

Notes

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Disco Drag ...page 7

Make A Wish ...page 15

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COUNCIL VOTES TO DISCRIMINATE

by David Stout
Q-Notes Staff

CHARLOTTE—On Monday, Nov. 23 the City Council voted down the Community Relations Committee's (CRC) request that it add sexual orientation, family status, age and disability to the city's list of protected classes as found in the Human Relations Ordinance and the Public Accommodations code.

As was expected, the lightning rod issue was sexual orientation. This quickly sparked a controversy that Councilman Hoyle Martin made incendiary by rhetorically asking why the CRC didn't also move to make "prostitutes" a protected class.

CRC endorses call for inclusion

The Committee overwhelmingly passed the resolution to lobby the City Council to update the Human Relations and Public Accommodations ordinances. They presented their request to the Council at a November 9 meeting.

The meeting quickly bogged down in discussions of morality and religious opinion. It ended with a vote planned in two weeks and Mayor Richard Vinroot's caution not to discuss the proposal in public. Ignoring the request, Martin exited the meeting and issued a barrage of inflammatory statements to the local networks about homosexuality and the fact that there could be no comparison between the struggles of African-Americans, such as himself, and gays.

Gays organize city-wide effort

The gay and lesbian community began a concerted telephone and mail campaign supporting the proposal. Addresses and phone numbers of the City Council were circulated and several benefactors had three versions of a post card printed and disseminated.

Community leaders gave interviews, wrote letters to newspapers, called in on radio shows and held a press conference at the Government Center a week before the vote. An ad-hoc organization calling itself Citizens for Human Rights made a presentation to the media on Wednesday, Nov. 17 announcing, "Citizens for Human Rights is a coalition of citizens who are concerned about the protection of the civil rights of all persons. We are here today to voice our support for a change to our city's anti-discrimination ordinance."

Although media polls indicated that the resolution had little chance of passage, many were still optimistic with several days left to turn the tide.

Council adds insult to injury

After preliminary items of business, the Council's Nov. 23 meeting turned to the proposed CRC resolution. Vinroot informed the overflow crowd that discussion on the resolution would be limited to 20 minutes per side.

Before opening the floor to the crowd, Vinroot introduced Rev. Clifford Jones of the CRC. Jones recounted the long process the Committee went through in approving the

resolution and closed with, "This discussion is about discrimination. I want to make that clear so let me say it again - discrimination."

Vinroot then yielded to discussion. Several members of the gay community spoke eloquently in support of the resolution, but their efforts turned out to be in vain. Even

than the dog shelter [a previous controversial debate] or sexual orientation."

In a fiery manner, Ella Scarborough intoned, "Brother pastors, I am very disappointed. Who is your neighbor? He's everybody around you in here tonight. God does not give us the right to judge and we should not judge. With that I call the question."

Before the vote was taken, Don Reid remarked to Hammond, "We discriminate every day, and you do too, and I think that's right sometimes."

Vinroot then called for the vote to deny the resolution as a whole. Voting to deny were Martin, Lynn Wheeler, Stan Campbell, Nasif Majeed, Reid, Mangum and McCrory. Votes in opposition to the denial were cast by Hammond, Scarborough, Cyndee Patterson and Dan Clodfelter.

Once the measure was defeated, Hammond moved that the CRC conduct educational, sexual orientation sessions for the community, but McCrory blocked the motion by pointing out that it was not on the agenda. Vinroot announced that it may be placed on a later agenda, but even that is uncertain based upon the comments of Mangum, "We're leaving the wound open and rubbing salt in it. We are just asking for things to go on and on and on."

Staffwriters Dan Van Mourik and Gordon Rankin contributed to this article.



Citizens For Human Rights addresses the media

former Charlotte Mayor Harvey Gantt could not sway the Council when he remarked, "No matter how important or trivial you consider this, you send a message about what we are all about. I hope you send the right message."

The floor was next opened to the opposition. Several area ministers spoke out against the resolution and its "lifestyle endorsement," but the most extreme views came from a speaker representing a national "family" organization. Linda Oberfield raised eyebrows when she quoted from an unidentified study which indicated that 51% of gays said they had sex in public. Then she further irked those gays and lesbians in attendance by stating, "although gays are only 2% of the population, they are responsible for 80% of all child molestations." Those statistics were likewise quoted from an unnamed source.

Once time had expired, the Council began its own discussion with Tom Mangum's motion to deny the entire proposal. The motion was seconded, and debate began.

Martin then offered a counter-motion that the resolution be passed with the exception that sexual orientation be redefined as "male or female heterosexuality." This, in essence, would have offered discrimination protection to heterosexuality. Martin's proposal was later retracted.

One of the few supportive comments came from Mayor Pro Tem Ann Hammond who said, "This is not a religious issue.... North Carolina leads the nation in hate crimes. That should cause us some concern. That should indicate some needs for protection for this group.... I am deeply saddened."

Councilman Pat McCrory then stated in opposition, "Charlotte averages 20 murders a month. I think that is much more important

Newspaper says YMCA homophobic

by David Stout
Q-Notes Staff

CHARLOTTE—Local alternative/entertainment newspaper *Creative Loafing* has charged that the Central Branch of the YMCA is denying that publication the right to distribute on its premises because of institutional homophobia.

Distribution Manager, Don Swan, reported that on the evening of Nov. 10 one of his employees was told by "someone at the Central Y that we could no longer distribute there." When the surprised distributor asked why, he was told that a YMCA employee had discovered that a member had stated they "worked out at the Central Y in the 'Man Seeking Man' section of the personals," Swan recounted. He further added that the YMCA worker told the *Creative Loafing* employee that this ad made the YMCA "look bad" and the paper would not be accepted at any Charlotte YMCA location thereafter.

Swan said that the YMCA representative did not identify himself so he did not know who his distribution person had spoken to.

For this reason, *Q-Notes* contacted Dan Wilcox, Branch Executive of the Central YMCA, for information. Wilcox stated that our inquiry was the first he had heard of this particular incident; however, he did confirm that the Central Y had, in separate incidents, called *Creative Loafing* about some "questionable ads" and asked the publication to stop distributing there for housekeeping reasons.

He stated that someone had called the publication "to simply make them aware of a few ads we were concerned about. And when we pointed the ads out to them, they were surprised at some of them." When asked if the

Continued on page 28

First Tuesday folding in January

by Dan Van Mourik
Q-Notes Staff

CHARLOTTE—First Tuesday Association for Gay & Lesbian Equality, serving Charlotte since 1988, will suspend operations shortly after the publication of its January 1993 newsletter. First Tuesday has been the only visible, political action group in the Charlotte area.

According to an October 29 letter, only two active board members remain - Darryl Logsdon and Don King. Efforts begun last spring to recruit new board members were unsuccessful. While many in the community expressed a desire to see First Tuesday continue its needed programs, no one stepped forward to make a long term commitment to the board. "The biggest reason I see is that the number of organizations has grown, as it needs to, but I'm not seeing a corresponding growth in the number of people. We're cutting the pie into smaller pieces," Logsdon said.

When asked what it would take to keep First Tuesday from shutting down, Don King stated, "...a half dozen people coming on the board of directors." He didn't see that happening, but is not pessimistic about

First Tuesday's demise. "In its absence, a vacuum will form, and there will be a groundswell to form another activist organization."

The documentation project which collects specific examples of anti-gay discrimination, begun by First Tuesday, will continue, King said. Some funds will be retained to maintain the project either by an individual or another organization.

While First Tuesday is in good shape financially, the lack of board members has forced them to drastically scale back activities. "It's going to leave a void in certain areas," Logsdon said of the short-term impact on the community. "If a Cracker Barrel happens again, and if the community wants to respond, it would have to be started from scratch."

Without dedicated leaders for their various committees, closing down operations was First Tuesday's final option. Anyone interested in continuing any program begun by First Tuesday should contact Darryl Logsdon at (704) 527-0111 or attend First Tuesday's Board/Business meeting on Tuesday, December 1, 7:30 pm at Christ Episcopal Church in Charlotte.