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FREE

ACT UP/SF calls for boycott of North Carolina

Controversial imprisonment may have figured in loss of Mercedes-Benz plant

by David Stout
Q-Notes Staff

SAN FRANCISCO—ACT UP/San Francisco has endorsed a national boycott of North Carolina over the imprisonment of Tuscarora Indian Eddie Hatcher and is encouraging other chapters to do the same.

The Prison Issues Committee of ACT UP/SF drafted a press release in August which stated that the group had been contacted by the Free Eddie Hatcher Campaign, based in Pembroke, NC, about the inmate's circumstances. At the same time they were asked to sign on as co-sponsors of a nation-wide boycott of North Carolina travel and tourism and also its lucrative furniture industry, specifically Broyhill Furniture and Thomasville Furniture products.

After reviewing the case, members agreed that Hatcher's imprisonment was unjust and the group backed the action.

Hatcher's incarceration stems from his role in the February 1, 1988, ten-hour armed occupation of the Robeson County newspaper, the *Robesonian*.

He and partner Timothy Jacobs said that the take-over was an attempt to call attention to the corruption and racism within the local government. They charged that county officials were trafficking cocaine and turning a blind eye to a crime wave consisting of almost twenty minority murders.

After holding the newspaper staff hostage for the better part of the day, Hatcher and Jacobs released the *Robesonian* employees and turned themselves in to the authorities.

In March, North Carolina officials decided to pre-empt their charges in lieu of a federal trial.

The lengthy court proceedings culminated on October 14, with a federal jury finding the defendants not guilty on all counts in accordance with their necessity defense. In an unexpected move, state prosecutors then dredged up their original charges and announced plans to retry the pair.

Emotionally weary from the just-concluded federal case, Timothy Jacobs plea-bargained to a six year prison sentence. Eddie Hatcher fled to San Francisco.

He was eventually captured, brought back to North Carolina and convicted of kidnapping. On February 14, 1990 he was sentenced, under a separate plea-bargain, to eigh-

teen years in prison.

Since then, Jacobs has been released while Hatcher has gone before the North Carolina Parole Commission twice and been turned down both times. His third parole hearing is scheduled for this month, and Juanita Baker, the Chairman of the North Carolina Parole Commission, stated emphatically that no outside pressure would influence the decision of the commissioners, "The commission will deal with the facts of the case and that will be our only concern."

John Chapman, of ACT UP/SF's Prison Issues Committee, says that his organization took up Hatcher's plight because he has become a champion of AIDS-affected inmates, "Eddie has been an outspoken supporter of

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Bar owner's house burned by arsonists

by David Jones
Q-Notes Staff

JACKSONVILLE, NC—On Saturday night, October 9, at about 11:30 pm, Danny Leonard, owner of Friends Lounge in Jacksonville, was ready to perform as Brandy Alexander when he got a phone call. His house was on fire. When he arrived, the fire was under control, but everything inside was covered with what he calls a thick, black grease formed by smoke, soot and water.

The front door to the house had been kicked in and someone had gone straight to Leonard's bedroom in the back of the house, soaked the bed in a flammable liquid and set it on fire. The fire was so hot the bedsprings had melted into the floor, he reports. The bedroom area of the house was badly damaged and the house has been declared a total loss, Leonard says. He said that robbery was clearly not the motive since neither a jar of money in the bedroom nor stereo equipment or a camera were taken.

Later that night, he got an anonymous, threatening call. "We fixed you good this time, faggot," he remembers the caller saying, "Next time we'll finish you off." When asked how he replied, he almost shouted into the phone, "Hell, I said, 'Well, come on, then.'"

Jacksonville police opened an investigation but Leonard does not believe much will come of it unless the police lab can produce



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some evidence. The police have reportedly said that arson is usually a very difficult crime to solve.

The North Carolina Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCCGLE) is in contact with the Jacksonville Police Department to assure that the investigation is thorough, and will consider, at the group's next board meet-

ing, offering a reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of those responsible for the fire.

Leonard reports that he was planning to purchase the house which he had been renting and had let his renter's insurance lapse. Most of his personal possessions were de-

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Clinton appoints Triangle activist

by David Jones
Q-Notes Staff

CHAPEL HILL, NC—Jesse L. White, Jr., of Chapel Hill and current chair of NC Pride PAC, the North Carolina gay and lesbian political action committee, has been nominated by President Bill Clinton to be the co-chair of the Appalachian Regional Commission. The appointment requires confirmation by the U.S. Senate, which will hold hearings on the nomination. The White House is reportedly aware of White's role in gay and lesbian civil rights in North Carolina.

White, 49, a native of Mississippi, will manage the federal agency which sponsors economic development and other anti-poverty programs for the 13-state Appalachian mountain region running from Mississippi to New York. The state co-chair is Virginia governor Douglas Wilder. The commission was established as a part of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty.

According to press reports, the commission has a staff of 55 and a budget of \$190 million. To date, \$798 million has been spent in North Carolina. If confirmed by the Senate, White will move to Washington, DC.

White and President Clinton have had a long relationship. White was the executive director of the Southern Growth Policies Board, a think-tank of southern governors, between 1981 and 1990, and worked closely with Clinton when Clinton was the governor of Arkansas. The board develops strategies to improve economic development in Southern states.

White became widely known during his tenure as an advocate of investing in and growing businesses and industries that originate in the South instead of relying on importing jobs by recruiting business to move to the South. In numerous speeches and articles, he argued that imported jobs are at risk of moving eventually to places with cheaper labor, including overseas, while industries developed from within a state or region are more stable and have a greater long-term positive impact on more aspects of regional economies.

When he left the board in 1990, White was widely praised for his leadership. Gov. Carroll Campbell of South Carolina said at the time that "Your efforts on behalf of economic development throughout the Southeast are without measure." Gov. Ray Mabus of Mis-

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Military witchhunt halted by courts

by Dan Van Mourik
Q-Notes Staff

The U.S. military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy regarding homosexuals in the armed forces is on trial across the country. Even before the new policy was to go into effect, October 1, rulings were being handed down which, in essence, stated that discharge from the military on the basis of sexual orientation alone was unconstitutional. While none of the cases were brought to court after the new policy was to be instituted, rulings will have a significant impact because they address the broader issue of discrimination rather than the specifics of a single policy.

Each time a lawsuit has been presented to a lower court, gays have won and the military has lost. However, the U.S. Supreme Court has successfully avoided ruling on the ban itself, honing in on the specifics of individual cases with carefully constructed language

that can in no way be construed to apply to a larger forum. But that could soon change.

The case involving Keith Meinhold, a Leading Petty Officer in the Navy, may force the Supreme Court to decide the issue. Meinhold publicly announced his sexual orientation in May 1992. He was discharged three months later. His suit against the Navy challenged the ban as unconstitutional and he was reinstated. However, the Navy continued to appeal.

U.S. District Judge Terry Hatter Jr., as part of his ruling in the Meinhold case, placed an injunction on the Department of Defense (DOD) which instructs the DOD "not to discharge any person from the armed forces solely because of his/her status as a homosexual." This "freeze" applies to transfers as well.

The significance of this decision rests in the fact that it encompasses the entire Depart-

ment of Defense and is not directed at a single individual under a specified set of circumstances. It effectively lifts the ban on gays as promised by but not pursued by President Clinton.

In September, Hatter ordered several DOD officials, or their representatives, to appear in court. His order made it quite clear that the officials were to "show cause, if you have any, why you should not be held in contempt for continuing to enforce the Department of Defense's policy regarding gays and lesbians."

During that September 30 hearing, Judge Hatter again ordered the DOD to cease "discharging, changing enlistment status or denying enlistment to any person based on sexual orientation in the absence of proven sexual conduct — if such conduct is proven to interfere with the military mission of the

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