

July 1, 1977
Alexandria, Va.

Dear Mary Pat and Stefan:

Thank you for informing me and other council members what important matters have come up.

The switch of health insurance policies was unavoidable because \$160 is difficult for some students to raise. As for housing, naturally I understand its need and the benefits to students of their construction.

I will be interested in following the UTS/CTS coordination or merger possibilities. It would be hard for the University to merge its own service with CTS without extracting proper assurances that the students will receive the relatively superior service that they have already been receiving. And under these conditions, we really can't make any judgements until an actual proposal or study is presented.

I hope you will keep me posted on further developments.

Naturally, I was pleased that you would be interested in GSU plans for this fall. There are many topics I would very much like to discuss that are related to gay rights. I have undergone much soul-searching over the past year and especially over the last semester as to what rights a gay student can expect from a university and from its student organizations. I became convinced that most students were willing to accept homosexuals as having equal rights as students. This is a radical change from the sixties. Some members of the University community, and some of them are relatively powerful, are not ready to accept us, and have easily prevented discussion of the issues. First I would like to share with you some items that will convince you that this year's student council will be forced to deal with the issue of what limits there are to the harassment of gay persons at the University of Virginia.

After two years of extremely homophobic and totally unresponsive leadership of the Cavalier Daily, the present editors seem to be a 180 degree turn. The last issue of the year, with courage that surprised me, went back to clear the record on the Elkins affair once and for all- and left the clear fact that Hereford was exercising harassment of Elkins merely because of his affectional preferences, and trod all over spheres that had until then been considered the exclusive matter of the individual student. This change in the editors of the campus press may have great implications.

Secondly, there is the continued emphasis in CCHS on providing the basic information about sexuality to students who wish to develop informed views and self-awareness.

Thirdly, there is the new political movement symbolized by Anita Bryant. Yes, she will have a large impact even in Charlottesville. Many gays have

come out for the first time during the last several months. The number of gay organizations has jumped to 1800 around the country. On the other side, Ms Bryant is establishing a residence near Lynchburg, and it can be expected that she has friends at UVA who will invite her here. I have found, by observing the activities of gay rights activists and women's groups that Anita's campaign has led to a gearing-up by the left and right to do battle on the issue. Women's groups have come out strongly in favor of gay rights on anti-sexist principles, even though they realize this does not help their ERA drive.

All of these political factors are presented here only to help place the issue in perspective. I wish to emphasize that I realize that Council can deal only with concrete, well-defined issues. Where minorities who are unpopular have won full participation, it is because they rose above immature name calling and went to work for concrete social change. This is the new-found status of the gay rights movement. Unfortunately, the homophobes are likely to continue the tactics of the past years, which will tend to confuse what principles and concrete issues are at stake.

Many liberals still doubt that anti-gay discrimination is really a serious problem. Few realize its full impact on the economic, social, and psychological well-being of lesbians and gay males. So it would be natural for the sympathetic liberal to demand proof that discrimination really does exist. I accept the challenge. In order to make this letter less than 3000 pages I postpone a comprehensive list. I hope you will be interested in this. Its purpose will be merely to document concretely as possible the problems that exist, in order to encourage rational and objective discussion. This list will be forthcoming shortly. I understand that the Minorities Committee will play a central place in such questions, but I hope you will follow these matters as well. It should be easily understood that really hard or legal proofs can never be available on the vast majority of abuses. Until the last year at most, the average gay person believed she was being justly punished for her evil nature, and they desired nothing more than to hide their shame rather than seek redress. That is why recent events have been so shocking to the status quo!

The GSU was evicted from its office in Peabody when it was pointed out to Council that the Board had classified it as political in nature. As I have discussed with you, the Board's classification was based on grounds no longer applicable to the GSU, specifically, that the GSU's constitution did not specifically preclude political (i. e. electioneering, legislative lobbying, etc.) activities that would cost UVA its IRS status. You probably know more about the types of arguments that will perhaps be offered to deny office space by the Board in the (inevitable) case of appeal to it on this issue. (I expect a big stink all over the U about this, bigger than before.) It is not likely that the GSU will prove the "test case" that will point out ^{to the board} the absurdity of its own notions of what is "political". The GSU would likely be the very occasion for fortifying their position on this, in some way (Forgive me if I add that it irks me and many I know to see the Board use its power over student activities for purely political reasons!) I offer this as the best argument I can think of, but one that is likely to be used.

I do believe the Board will be forced to deal with the GSU (for at least the third time-not to mention times the Board might discuss us in private) and admit that the GSU has done nothing political, that it has changed its constitution, that it has not engaged in any illegal activities (although I doubt if any of them really believe we are not compulsive felons-and it is quite possible that the Board has some other source of information, since certain persons, belonging to a well known right-wing student organization, have infiltrated the GSU or spied on us, the University police has a file on the GSU, and recently it has become a widespread belief among most members of the University that the GSU, homosexuality, and gay dances were not exactly legal, somehow, and certainly to be discouraged at all costs.) Notice that our right wing friends are calling the shots ahead of time once more. The political thing is no longer valid, if it ever was. Now they have tried one last desperate obfuscation-that we are a "religious" (or more precisely, anti-religious) group. The Board will stop short of this, but the absurdities that the right-wing students have been driven to in fighting CCHS, the GSU, and possibly other groups shows they have run out of cards. I believe this is a precursor of the Board's decision on GSU office space eligibility. The Board will be required to go to absurd, indefensible extremes in finding an arbitrary reason for denial, OR grant office space. An adverse decision might prompt a lawsuit, depending. In any case, the appeal would be a serious embarrassment to the Board. (I should add that the GSU wants the office for its own sake-to establish better services for students that are very much in demand!)

Anyway, I realize that this very question has a self-generating potential for being the CD's bread and butter this fall. I hope you won't dread it. I do. Guess I'd better end this letter soon. Let me close in saying that I really appreciate the smart thinking and hard work and experience you both have in dealing with students problems. My own role as Councilperson is likely to be that of standing behind and lending help when needed to the majority of questions, especially when I have no "feel" for how the students actually affected understand the situation. On other questions, I hope to represent groups and points of view that perhaps have not been encouraged. I'm not the first or even the second GSU member to be on Council. I'm not ^{necessarily} the only one on this year's Council. But I will be the first GSU president, and this will make a difference. I will promise to do my part and more in encouraging "communications." I will try to reach even the most alienated and disaffected. How can lesbians and gay men be so silent? How can Blacks be so muffled? How can people who can come to understand society's sexism allow others to be drowned out? Perhaps there is something seriously wrong here at UVA. Maybe it was just the situation last year. But Council can help by encouraging members of the student body to take part, to exert appropriate pressure on Council itself, faculty, and administration when it feels it has just reasons. UVA must create leaders like yourselves, not bookworms and "yes-men."

Last, please let me know how I can call either of you long distance in the evenings- I just can't call from work very easily. I hope you will keep me informed.

Sincerely,
