

'Gay Pride Week': speeches, confab, and 'gay-in' in Portland

Four years ago this month, the New York City Police Department made a typical raid on a gay bar in the gay Christopher Street district of New York.

Something strange happened.

Rather than getting herded off to jail, the gay people — for the first time — fought back and a three day riot ensued.

This was the birth of the gay liberation movement. The next year saw the founding of the national Gay Liberation Front and now the gay movement is a growing cause that is spreading across the country.

Last week in Portland, and in cities all across the United States, the movement celebrated its third annual Gay Pride Week.

On Saturday gay pickets demonstrated for gay rights in front of the Pioneer Post Office. Gay activists from around the West Coast spoke.

Jim Foster, who supported a gay rights plank at the Democratic National Convention last year, was the first speaker. He urged support for Oregon House bill 2930, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in the areas of housing and employment.

"We are at a turning point," Foster said, "as all over the nation the gay movement is exploding to massive proportions."

Foster is political chairer for San Francisco's Society for Individual Rights (SIR).

George Nicolle, chairer of the Oregon Gay Political Caucus, also spoke in support of HB 2930 and urged state legislators to endorse it.

By RANDY SHILTS
For the Emerald

"The persecution and discrimination against gay people is not nearly as destructive as the fact that the society still denies our very existence," Nicolle said.

Scott Lewis, a minister for the Seattle Metropolitan Community Church (one of a network of gay churches), said that "while the Church has been a key oppressor of gay people...I know Jesus Christ to be the greatest liberator of all times." It is the Church and not Christ that has been oppressive to gay people, he said.

Jerry Harris, a University Sociology graduate student representing Eugene Gay People's Alliance, said, "A society that puts more value on men killing one another than men loving one another is a sick society."

He also spoke in support of a proposed ordinance before the Eugene City council that would ban anti-gay discrimination.

Randy Shilts, chairer of the ASUO's Incidental Fee Committee and Oregon's first openly gay public official, also spoke at the demonstration.

"This society demands that we as gay people live without love. We can get by if we pretend we are straight but as soon as we express our sexual identity we lose our jobs and our free place in the society," Shilts said.

"The end result of gay liberation is love. The society must learn to respect it."

The demonstration was followed by the Third Annual Northwest Gay Conference.

Foster was a key-note speaker and urged gay unity among all gay people.

Two Seattle Lesbians presented their documentary "Gay Families," an in-depth analysis of their relationship — as two gay women — with their children as a gay family.

The speeches were followed by workshops on gay media use, gay student activism, religion and the homosexual and lesbian activism.

The next day a gay-in was held in Washington Park.

"Similar demonstrations were held across the country in Seattle, San Francisco, New York, Washington D.C. with a gay-in in Mayor Daley's Chicago office," said Shilts. He also urged interested people to attend the weekly meetings of Eugene Gay People's Alliance at 8 p.m. on Tuesday nights at the Wesley Center at 1236 Kincaid.

(Shilts is an Emerald reporter and a member of the Eugene Gay People's Alliance.)

Supreme Court nixes curbs on Ohio Guard

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WASHINGTON — Closing another chapter in the controversy over the death of four students during a 1970 antiwar demonstration at Kent State University, the Supreme Court last week declined to order "judicial surveillance over the training, weaponing and standing orders" of the Ohio National Guard.

In a decision by Chief Justice Warren Burger, the high court ruled that "the complex, subtle, and professional decisions as to the composition, training, equipping and control of a military force are essentially professional military judgments, subject always to civilian control of the legislative and executive branches" of government.

The decision grew out of a federal court suit, filed five months after the Kent State shootings, by three students who asked for restrictions on future training and use of the guardsmen.

They suggested that the existing training led the part-time soldiers, at Kent State and in other circumstances, to use "fatal force in suppressing civilian disorders when...non-lethal force would suffice to restore order."

The Sixth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati had ruled that a federal district court judge improperly dismissed the students' suit and had returned the case to him for resolution of that issue.

But Burger's opinion reversed the appellate court decision and said the district judge had acted correctly.

The Chief Justice pointed out that since the suit was brought, the complaining students had left the university and the Ohio National Guard had adopted new "use-of-force" rules and civil disorder training.

Burger's opinion was joined by President Nixon's other three appointees to the high court and Justice Byron White.

The other four justices said they would not have gone as far as Burger on the merits of the case, but would have dismissed the students' suit as moot in light of the changes since 1970.

Earlier, the supreme court had ruled that the families of the students shot by the guardsmen were not entitled to sue the state government for wrongful death.

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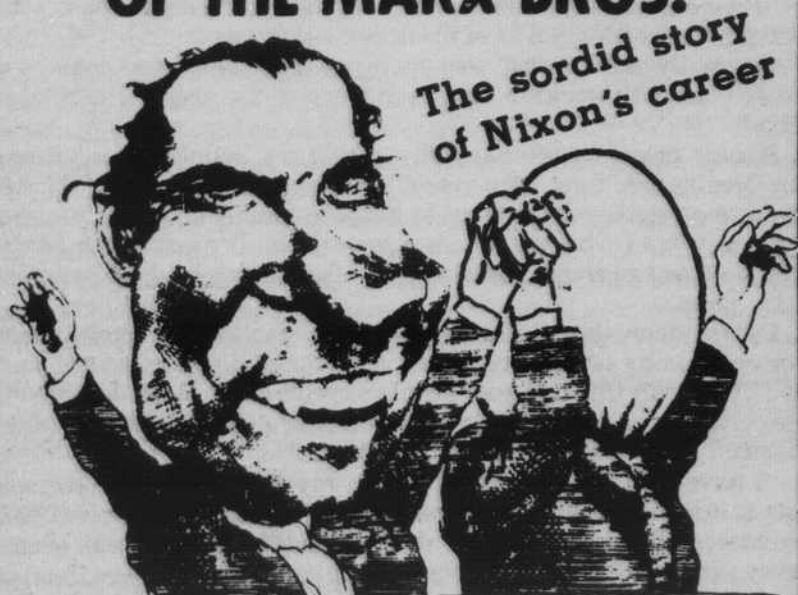
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