

Committee reports were given by their respective chairpersons or spokespersons. (See Below for Committee Reports.)

It was announced that the Pennsylvania Department of Health has requested a person from the Caucus to work with an in-house task force on gayness, within the department. Expenses will be paid by the department for that position. Persons interested in the position are requested to send a resume to Dr. Walter Lear in care of the Governor's Council.

During the discussion of the request, To Kerrigan moved that "we convene a caucus committee for Health Concerns." The motion passed, and Ray Stickle was appointed convener of that committee.

The was discussion of the need for a archivist for the Caucus . Dave Leas moved that "the chair appoint a record keeper for for the caucus Temporarily." pending further discussion of whether the position should be added to the by-laws. Sam Edmiston has been appointed to fill the temporary position.

The Caucus was moved by an account of a Gay Alcoholics Anonymous group meeting at the Friend's Meeting House in Harrisburg being invaded by a militant group of straights. The invaders warned that if the group at the same location, the building would be vandalized. Action by the Caucus on this matter includes the following measures:

1. letters to both the Gay AA group and the Friends Meeting House voicing our support and suggesting that the AA group hold another meeting at the same location. Also included in the Letter to the AA group was an offer to patrol the meeting area during the meeting hours, and with permission of the original people involved, to take the matter to the Harrisburg Police.

2. Contact with the Governor's Council on the matter.

3. A letter to the National General Service Board of AA outlining the problem and acur actions. (A reply has been recieved from the National Service Board by telephone, saying that the are contacting local AA officials and suggesting a conference in Harrisburg to confront the problem.- J.B.)

DI Discussion then followed on ways to increase participation in the Caucus. Some of the Suggestion made were as follows:

1. Placing meeting dates and locations in both the gay and straight press.
2. Holding socials after general meetings.
3. Making a concerted effort to attract new members
4. Contacting members who have not been attending meetings recently.

The next meeting of the Rural Caucus was announced for Room 217, Hetzel Union Building (HUB) in State College, January *th at 1:00 P. M.
The meeting adjoured at 5:20 P. M.

Respectfully submitted by

Dave Leas
Temporary Acting Secretary

N.B. Many thanks to Marlin McConnel, proprietor of the Railroad House., for opening his establishment for our meeting.

Legislative Committee Report

Sam Deetz, convenor of the Legislative Committee of the Rural Caucus, gave his committee's report. Sam announced that a joint meeting of the legislative committees of the Rural Caucus and of the Governor's Council for Sexual Minorities was held on November 20th in Lancaster, and that these committees will continue to meet jointly until further notice. We were reminded that positions on both committees are open, and that especially now, very much work can be done by very many people toward repeal of the "sodomy statutes". Membership on the Caucus Committee is open to any person whether or not they are members of the Caucus merely by attending the meetings of the Committee or notifying Sam that you wish to take an active part, and on the Committee for the Governor's Council by submitting a resume to Tony Silvestre, Chairperson; Pennsylvania Council for Sexual Minorities, 328 Main Capitol Building; Harrisburg, Pa. 17120. (Resumes are also being accepted for new appointments to the Governor's Council itself. Submit to the same. -J.B.)

The first priority of the legislative committees in the future will be the repeal of the Voluntary Deviate Sexual Intercourse Statutes. Barry Kohn, Deputy Attorney General of Pennsylvania and head of the Community Advocate Office in Philadelphia, has drafted a new bill which is more suitable to acheive repeal than had been previous drafts. Actually the bill was written in cooperation with the District Attorney's Office of Philadelphia, and will amend several sections of the Pennsylvania Crimes Code to meet the needs of both the Governor's Council and the District Attorney's Office. These include the following:

1. a section which will increase the statute of limitations for rape from its ive years, making it consistent with other serious crimes.
2. a redraft of definitions making a distinction between Sexual Intercourse and Sodomy (presently called Deviate Sexual Intercourse) which is necessary because of overlapping definitions under the present law.
3. changing the name of the crime "Involuntary Deviate Sexual Intercourse to "Forcible Sodomy". The purpose of this change is to move away from the idea that a particular type of sexual intercourse is deviant.
4. Repeal of the Voluntary Deviate Sexual Intercourse, by ommission from the Code.
5. Changing the location of the statute relating to the Corruption of Minors from the section on Sexual Offenses to the Minor's section of the Crimes Code. This is necessary because prior to 1973 there had been two sections where Corruption of Minors was present in the Crimes code. In 1973, the legislature repealed the wrong section, leaving the corruption of Minors only in the Sexual Offenses section. The District Attorney's Office wants Corruption of minors under the Minors' section rather than under sexual offenses. Also, in making the revision, they want the age lowered from 17 to 15 for the minor that can be corrupted.

For more information on the above, please call Barry Kohn, Deputy Attorney General, (215) 238-7351

Monies to support the Effort to Repeal these laws is being supplied by a group of closeted gays in Philadelphia who have have fromed the 1891 Foundation specifically for the purpose of funding the effort. A budget has been prepared by the Legislative Committee of the Governor's Council which includes a paid position as coordinator of the effort. The salary would not exceed more than an 8% increase over a slary previously paid to the person selected. This position is open and anyone interested in applying for it should submit a resume to Ken Burke, Chairperson of the Legislative Committee of the Governor's Council for sexual minorities (Address above). The budget also includes allocations for traveling expsenses, telephone, lodging, and postage for various persons involved with repeal.

The state will be divided into eight areas with a person designated to coordinate the effort in each area. Ken Burke is responsible for the area of Lehigh, Northampton, Luzerne, Lackawanna, and five other Northeastern Counties; Sam Deetz is responsible for Lancaster, York, Lebanon, Cumberland, Dauphin, and five other south-central counties; Joe Burns is responsible for Berks, Schukill, and Carbon Counties; a coordinator is needed for Bucks, Montgomery, Delaware, and Chester counties; Dan Maneval for a number of counties in and a cound Williamsport represented by Senators Hager and Kury. These persons are busy forming committees to aid repeal in these areas. If you are willing to help them, please contact them as soon as possible.

There will be two Gay Lobby day efforts made for repeal, one directed at the Senate, and another at the House of Representatives. The bill will be introduced first in the Senate.

Sam asked for support of the Caucus for the repeal effort as a first priority. It was given unanimously. The Co-Chairpeople were given permission to invite Barry Kohn to address the next meeting of the Caucus, at Sam Deetz' request.

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

Joe Burns announced that Bob Woods had been elected Chairperson of the Committee at their last meeting. It was announced that the plan for the telephone tree had been completed by the committee and that they were ready to begin putting the plan into operation. They are projected several uses of the telephone tree, (a) to obtain a consus of Rural Caucus members on emergency matters and (b) as an alert system for general use in alerting gays in the general population of the state, i.e. a media alert, or a legislative alert. (see insert)

Since the question was raised of what it meant to obtain consensus (as required by the by-laws, Sam Deetz moved that "the definition of voting members shall be applicable to the telephone tree for obtaining a consensus. The motion passed.

(Please note: some use was made of the telphone tree in the past month when an emergency arose with a members employment. We beleive his job has been saved, thanks in part to telephoning within the Caucus, and thanks to the many persons who responded to his needs with telephone calls and letters to his employer. Come to the meeting to hear the fascinating story of how his employment was first threatened, then saved.-J.B.)

EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT

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Mary Nancarrow gave the report of the Education Committee. Mary has been reelected Chairperson of the committee, but is seeking to have a co-chairperson share the responsibilities for the committee, as her position as Co-chairperson of the Caucus and other duties also demand time and effort. Mary announced that the Book Fund is being implemented. The Committee is using the funds to buy books on gayness and to distribute these books to libraries in scools and colleges within the Caucus area. The fund is dedicated in the memery of Kenneth Myers, the Lebanon High School Student who committed suicide. The Committee also announced its plan to send the letter written by Ruth Steck, former Co-Chair of the Caucus, to the principal of Lebanon High School to all the high schools in the state. This will be done in the near future.

Mary also stated that the committee will soon meet with the Commissioners of Education of the Pennsylvania Department of Education, though at this point they are still getting the runaround from these people. Mary and Dave Leas spoke to the "in service" staff members of the Executive Academy within the Department of Education. This is the beginning of meetings which will eventually "sensitize" the entire staff of P. D. E., when the rest of the commissioners can be brought to allow it. Another meeting with the Academy was scheduled for December. Persons who are interested in helping to meet with the staff of P.D.E., please contact Mary. We expect the schedule of meetings to get hectic as time and the Commissioner's attitudes progress.

Since there is space, I will take it to report some of the doings within the Caucus area. I have taken the opportunity, since being elected as Co-Chair of the Caucus, to visit some of the groups in which I do not otherwise participate. Both Mary and myself would like to get around to visiting all the Rural groups in an unofficial capacity, simply to know how they are doing, and to keep them posted on some of the more important aspects of Caucus Activity. It would be most helpful if the persons responsible would see to it that their newsletters are sent to the Caucus, and/or that we are informed of when and where regular meetings are taking place. Also, this newsletter has always intended to include a schedule of events within the Caucus area, but no one has ever bothered to inform us of projected activities. It would also be helpful if we knew the addresses of the organizations, and the addresses and telephone numbers of the officers, board, or Council members governing the organization. Such information, of course, is treated as confidential.

Le-Hi-Ho, the oldest established organization within the Caucus area, is still perhaps the strongest and most successful. Governed by a Board, chaired by Ken Burke, and consisting of six other persons, they regularly draw approximately thirty persons for their monthly meetings, held on the third Sunday of each month at the Unitarian Church of the Lehigh Valley. In the recent past, they presented Frank Kameny to the Valley, Mark Segal on another occasion, and often schedule other speakers for their meetings. They have built up a very fine library over the years, and circulate books on gayness with other public libraries in the area on a regular basis. Another main activity is presenting programs to schools and colleges in their area, and occasionally going on local television. Most of these invitations are repeats after their initial visits. Le-Hi-Ho has officially withdrawn support from the Caucus. The mailing address is Box 1003, Moravian Station, Bethlehem, Pa. 18018.

NEPGA (Northeastern Pa. Gay Alliance) in Wilkesbarre, once caput, has come back as a very strong organization. We attended their Christmas party, which had been preceded by a regular meeting on a very snowy, nasty night. Some twenty persons, a few of whom were there for the first time, were really enjoying themselves. NEPGA has had some four articles about them in the local press, and each mention has brought them a lot of liberating to handle. They have just adopted new by-laws, and reelected Tom Schidle as their Director and main official. One interesting activity has been the recent formation of a singing group which regularly appears in several places in the area. They also are busy presenting programs on gayness in the local area. Their mailing address is P.O. Box 1710, Shaverstown, Pa. 18708.

Gay Switchboard in Harrisburghas answered some three thousand calls since their founding nearly two years ago. Night after night, a small and very dedicated group keeps reaching out to gay people and others who are troubled or have questions about gayness. Their organization has many members who choose not to serve by answering the phones, but performs other work. Two new recruits attended the night we were there, but no one can serve until they have completed training. A new training group is scheduled to start in January, and we sincerely urge you if you live in the area or have friends who do, to get yourself or them involved. Marilyn Huyett and Gary Flickenger co-chair the organization. One can reach the switchboard in the evenings from 6:00 to 10:00 at 717-234-0328, Monday through Friday.

VERY IMPORTANT NOTICE-PLEASE RESPOND

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The Communications Committee of the Pennsylvania Rural Gay Caucus requests your personal and/or organizational participation in its telephone tree. The telephone tree has three specific purposes. (1) It is constitutionally required to gather a consensus of the voting membership before the Co-Chairpeople of the Caucus can initiate action on behalf of the membership in an emergency occurring when it is not convenient to a regular meeting of the Caucus to decide a course of action. You need be concerned with this purpose only if you are a voting member of the the Caucus, i.e., if you have attended a regular meeting within the last six months. (2) We are setting the tree up in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Council on Sexual Minorities whom we are specifically empowering to initiate use of the Rural telephone tree for state-wide alerts on matters and emergencies important to the Council. The Council has already seen to setting up telephone trees in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, but is counting on us for the Rural Areas. Clearly, to effect this purpose we need the cooperation of as many groups and individuals as will cooperate. LET IT BE MADE PERFECTLY CLEAR THAT THERE IS ONLY ONE MASTER LIST OF A DRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS, AND NO OTHER COPIES WILL EVER BE MADE. THE MASTER IS KEPT STRICTLY FOR THE PURPOSE OF THE TELEPHONE TREE, OR MAILINGS FROM THE CAUCUS. IF YOU REQUEST THAT YOUR NAME, NUMBER, OR ADDRESS BE COMPLETELY CONFIDENTIAL, YOU WILL BE RECORDED ONLY ON A THREE BY FIVE INDEX CARD IN THE MASTER FILE, AND CONTACTED ONLY BY THE PERSON POSSESSING THE MASTER LIST. At the present time, the master is kept by Joe Burns, CoChair of the Caucus and Newsletter editor. There had been, and still are some partial mailing lists used by Caucus Committees. All lists other than those legitimate to this use by the Caucus have been recalled, following a complaint by a member. (3) We are informed from time to time of media alerts by various groups, usually the National Gay Task Force. We would use the telephone tree to make these alerts more effective.

The structure of the telephone tree is as follows: It will be initiated by four persons responsible for contacting persons at the next level. The initiators will be the Co-Chairpersons and two others designated by the Caucus. The second level is Contact Persons- those who agree to contact four or five other people in their local calling area, or those designated by organizations as responsible for alerting their organization. In the case of using the tree for gathering a consensus of the Caucus, contact persons would be responsible for reporting back to an initiator, in order to know the will of the Caucus as regards a planned action. The third level would be those whom the contact persons actually contact.

The Caucus will be responsible for contacting only those persons who choose to be on the Master List. Organizations may wish to set up telephone trees within their own organization for their own uses, and to cooperate in making Alerts more effective.

If this letter has been sent to an individual and not an organization, enclosed is a post card for your response. Organizations will please respond with a letter designating the persons they wish to act as Contact Persons for their organizations and any other relevant information they feel should be included. If you do wish to be a part of the telephone tree, please print your name, address, and telephone number on the card and return to the address below. If the information is to be confidential, please simply print confidential under your number. If you will act as a contact person for the Caucus, please print the word contact. If you are willing to take an active part in the effort for "Repeal of the Sodomy Statutes" as outlined on Pages 2 and 3 of the enclosed newsletter under the Legislative Committee Report, please print the word Repeal on the reply, also. Those who respond favorably to the telephone tree or to Repeal, will receive further communications outlining their position in the tree, or to discuss what part they may wish to take for repeal.

Please send your reply to: Joseph W. Burns, 1136 Walnut Street, Allentown, Pa. 18015. If you have any questions, call me at (215) 4322602 (Home) or (215) 367-5081 (Work).

~~BARRY KENT, DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL OF PENNSYLVANIA, WILL ADDRESS THE CAUCUS ON THE NEW BILL FOR SODOMY REPEAL AND THE EFFORT TO HAVE IT PASSED AT THE MEETING ON JANUARY 8, AT STATE COLLEGE.~~