

R.I. Baptists Greet 20th Century

PROVIDENCE — Nine persons supporting the position that a homosexual can be a valid Christian, picketed the American Baptist Convention at the Central Baptist Church on Saturday, April 12. The picketers passed out "An Open Letter to a Rhode Island Baptist" leaflet in support of their stand.

Stating that there is a "Conspiracy of Silence" in the Church, a conspiracy having to do with the attitudes about Gay people in the Church itself, they charged that the "Conspiracy creates fear, terror, violence and dread for Gay people and for many non-Gays." They defined the "Conspiracy" further by stating that the "Conspiracy of Silence lays all the burden of dealing with homosexual feelings and feelings about homosexuals on Gay people."

The "informational picket" came about as a result of the creation of a task force to study homosexuality.

When the Rhode Island Council of Churches granted affiliate status to the Metropolitan Community Church in Providence, the American Baptist Churches of Rhode Island formed the task force to study homosexuality and its relationship to the church. The task force submitted their report to the Convention on April 12.

The open letter leaflet was not a condemnation of the American Baptist Church. It stated, "As a Rhode Island Gay Christian I find some sense of pride in the fact that Baptists in this state have had the courage to break the Conspiracy." The focus of the small demonstration was to inform the members of the convention of the stand by some of the gay Christians in the Church.

The report of the task force released at the convention stated that some members of the six-person task force "view homosexuality as a valid and

acceptable lifestyle for those who are true homosexuals." The report further states that, "These of our number feel that while certain texts in the Bible speak against homosexual acts, the Bible did not know homosexuality in terms of the modern psychological understanding of that word and therefore could not have addressed the subject."

"These members of the task force feel that recognition of a homosexual fellowship as a valid Christian church will, in the eyes of many, inevitably elevate homosexuality to the level of acceptable Christian behavior, and will tend to encourage experimentation in this direction, especially among young people whose sexual attitudes are still in the process of being formed."

The task force did agree on some points. "Homosexuals are persons for whom Christ died, and therefore are

like all of us, the objects of His love and have access to His grace."

"Homosexuals have often been mistreated, denied equal protection and due process under the law and we deplore and condemn both the structures and attitudes which tend thus toward their cruel and even brutal treatment."

In conclusion, the task force stated that "such a fellowship would radically offend the beliefs of a vast majority of our Rhode Island Baptists and would serve seriously to divide and weaken our convention." They further stated that they could not recommend to the convention a position on homosexuality at the present time, but would continue to function until the next convention. They suggested that each church should study the issue and submit its conclusions to the task force for the 1976 convention.

Sexual Minorities Conference

BOSTON — Some 80 persons attended the first Boston Conference on Alternate Sex and Gender Lifestyles on April 19 at Emerson College. The all-day conference, sponsored by the hotline Community Sex Information in cooperation with Ariadne Kane, dealt with transvestism, "transgenderism," and to a lesser extent, transsexuality, and drew professional and volunteer counsellors and interested individuals (including about 15 TVs, TGs and TSs and a number of gay people). All the discussion dealt with biological males, since female TVs, TGs, etc., are more rarely known.

Several points emerged from the conference. One was the difficulty of fitting a particular person into a particular category, due to a mixture of "fetishist" and "gender identity-derived" feelings leading to cross-dressing.

Another point was the severe stresses and isolation experienced by many in these lifestyles, leading to as yet little "fetishes-are-far-out" or Transvestite Liberation positivism. For example, the transvestite speaker, Betsy, said that "At the pseudotransvestite stage, where a person shows interest by reading the TV literature but doesn't dress, it might be manageable or curable." She felt that the fetishist, who wore only a single item or two of the opposite sex, could also be curable, while the TV who dressed more fully might not be. "There," she noted, "it is a problem of management, like arth-

ritis." When someone from the gay community questioned this, she rescinded the word "cure": "not cure, but riddance, if you will."

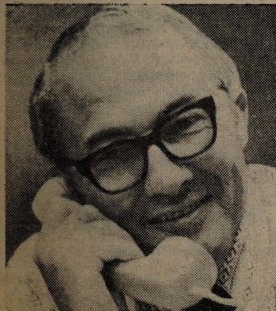
The next speaker, Paula, a transgenderist from Washington, D.C., took a less severe approach, but it was still a question. "Do we have to be cured?" she asked, "or is it a matter of education of the public?" On the other hand, Ariadne Kane pointed out that "the very fact that they appear and speak here is a positive statement."

Renee, a drag queen from Boston who replaced a speaker on transsexuality who could not attend because of illness, went through a period of believing herself as a male, a gay male, and says, "There is only one Renee 24 hours a day". I hit this point along the scale (from masculinity to femininity) and I'm happy here."

Attorney Richard Rubino, of Rook, Roth and Rubino in Boston, spoke about the laws relating to cross-dressing and change of gender identity. Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont have laws prohibiting the use of disguise to perpetrate a fraud, and various cities may have their own ordinances about cross-dressing per se (Boston does not). A city's law department should be asked through an attorney about such laws. As to change of identity, under common law you change your legal name easily, but a change of sex designation, of importance to transsexuals, is another problem. The Massachusetts Bureau of

Vital Statistics, for example, will not change the sex of a transsexual on the birth certificate (although one might be able to get Probate Court to order this done); in fact, Illinois is the only state having a specific form for transsexuals to fill out to get a new birth certificate. Dr. Michael Fleming, a professor of psychology at Boston University and on the staff of Gender Identity Service, emphasised his view of the importance of a preoperative transsexual's analysis of her expectations from the operation, to avoid possible depression afterwards. He also said that peer support groups were now emerging as an important function of the G.I.S. He also believes that for fetishism and possibly transvestism, aversion therapy can work for those who really want it to.

The format of the conference combined lectures with small group discussions involving some eight to ten people including one or more resource persons. The conference was the second of its kind in New England. The first was last December in Newport, R.I.



Sen. Allan R. McKinnon (D-Weymouth), head of the Joint Legislative Committee on Commerce and Labor, and a sponsor of this year's gay rights legislation.

Bills Get Report

BOSTON — House bill 2848 (S.272) was given a unanimously favorable report from the Legislature's Committee on Commerce and Labor last week, and was sent to the House Clerk for placement on the House calendar. The bill had originally been expected to receive an 18-4 favorable report, with four members dissenting, but committee staff director Robert Barry told GCN that it was decided that the committee's report should be unanimous since the two chairmen, Rep. Richard H. Demers (D-Chicopee) and Sen. Allan R. McKinnon (D-Weymouth), will be carrying the bill on the floor of their respective branches.

H.2849, a more limited bill banning discrimination against gays in state civil service positions, also received, as expected, a unanimously favorable report from the Joint Public Service Committee, and will be carried on the floor of the House by Rep. Richard E. Landry (D-Waltham), who chairs the House Public Service Committee.

H.2944, a measure repealing the centuries-old Massachusetts "sodomy laws," was "committed for further study" by the Judiciary Committee. The committee staff, however, said that this was not an attempt to bury the bill. GCN learned that the two heads of the committee, Rep. Michael F. Flaherty (D-South Boston) and Sen. John J. Conte (D-Worcester) were reluctant to give the bill a favorable report, but were even more reluctant to offend two supporters of the bills, Atty. Gen. Francis X. Bellotti and the Massachusetts Bar Association.



Ariadne Kane speaking at the Alternative Sex and Gender Lifestyles conference. (photo by Jim Ashe)

Three Die in Montreal Fire

By James Thorpe

MONTREAL — Three men died in a fire April 12 at the Aquarius Baths, located on Crescent St. in downtown Montreal. The fire, which broke out about midnight, completely destroyed the four-story building, which was occupied on three floors by the baths. Most of the patrons escaped with few injuries, but some are still hospitalized, recovering from serious burns.

The city arson squad is still trying to determine the cause of the fire, and told GCN that no comment could be made at this time. Lorne Halliday, manager of the sauna, told GCN that he had no comment to make about the fire or the possible rebuilding of the baths.

The baths were subject to a massive raid just over two months ago, when 35 patrons were arrested. Hearings on the bust are to be resumed April 25.

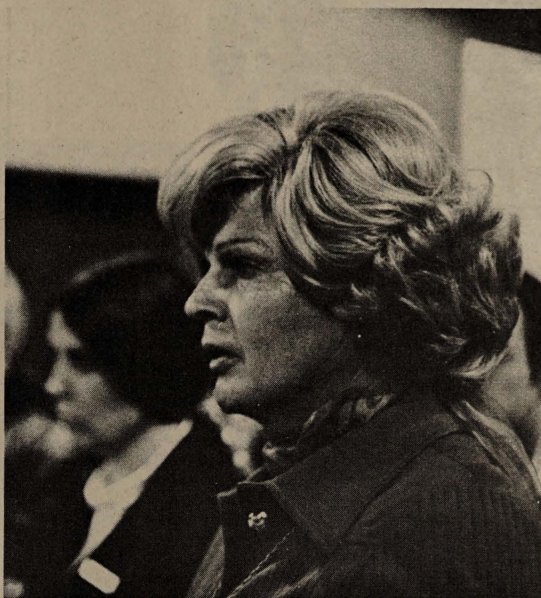
The congregation of the Metropolitan Community Church of Montreal dedicated their April 13 service to the three victims and their families.

Transvestites Speak for Themselves

These pictures were taken at a transvestite/transsexual conference. At this conference people spoke about the subculture, and about their views and society's views of it.



Identity change is a large gray area, but where there aren't laws a Probate Court judge can order the City Clerk to change records.



photos by Jim Ashe

Some are "tapestry TVs." They're happy there. They just want to find some friends to talk to and socialize.



Stoller . . . he thinks its a passivity vs. aggression thing. He never says where he gets his data.



. . . a lot of theories. I guess you have to talk to a lot of people and find out what makes them tick.



Here's a great fallacy. When you win, you don't lose.

. . . he may start going to drag balls. That confuses the gay community!