

# The Front Page

Vol. 3, No. 22 December 21, 1982 — January 10, 1983

## “Crime Against Nature” Repeal Possible

For several months we've been hearing rumors of an impending proposal to repeal the "crime against nature" law. But we've kept the lid on the story, fearing that premature publicity would hurt the proposal's chances. On Friday, December 10, 1982, the Charlotte News ran an article on the recommendation as its lead story on page one. We now feel free to inform our readers of the proposal, and we intend to keep you up to date from now on.

For several years the North Carolina Criminal Code Commission, an independent commission set up by the legislature in the mid-sixties and composed of prominent lawyers, judges, prosecutors and private citizens, has been working on a comprehensive revision of the state's criminal laws. The commission will make a recommendation to the session of the General Assembly that begins in January.

One of the recommendations tentatively accepted by the commission is repeal of the "crime against nature" law that has been used against gay people for so long. However, the recommendation has not been finalized, and it could be changed before the proposal is sent to the legislature.

In 1960, every state in the Union had a law similar to North Carolina's crime against nature law. However, such statutes remain in force today in only 24 states. Most of these

laws in other states were repealed as the result of legislative action like what is contemplated in North Carolina.

In most of these states, the repeal of laws criminalizing private sexual activity between consenting adults received little or no publicity. However, the latest change in the District of Columbia provoked a massive campaign by the Moral Majority in 1981, and the effort to repeal the D.C. law proved unsuccessful.

Here, the North Carolina Human Rights Fund has launched a fundraising and membership campaign to help the chances of any proposal to repeal the crime against nature law.

"The proposed repeal is very important to North Carolina's gay community," said John H. Boddie, a Raleigh attorney who serves as the NCHRF's legal counsel. "The crime against nature law is used against gays all the time, even when they're not charged with a criminal violation. Some judges seem to believe that the law means that gay people are automatically criminals, and that feeling makes it easier for them to deny child custody to gay and lesbian parents or to allow discrimination in other areas.

"Until the crime against nature law is repealed, I see no way for lesbians and gay men to receive equal justice in this state," Boddie added.

On the other hand, the crime against nature law is not just a gay issue. The law makes all forms of oral and anal sex a criminal offense punishable by up to ten years in prison.

In fact, the commentary to the American Law Institute's Model Penal Code says that in North Carolina a husband and wife who engage in oral sex are violating the crime against nature law and are thus technically subject to ten years imprisonment.

"I think most people would agree that the current law is ridiculous, if they knew what it said," Boddie said. "The problem is that few straight people know that oral sex between a man and a woman is just as much a 'crime

against nature' as sex between two men or two women.

"If the proposed repeal is to pass, the gay community has got to educate the population at large," Boddie added. "The religious right wants the issue to be seen as one only of concern to gays. We've got our work cut out for us in showing non-gay people that the law affects them, too."

The North Carolina Human Rights Fund is continuing to seek members to help the effort to repeal the crime against nature law and to assist its other projects. The address of the fund is Post Office Box 10782, Raleigh, North Carolina 27650.

## LETTERS

### Drag: the Pros and Cons

Gentlemen:

I do enjoy your news and stories of people. As a suggestion, and that's all, I'd like to read about the lives of female impersonators... how they got started and what they do off the stage. We already know how they are on the stage. Keep up the good work.

Ken  
Newbury, SC

Dear Sirs:

In a recent issue of *The Front Page*, you had a picture of Melissa Montgomery, Miss North Carolina '81-'82. I was wondering if you could send me a picture like that before it was completed for publication, without the other articles printed over it.

I would really appreciate it if you can, but if not, thanks a lot anyway. You're really doing a great job with your paper, keep up the good work.

A Faithful Reader,  
D. Cassidy

Dear Michael Baker:

I simply could not allow the remarks made by the "Devoted Pageant Participant" in the letter you published in Vol. 3, No. 20 to pass

without some comment. The author of that letter spends a great deal of space defending and promoting the notion of North Carolina becoming a "rising star in the business of femal impersonation," going on to wax ecstatic on the "quality experience, local pride, expense and talent" that contribute to making drag shows "one of the most progressive mediums of entertainment in North Carolina." Please!

While I am sympathetic to a vast number of opinions and would never attempt to quell anyone's self-expression, it occurs to me that the sentiment expressed in that letter is not a majority opinion (and certainly not one held by me), but worse, simply continues to promote ignorance to a large portion of the community which may not even be aware of what a "drag show" is really like.

Before I say any more, let me tell you about myself and where I am coming from. I was born in Gaffney, S.C. and raised there until my family moved to Thomasville. I graduated from UNC in Greensboro. I am 32, and have lived in many cities all over the state, so I know the Carolinas well. I have often tended bar at gay clubs as a part-time job, although not in the last year or so, I am telling you all this not  
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## St. John's MCC:

RALEIGH—St. John's MCC, having been officially approved for chartering, faces challenging and exciting weeks ahead. Highlighting the church's chartering/anniversary celebration will be its Founder's first visit to Raleigh. The Reverend Elder Troy D. Perry will participate in a week-end of activity on February 25, 26, & 27, 1983.

Adam DeBaugh, chair of the UFMCC's departments of Christian Social Action and Ecumenical Relations, will be guest speaker at the 3PM worship service on December 19th. Mr. DeBaugh, who lives near Washington, D.C., is noted throughout the Fellowship for his writings and lectures. He and the

Reverend Elder Nancy Wilson co-authored the paper presented for membership into the National Council of Churches. He recently participated in dialoguing with a group of the NCC theologians.

St. John's Christmas candlelight/communion service will begin at 11pm at the Baptist Student Center at 2702 Hillsborough Street in Raleigh. On Christmas Day at 2pm, there will be a potluck dinner in the social hall at 814 Dixie Trail. Those who may not be able to be with family on this special holiday are urged to join in the festivities. There's always room for one more, says Rev. June Norris, in the "Family of God."

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