

(HELMS continued from page 1)

rooted in homophobia."

The bill passed after virulent floor debate led by Senator Helms. Helms said he introduced the bill because he was disgusted by a comic book depicting safer sex practices published by Gay Men's Health Crisis Center. While he conceded that no federal funds had been used in producing the comic book, Helms noted that GMHC conducts educational efforts under a statement of purpose which explicitly affirms gay identity and gay sexuality.

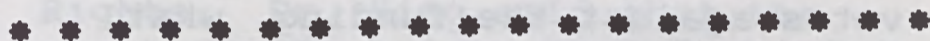
Said Helms, "I will not consume the Senate's time reading the details of this revolting project. But, Mr. President, you know those little bags they have on airlines when it gets bumpy, if I were to read the sickening details to you...you would need one...We have got to call a spade a spade and a perverted human being a perverted human being, not in anger, but in realism." Helms blamed the spread of AIDS to homosexual intercourse, saying that "(E)very AIDS case can be traced back to a homosexual act."

NGLTF plans to register its condemnation of the amendment by meeting with several senators and

staffers. In addition, the Task Force is actively contacting state and local groups in the states of all Senate supporters of the federal gay rights bill to encourage that constituent meetings and direct action be initiated.

Some Senators are justifying their votes by saying that the actual impact of this bill will be negligible. "This is wrong and unacceptable on two counts" said Levi. "First, its intent and effect are homophobic, as Helms made patently clear throughout the debate. Our friends who abandoned us on this vote would never have voted for a measure that was racist in intent, no matter how benign its impact. Second, this amendment could well rule out any federal funds for the safer sex programs our community has so successfully developed"

"We hope to defeat this amendment when the House and Senate have a conference on this bill, but its chilling effect on the Public Health Service bureaucracy may result in the reduction or elimination in funding for gay-related AIDS education programs" Levi observed.



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