# Our Own

Unitarian-Universalist Gay Community
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## MEN ARRESTED AT MALL STORE

During the month of February a security guard for J.C. Penney has been the complaining witness against four men. The men have been accused of indecent exposure and/or prostitution/soliciting. The guard is an employee of the Military Circle store in Norfolk. He is a slender young white male, who appears to be in his early or mid-twenties and has short reddish-blond hair and a mustache. According to reliable sources, he stations himself in the vicinity of the public restroom and engages men in conversation. He is said to pass himself off as a salesperson for another company.

On February 2, at about the time of the store's closing, the guard initiated the arrest of a man and charged him with both indecent exposure and prostitution. Both charges are serious misdemeanors. The accused in this case was convicted on both counts and was sentenced to serve 30 days in jail and pay $100 for each count. The convicted man appealed the decision.

On the afternoon of February 4, the guard filed prostitution/soliciting charges against two men. The attorney for one of the men succeeded in having the charge reduced to the lesser offense of disorderly conduct, and the judge awarded a suspended 30-day sentence and a $25 fine. The case of the second man arrested on February 4 has been continued. On February 16, a fourth man was arrested for indecent exposure, and his case has also been continued. All of these cases were heard in Judge Joseph A. Jordan's district criminal court.

The law governing prostitution/soliciting is a city ordinance (Section 31-56 of the City Code), and conviction carries penalties of not less than twenty dollars nor more than two hundred dollars or confinement in jail of not more than six months or both. Indecent exposure is a state offense (Section 18.2-387 of the State Code), and is a Class 1 misdemeanor; it carries penalties of 12 months in jail or a fine of not more than $1000, or both. The disorderly conduct law is a city ordinance (Section 31-17) and carries a penalty of not less than one dollar nor more than $500, or confinement in jail of not more than six months, or both.



## Cruising, the Movie

### A Commentary by J.D.

"This film is not intended as an indictment of the homosexual world. It is set in one small segment of that world, which is not meant to be representative of the whole." So claims the disclaimer shown at the beginning of the movie Cruising, which opened nationally on February 15. This is the movie that caused so much fuss last August during its filming in Greenwich Village. The reason for the protests, in a nutshell, were that the film viciously misrepresents gay life to an American public that has no other reference for comparison.

This is certainly true. It takes the hero, Al Pacino, through a police undercover assignment in which he masquerades as a patron of sleazy S&M bars, in an attempt to flush out the murderer of several gay men. These are not run-of-the-mill murders, they are brutal knife-murders (shown explicitly on the screen) done after luring the victim to some isolated place for the purpose of having sex. The too-subtle underlying conclusion is Pacino luring the killer under a bridge, where Pacino knifes the killer. This apparently completes the metamorphosis from police officer to homosexual S&M murderer.

There are no characters in the movie that could be considered to be in the mainstream of gay life--they are either killers or killed, and always associated with quickie S&M sex.

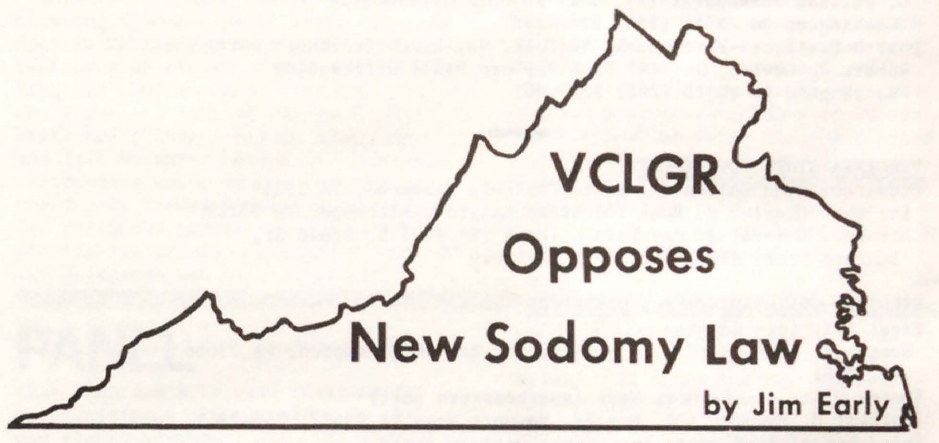
As for the bar scenes, these appeared to be very contrived and unconvincing, as the camera never really focused on anyone--the patrons remained either uniformed, semi-nude or discoing stick-figures. Even the scene alluding to fist-fucking is so disjointed that I doubt straight audiences will even guess what is going on, which is probably for the better.

Despite all of this, when the movie was over I didn't feel threatened. This was because the movie and its production were a shambles. It was so poorly made that it is hard to believe anyone taking it seriously. But don't take my word for it; The Washington Post reviewer described it as "dramatically evasive and incomprehensible. Even the most ardent sensation-seekers are likely to trudge out of this fiasco with their brows knit into a collective 'huh?'"

The Virginian-Pilot's review headline stated, "Slimy Cruising Stretches Bounds of Pure Awfulness." The reviewer, Mal Vincent, goes on to say, "The film looks as if it were edited during someone's day off. Plot lines are introduced, then dropped, and the ending makes no sense whatsoever. Don't let anything in this review interest you enough to make you go see this boring trash. It's not worth your dollars or your time."

I thoroughly agree with Vincent's comments. The movie is not worth anyone's time or money, and was bad beyond my wildest dreams. From my point of view, I got what I wanted for my ticket. My $3.50 bought me a first-hand opinion of the movie and the right to intelligently criticize it, necessary for writing this review. I'm not sure that there is any other justification for seeing this movie. I urge no one to see it.

## VCLGR Opposes New Sodomy Law



by Jim Early

At a special February 23 meeting in Richmond, the Virginia Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights (VCLGR) voted to oppose a General Assembly bill which would amend the sodomy statute in the Virginia Code. The bill, sponsored by House Delegate Bernard Cohen, a Democrat from Northern Virginia's 21st District, would decriminalize heterosexual acts of sodomy altogether and reduce the acts of sodomy performed by homosexuals from its present status as a Class 6 felony to that of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

(The proposed bill would change section 18.2-361 of the Code to read as follows: "Crimes against nature.--If any person shall carnally know in any manner any brute animal, or carnally know any male or female person, of the same sex, by the anus or by or with the mouth, or voluntarily submit to such carnal knowledge, he or she shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

If any person shall by force carnally know any male or female person by the anus or by or with the mouth he or she shall be guilty of a Class 3 felony."

The penalties for a Class 1 misdemeanor consist of not more than 12 months in jail and a maximum fine of $1,000. In its present classification as a Class 6 felony the penalties for sodomy include from one to five years in prison or, in the judge's or jury's discretion, jail confinement up to 12 months and a maximum $1,000 fine.)

VCLGR members, in adopting their formal position on this legislative issue, listened to a number of arguments supporting and opposing the proposed legislation. The chief argument heard against the bill was that its passage might make more difficult the eventual abolition of sodomy as a crime if it remained a crime for only the relatively small proportion of the population that is homosexual. As the law presently stands, sodomy is a crime for everyone. Jannequin Bennett of Charlottesville summed up the majority sentiment when she said, "I have a real strong feeling we ought not to support this bill...I don't want 150 years of arrests as misdemeanors before the state would take a look at (changing) the laws again."

Tony Segura of the Richmond Gay Rights Association (GRA), warned that if the bill passed in its present form, there could be many more convictions for sodomy since judges might be more inclined to convict on misdemeanor charges than they would on felony charges. Segura said that the number of convictions went "way up" in New York state following a similar change in the laws there.

Tom DePriest, of the Gay Activist Alliance/District of Columbia argued for passage of the Cohen bill in its present form even though he conceeded that the bill has shortcomings. DePriest, who is a lawyer, said that the Cohen bill is a "liberalization of the code" and would make it easier to mount a successful legal challenge to the constitutionality of the law. He said that "after decriminalization of sodomy for 90 per cent of the population, what possible interest does the state have (in keeping as a crime) the same act committed by the remaining 10 percent?"

Elmo, a law student from Charlottesville's Gay Student Union, also supported Cohen's bill and pointed out that convictions for felonies affect the right to vote and the right to hold certain jobs and can be used to impeach a witness' future testimony in court. Elmo also reminded VCLGR members that the police person on the beat has broad discretionary powers and would

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## Update: VCLGR Alters Stand on Bill

As of today (February 29) it appears that there is a good chance that a Senate committee of the Virginia General Assembly will report out a liberalized version of the State's sodomy law. As a result of behind-the-scenes negotiations, it is probable that the language of the bill will decriminalize sodomy altogether for heterosexual acts, and homosexual acts when performed in private. The bill would make it a misdemeanor for persons of the same sex to engage in sodomy if the act occurs in public. Apparently the bill is silent on heterosexual acts of sodomy performed in public.

The bill's patron is Delegate Bernard Cohen from Northern Virginia, and he was quoted in today's Richmond News Leader as having said, "We ought to get about our business, taking care of more important things." Cohen has indicated that he feels it is time for the state to stop making criminal certain intimate sexual behavior between consenting adults, the newspaper said.

Our Own contacted Bruce Garnett, one of the two lobbyists for the Virginia Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights (VCLGR), which had opposed an earlier version of Cohen's bill. However,

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LAMBDA ALLIANCE

## Panel Discussion on Gay Politics Held

by Doug Thompson

In a panel discussion sponsored by Lambda Alliance of Williamsburg at its February 20 meeting, four prominent gay activists talked about the future of the gay movement. Steve Endean of Gay Rights National Lobby (GRNL), Karen Charlotte and Barbara Weinstock of Richmond Lesbian-Feminists and the Virginia Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights (VCLGR), and Richard C. of the National Gay Task Force (NGTF), all expressed their satisfaction at the gains made by the movement during the last ten years and voiced guarded optimism for the future.

Richard, a co-chairperson of the NGTF board of directors, stated that events since the beginning of the movement should give lesbians and gay men some hope, but he stressed that the movement has just begun. "Primarily, the last ten years have served to raise the consciousness of both gay people and society in general, and we can't afford to bask in the successes of the past. We must continue to act in order to gain legal protection quickly."

Richard emphasized that the initial successes of the movement have led to the backlash against gay people that has been stimulated by the general frustrations felt by many people in our society. The 1980's, he believes, will bring increased confrontation with the far right, and gay people must stand firm in their refusal to be society's whipping persons.

Richard also stated that we must link our support network more closely in the future. If a new organization grows out of the National March on Washington, he feels that it can be important if it concentrates on network building. He also believes

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