

Vandalism as self-defense

by Janet Gornick

NEW YORK — Dorchen Leidholdt of New York Women Against Pornography (WAP) paused momentarily in the Manhattan subway to scrawl "Degrades Women And Promotes Rape" on a poster advertising the August issue of *Penthouse* magazine. Sighted by an observant Transit Authority policeman, Leidholdt was arrested, handcuffed, and taken to jail, where she received a summons to appear in New York Criminal Court on August 22, on trial for "writing on property."

Accompanied by Alexandra Matusiuka of WAP and Janet Gornick of DC Feminists Against Pornography, Leidholdt approached the bench, armed with a copy of the advertised *Penthouse* — opened to the center spread featuring several pictures of a faceless naked woman bound tightly from

head to toe with black rope.

When asked by the judge how she pled to the charged, Leidholdt responded, "Not guilty," and immediately began to read in a clear, loud voice the following statement:

Not guilty. I did write "Degrades Women and Promotes Rape" on a poster advertising *Penthouse* in a subway station. But I wrote this message not as an act of vandalism but to defend myself against the psychological and physical danger *Penthouse* poses to women.

The posters advertising *Penthouse* depict women as sexual objects and targets. They carry sometimes subliminal, sometimes overt messages of violence. They frighten, intimidate, and humiliate women subway riders. By writing on the poster I was defending myself against sexual harassment.

I was also defending myself against sexual violence. *Penthouse* actively promotes the abuse, rape, and murder of women. The issue advertised by the poster I wrote on contains a story celebrating the gang rape of a college woman in a fraternity house — frighteningly similar to real gang rapes that have been carried out in fraternity houses around the country. The issue also features a photo essay celebrating the bondage, rape, and death of a woman and a cartoon that pokes fun at the rape and murder of a woman.

By using the subway system as a vehicle to promote *Penthouse* with its message of violence against women, the MTA is jeopardizing the psychological and physical safety of women. As a woman who is dependent on the subway system, I feel that I had no choice but to attempt to defend

myself against *Penthouse*'s dangerous propaganda.

Just short of the final paragraph, she paused to ask the judge if she might show him the magazine. The judge — his face reflecting a mixture of shock, amusement, interest, and at least a touch of respect — declined a look at the *Penthouse* spread, and dismissed the charges against Leidholdt.

Leidholdt's statement noticeably woke up the rather sleepy courtroom, which was filled with nearly 200 people, mostly young and male. As the three women walked out of the room following the dismissal of charges, nearly everyone stared; a few nodded in agreement. One woman raised a fist in the air and said, "Thank you."

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Gay judge removed from bench

A Minneapolis county district court judge, 21 years on the bench, has been ordered removed from his post following his arrest for soliciting a male prostitute and his subsequent acknowledgement that he is gay.

Judge Crane Winton's difficulties began in February, 1982, when a Minneapolis TV station did an investigative report on teenage prostitution in a Minneapolis park. Winton was arrested and charged with solicitation, a misdemeanor, as a result of their probe. He was fined \$300 and returned to his job, where he has remained since.

In Minnesota, consensual sodomy includes both oral and anal sex, and is illegal.

After Winton's arrest, a three judge review

panel was convened to hold disciplinary hearings. During the hearings, Winton was questioned about his involvement with hustlers and pat acts of consensual sodomy. Winton was also questioned about his future behavior. Winton told the panel that he would no longer solicit, but that he may again violate state sodomy laws in his private relationships.

During the course of the hearing, Winton's lawyers argued that the sodomy laws are antiquated and that Winton was being singled out because he is gay. Testimony was admitted by Winton's attorneys which indicated that 75% of judges and 99% of lawyers violate the state's sodomy laws.

In addition, much attention was focused on another Minneapolis judge, who had also been convicted of involvement with women prostitutes. He was returned to the bench with a reprimand. The panel maintained that the differences in the cases was one of future intent.

Testimony was also heard from other lawyers and judges who maintained that Winton is highly competent. Winton's lawyers argued that his competency outweighed any short term damage to the court's and Winton's reputations.

The panel disagreed, saying "People may accept or adopt any lifestyle they wish, but in so doing they also adopt and accept the ef-

fect of public regulations, whether good or bad, of activities which are part of such a lifestyle, and are crimes, together with the public perception of them when they commit such crimes."

Winton's lawyers expect the review board to rubber stamp the panel's recommendation to remove Winton. From there the case will go to the Supreme Court where lawyers for Winton will argue that the sodomy laws are antiquated, that they are an invasion of privacy and that they discriminate against gay people.

Gay Community News & Equal Time

Church council tables MCC application

The National Council of Churches' governing board, early this month, voted 116-94 to indefinitely postpone a decision whether to admit the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches.

After short, mostly procedural debate the governing board voted not to act on a motion that would have made the 27,000 member denomination eligible for membership in the National Council, the nation's most numerous inter-denominational organization.

Unresolved by the vote are a number of issues, including the question of the status of the original application for membership and what it does to continuing relations between the council and MCC.

Less than a week prior to the vote not to decide on the membership application by MCC the hierarchy of the Greek Orthodox Church in the United States had threatened to resign its membership if MCC was admitted to the National Council of Churches.

The Reverend Dolores Berry, newly elected Senior Pastor of Portland's Metropolitan Community Church, commenting on the NCC vote, said, "The large group (MCC) does not see the decision negatively. They are not ready to say no. It means that they are going to go back and work some more. it was another victory. The spirit is continuing to work and open more doors."

ERA rejected

In a move that feminists said they would "remember in November 1984," the House of Representatives voted 278-147, six votes short of the two-thirds majority necessary for passage of a constitutional amendment, to revive the equal rights amendment.

Using a procedural move to prevent opponents from altering the original language of the amendment, House Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill Jr. insisted that the issue be voted on with no amendments and debate limited to 40 minutes. Opponents want to add language relating to abortion, the draft, women in combat and other peripheral issues.

Some congressmen who voted against the

amendment said they were not voting against the ERA but "for the respect of the United States Constitution." Feminists called that objection a smokescreen.

Women's groups angrily denounced those who had voted against the amendment. Kathy Wilson, chairwoman of the National Women's Political Caucus, said "Those who voted against us will soon learn the consequences of the gender gap."

The vote was "offensive" to Oregon State Senator Ruth McFarland. "I'm going to endeavor to change one of those votes," McFarland said, referring to her candidacy for the 5th Congressional District seat currently held by Denny Smith.



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