

Talking changes minds, attitudes

You can read all the books and hear all the lectures you want on homosexuality and you won't learn as much as if you listened to a homosexual speak, asked questions and heard the answers.

Books and lectures change very few minds. Personal understanding through communication does.

Some minds were changed about homosexuality at the Sociology Club's forum Monday, which featured two members of the Gay Caucus.

Before the seminar, opinions were expressed that, at the kindest, poked fun at and belittled the speakers.

"You want to go hear the fags?" "They got some queers talking to the Sociology Club." "Let's go see the homos."

These remarks were heard before the seminar, and some were not so tasteful. The individuals obviously did not consider the personal conviction and courage it must have taken for these individuals to stand before a group and answer questions about such a personal thing as their lifestyle.

The mood of the audience shifted during the meeting and became quite friendly, according to Perla Queyquep, club

sponsor.

People in the audience may have been confused, uncertain about what they were going to hear. Hostility is the easiest way to handle those feelings.

When the audience learned that the homosexuals were not trying to convert them or expound homosexuality as the best lifestyle, they began to loosen up and try to understand the men.

Queyquep said she played the tape of the forum to one of her classes and said anyone who didn't want to hear the tape could leave.

Two or three left the class, she said. Only when a person is willing to listen to other arguments can he make a valid judgement. Someone who refuses to listen to another opinion has no right to express his own as truth.

The Sociology Club, as well as other clubs and organizations on campus, have been performing a valuable service to students by making these speakers available.

If a student has a chance to hear this type of discussion, he should not deny himself the chance to grow by hearing other opinions and justifying his own.

GARY VAN OOTEGHAM, vice-president of the Gay Political Caucus, spoke to the Sociology Club last Monday on the problems gay people have trying to lead an average life. Texian photo by DeLea Sayers.



Seminar discussion covers gay lifestyle

By JASON LUTERNOW
Texian Staff

"We are a natural people. We are not the weird people that some people believe us to be. We are just an average citizen. We just have our own way of living," said Gary Van Ootegham, Gay Political Caucus president.

Van Ootegham, and Jerry Miller, GPC vice-president, spoke on homosexuality at a seminar sponsored by the Sociology Club Monday.

Van Ootegham, an ex-employee of the county treasurer's office, made a public announcement that he is a homosexual before the Harris County Commissioners last summer.

The day before he made this proclamation to the commissioners Van Ootegham was fired for alleged politicking on county time, but he said he did not.

Van Ootegham became outraged at the fact that at the time of his announcement, the commissioners "did not even consider homosexuals to be a minority group."

He went on to say that the Gay Caucus was not trying to persuade people to change their

views on the gay community but that they were just trying to get people to recognize the fact that they have the same rights as anyone else.

Miller explained the role of the gay in society.

He said that many people are gay but suppress these feelings because they are afraid of public ridicule.

He said about himself, "I simply went through life acting out a role that was socially acceptable, so I married and lived with my wife for ten years before I began to become more honest with myself."

Miller went on to explain the importance of the gay bar in gay society.

"The bar is the only setting in which we can meet other gays and not be hassled," he said.

Miller also said that there are fourteen gay organizations in Houston, and that there are more than forty gay bars.

They both cited a 1970 poll which said that ten percent of the people have gay tendencies.

According to this poll 13 percent of all men are gay and so

are seven percent of all women.

They also talked on the growing impact that the Gay Political Caucus has in the local community. Miller said that the two-month-old organization now has a mailing list of more than 13,000 people and that they are booked up for speaking engagements.

6/75 Fight for Rights

Homosexuals are organizing to fight for their rights as individuals, a founder of gay movements in California said Saturday at the Texas Gay Conference II being held in San Antonio.

The three-day convention, which concludes Sunday, was attended by 100 members of the Texas Gay Task Force, a statewide coalition of gay organizations and individual members.

Morris Kight, founder of the Los Angeles Gay Liberation Front, said in a press conference at the convention that gays will "no longer stand for oppression and discrimination."

Kight heads the Los Angeles Gay Community Service Center, which recently received a \$1 million federal grant for venereal disease and alcoholism programs among gay people.

"In Nazi Germany millions of gay people were exterminated and turned to cinders in death camps," Kight said. "Today we are being forced out of jobs and forced to play a secondary role in life. No longer will we play this role. The gay issue should never have been an issue at all, but since it is an issue, we will fight to win it."

Kight said that being born homosexual is as "natural as being born left-handed."

Ken Cyr, Fort Worth, said the Texas Gay Task Force is



GENE LEGGETT (L), defrocked Methodist minister, and Kathy Deitsch were among 100 persons attending this weekend's Texas Gay Conference II in San Antonio. (Staff Photo.)

preparing for National Gay Pride Week, the last week in June, during which the "joy of being gay" will be stressed.

Carolyn Innis, Philadelphia, Pa., founder of

Gay Nurses Alliances, said at the conference that homosexuals will not be accepted into American society until the "sexism" of the middle-class American male has been eliminated.

Five annual conferences vote against 'gay' clergy

NEW YORK (RNS) — Early signs indicate that opposition to the ordination of homosexual ministers is emerging in many of United Methodism's 1975 annual conferences.

At least five of the conferences meeting in late May passed resolutions expressing such opposition, and similar resolutions were being proposed in numerous other conferences.

The Louisville and Red Bird Missionary Conferences, both in Kentucky, opposed the ordination of homosexuals, while the Missouri West Conference reaffirmed denominational Social Principles which, as interpreted, place a ban on such ordinations.

Differing views on the question marked the Troy Conference session in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., and no stance, pro or con, was expressed. Instead, delegates supported a church-wide study of human sexuality as a prelude to any United Methodist decision on ordaining homosexuals.

In a three-pronged resolution which it will submit as a petition to the General Conference of 1976, the Central Texas Conference:

- 1) opposed any efforts to allow known and practicing homosexuals to be ordained;
- 2) opposed the employment of homosexuals "by boards and agencies of the United Methodist Church where educational, cultural and social processes affect the lives of our children, youth and adult members;"
- 3) opposed the granting of any United Methodist funds to support homosexual caucuses.

Actions of the annual conferences will have a bearing on whether homosexuality, in relation to ministry, comes up at the 1976 General Conference, a national legislative body, and what, if any, decisions might be reached at the Portland, Ore., meeting.

The Louisville, Red Bird and Missouri West Conference each endorsed statements on homosexuality in the United Methodist Social Principles, a 1972 document. The Principles affirm that homosexuals are persons of "sacred worth" but reject homosexuality as incompatible with Christian belief and practice.

Some moves to delete the anti-homosexual passages from the Principles are anticipated at the 1976 General Conference. Although there is no direct United Methodist legislation on the matter, a barrier to the ordination of

homosexuality is raised by the Principles, according to both the bishops of the church and the United Methodist Division of the Ordained Ministry.

Conference denies orders for homosexual

SAN ANTONIO — In action June 4 clergy members of the Southwest Texas Annual Conference voted unanimously to refuse to accept a recommendation by St. Stephen's United Methodist Church here to restore the credentials of Gene Leggett, a self-proclaimed homosexual.

Mr. Leggett's credentials were suspended in 1971.

Dr. Dan Solomon, chairperson of the Board of Ministry and pastor of St. John's UMC, Corpus Christi, reported that the board had met with representatives of St. Stephen's Church and that following lengthy deliberation had voted 25-1 to recommend the rejection of the request from St. Stephen's UMC.

Mrs. Frances Opitz, lay member from St. Stephen's UMC, read a prepared statement, which read in part:

"In preparation of these remarks, I have the aid and support of Dick Lear who has been the pastor of St. Stephen's UMC as we have placed this resolution before the conference. We acknowledge the concern and action the conference has given to our request.

"As the lay delegate of St. Stephen's, I wish to express our growing concern to the ministerial members of this conference. We again affirm the continuing concern of St. Stephen's for treatment of minority groups with equity and fairness. We value the contributions of Gene Leggett has made to and in our congregation, and we acknowledge and accept his demonstration of the injustice he seems to have experienced in his role as our janitor. We were not aware of any insensitivity to his feelings and frustrations in this task.

"It is also important that we express our conflict and distress over his widely varying behavior in different groups, our growing lack of clarity over Gene's priority of clerical orders or personal cause and finally in the last few days his calling of St. Stephen's and the church into accountability without offering reciprocal integrity.

"We concur with the recommendation of the Board of Ministry of the Southwest Texas Conference, the statement concluded.

Ex-Houstonian fights 'gay' rule

A former Houston man has become the second enlisted man at Langley Air Force Base in Hampton, Va., to declare his homosexuality and to announce he would challenge military regulations banning homosexuals.

Sgt. Richard Hicks, 22, a musician in the 546th Air Force Band at the base, submitted a letter to his commanding officer, Capt. Ronald W. Carl, stating his preference for a gay lifestyle and seeking waiver of discharge procedure.

Hicks is a native of Houston. He played the tuba in high school and took private study in conducting and composition at the University of Houston. The Associated Press reported.

Hicks said he has known of his homosexual tendencies for about two years.

"Before that I thought I was straight," he said. "I dated girls but my life had been my music."

He said he was unaware of his homosexuality when he enlisted in the Air Force three years ago.

"In the past two years I've matured... finally realized I was gay," he said. "I went to a psychiatrist but that was a waste... the dude wanted to cure me. I had no illness."

Earlier this year, T. Sgt. Leonard P. Matlovich admitted his homosexuality, and an Air Force hearing board recommended that he be given a general discharge.

However, Col. Alton Thogerson, the base commander, overrode the hearing board and recommended that Matlovich receive an honorable discharge. Thogerson's recommendation is being reviewed by the secretary of the Air Force.

Both Hicks and Matlovich maintain that the Air Force ban is unfair and that they can perform their military jobs proficiently regardless of their sexual preferences.

The Air Force said Hicks has not been relieved of his duties as a band member.

Matlovich, a human relations instructor, was relieved of those duties and is presently on a barracks cleaning detail.