

Gay Affairs
File

GAY AFFAIRS

ORIENTATION MEETING SEPT. 28, 1977

Note: This meeting was extremely informal and was meant to foster frank and open discussion with no actual decisions being made. The following does not constitute a set of minutes, but is intended to advise Council members of the general discussion. This is necessarily only one somewhat subjective version of the discussions, but care has been taken to see that alternative views are recorded.

Committee members present

Eric Allison
Paige Armstrong
Sarah Berga
Jim Hoehn
Ray Hurd
Pamela Merchant
Monty Rieger

Community present

Linda DeWitt (CD)
Mark Ward
two other students

All persons present introduced themselves and explained briefly why they were there. Several members felt that Council had set an important precedent and that this would be an important committee. Mark Ward said he was there to see how his student activity fee money was being spent.

First there was a general discussion of the charge of Gay Affairs, its relation to Council and Minority Affairs, and committee openness.

Jim Hoehn suggested that there were three basic categories of activities appropriate to the committee: (1) Investigative (to find out what problems and needs there are that are not being met by the University), (2) Advisory (to advise Council on the actions that would alleviate gay student's problems and needs), & (3) Communications (facilitating discussion where doing so may directly improve gay student life).

A general discussion ensued on the problems of gays at the University. Mark Ward asked whether his money would be spent to really solve the problem via curing homosexuals, or whether he was being forced to pay for the advocacy of acceptance of an invalid and perverse lifestyle. Jim offered the opinion that it would be wrong to ask gays to try to solve their problems by converting to heterosexuals. The consensus of the committee was that we had no business deciding whether or not homosexuality is an invalid lifestyle, but that we should follow our charge from Council.

Jim said that Mark Ward was raising a valid question if he was asking whether or not there might be some clash between the interests of the heterosexual majority and gay students' interests. If possible cases of a potential clash between the interests of these groups exists, then we should seriously ask ourselves whether or not sufficient safeguards exist within Gay Affairs so that the interests of all students are accounted for. Committee members respond that the question was not a valid one, since there is no such thing as a gay interest or a heterosexual interest. Instead there were individuals' interests which did not dichotomize by affectional or sexual orientation. Also, there were heterosexuals as well as homosexuals on the committee. It was felt that there was no fundamental conflict and that helping gays didn't imply hurting nongays, and that we could expect Council itself to provide an adequate check if there were cases where a conflict existed. Jim reminded committee members that the committee is a creature of Council and that the committee must keep in touch with Council members to insure that the committee actions were consistent with a Council consensus. Mark Ward disagreed with members of the committee that there was no conflict. He said that acceptance of gays hurt society.

Mark Ward raised objections throughout the discussion. He said that he was being coerced into paying for advocacy of acceptance of gays, who were a threat to the heterosexual marriage. Monty Rieger suggested that Mark should realize that many gay people are married and have children. The general consensus of the committee was that we should follow the specifics of our charge, and that the matter of student activity fees was not germane to the charge or to the present discussion in the committee on gay student problems.

Sarah Berga said that we should distinctly isolate two different kinds of problems and needs. First is the problem of whether or not gays are being denied equal provision of services given to all students. Second are the problems and needs which are unique to gay students and whether or not they are being dealt with adequately. Many agreed with Sarah that we should tackle the first set of problems first.

Jim suggested that many Council members may not be very well informed on both the basic facts about homosexuality and the subjective experience of being gay and a University student. Many of them might appreciate our choosing very brief materials for them to read, since they may be required to deal with gay-related issues in the near future. A discussion followed on how to develop objectivity in this, and what differentiates fact from opinion. Mark Ward asked whether viewpoints other than pro-gay propaganda would also be presented to Council members. Jim suggested that we would not present subjective information as received doctrine, that if there was a minority view in the committee that there could be a minority view attached, and that in any case Mark was certainly welcome to place whatever information or views he wished in Council members' boxes. Sarah said that of course we would be as objective as possible in the presentation of basic information.

The meeting adjourned at 10:45 P.M., two hours after it began.

After the meeting, the Chairperson identified some of the immediate priorities of the committee:

- (1) To determine the current legal interpretations of what rights gays have as students.
- (2) To develop a very brief summary of relatively objective information about homosexuality. Develop a brief subjective evaluation of the experience of being gay at the University.
- (3) To examine basic university services and programs to see whether gay students are receiving the levels of services to which they are entitled as University students.
- (4) To solicit comments from Council, University students, faculty, and administration on gay student problems.

Jim Hoehn
Chairperson, Gay Affairs