

# Gay Rights

The recently announced Gay Student Union (GSU) boycott of the Virginian and other Corner restaurants raises more important questions than simply that of who one might find sitting next to him at lunch. It also involves a question of civil rights, and clearly it is a question which demands the attention of the University on several levels.

At issue in the GSU boycott is a state Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) Board regulation prohibiting establishments which serve liquor from becoming a gathering place for homosexuals. Until now, it would seem, either the law has not been enforced or homosexuals have rather skillfully hidden their true sexual impulses from the community, for officials of the ABC Board admit that no establishment has lost its license in the past six years.

More likely, however, the reason that the state board has not seen fit to lift any restaurant's license is that whatever problems as have been traditionally associated with homosexuality have been more imagined than real. After all, one might well ask, how did those who framed the restriction expect that homosexuals would be identified except through some overt act on their part: dancing together or soliciting a dance from a member of the heterosexual side of humanity. In either case, important questions are raised.

In the first instance, who exactly is hurt, except those who are unable to control the wanderings of their own eyes and are thereby forced to witness what may offend them? In the latter case, while we agree that a homosexual's proposition is offensive to many, we find ourselves unable to offer a reason why someone might be prohibited from asking a question which can be answered either yes or no. Certainly in the so-called "straight" side of the world, numerous women must have been offended at one time or another through the years, by persistent advances of males with whom they, for one reason or another, did not want to dance or associate. In this case, as with the case of a

too-persistent homosexual, the offender could be evicted.

We are not suggesting that the proprietors of bars and restaurants are in any way free from their obligation to enforce the rules under which their license to operate was granted. Clearly, they are bound by the laws. What we do suggest, however, is that the regulation should be repealed and that the responsibility for seeking such change lies with the University. Just as any military commander worth his stripes would be the first to assert the rights of his men, even in the face of official disapproval, so should the University take the lead in protecting the rights of its own students.

In the interim, since we do not expect miracles overnight, it would be useful if student leaders would refrain from the sort of ill-advised remarks which former University Union Tri-Chairman Bert Ellis made in regard to a then-upcoming appearance of a nationally-known gay activist. Mr. Ellis overruled the decision of one of his co-chairmen to allow use of the Union's name—though not the Union's funds—saying that such co-sponsorship "would not help the University Union's name and prestige." It would undoubtedly benefit all if hereafter such student leaders as the University has would concern themselves with their responsibilities—in this case, the presentation of speakers—rather than their image.

The protection of public images has become all too prevalent a concern, from our national leaders who hire advertising men to guide their campaigns, on down to those who expressed fear in recent weeks that adverse publicity would hurt our Honor System. While we are not insensitive to the need for governments to maintain the appearance of dignity on occasions where the reality is not there, we are concerned that the pursuit of an image might overwhelm efforts to maintain the substance. In that process, one could easily expect the rights of minorities to be forgotten.