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*"For here we are not afraid to follow the truth wherever it may lead,
nor to tolerate any error so long as reason is left free to combat it."*

—Mr. Jefferson

Th. Jefferson

Thursday, November 17, 1977

The gay rights resolution

The Gay Rights movement has substantially improved the lot of homosexuals, but it also has galvanized opposition to rights for homosexuals, and that opposition seems to be gaining widespread national support. Anita Bryant won her fight to repeal a gay rights ordinance in Miami, and she has won a large and sympathetic audience nationwide. At the University, recent attacks on homosexual students, while perpetrated by only a small group of persons, are symptomatic of the hostile attitude which many hold towards gays.

In light of such attitudes, the resolution recommended to Student Council this week by Council's Gay Affairs Subcommittee comes at a good time. The resolution, which recommends that the University oppose any discrimination on the basis of sexual preference, recognizes what many people seem to forget: that homosexuality *per se* means nothing but a sexual orientation. It is true that homosexuals may commit unacceptable, illegal and offensive acts, but then so may heterosexuals.

The Council resolution also recognizes that the subtle and not so subtle discrimination to which homosexuals are subjected forces them to live in fear of losing jobs, friends, and family; the anti-gay bias forces homosexuals to live on society's fringes.

Unfortunately, many people have a visceral reaction against gay rights, instead of a rational sympathy for gays. Claims that complete social acceptance of homosexuality will bring more gays "out of the closet" are justified to some extent—if there were no stigma attached to homosexuality, many repressed gays probably would come out of hiding. But it is extremely unlikely that true heterosexuals would become "corrupted" and change their lifestyles as if responding to some fad.

Claims that homosexuality will disrupt American family life and destroy the morals of the young are so outlandish that it is hard to believe that many persons take them seriously. In San Francisco, where almost no stigma is attached to homosexuality, gays have caused even less trouble than in many other American cities. San Francisco family life does not seem to have broken down as a result of the city's large homosexual population.

Homosexuals at the University are not so lucky as those in San Francisco. They feel socially ostracized, and some gays have complained that University services such as Student Health and the Counseling Center also have discriminated against them. Incidents such as the tossing of firecrackers into the Halloween Gay Student Union Dance last month prove that the gays' claims are not unwarranted.

Gays currently have little recourse within the University if they feel they are being discriminated against. The Equal Opportunity Office will not handle complaints from gay students because federal and state anti-discrimination laws do not apply to sexual orientation. There is, in short, no guarantee that homosexuals at the University will be safe from discrimination unless they are willing to take their cases to court, where they may or may not find protection under the due process clause of the U.S. Constitution's 14th Amendment.

Council's resolution asks that gays be granted some protection. The proposal was not accompanied by factual findings from the Gay Affairs Subcommittee; such findings should be forthcoming soon, however. The gay rights resolution effectively lays the groundwork for future measures to protect the rights of homosexuals at the University.