

King County, WA gay rights ordinance

A King County fair employment ordinance which would have extended the city of Seattle's employment protection to gay men and lesbians in the surrounding county was returned to committee for further discussion March 15.

At least 450 people signed up to testify at two days of heated discussion. The first public hearing session lasted an unprecedented eight hours.

Sponsor of the ordinance, Councilor Cynthia Sullivan, reports she received a death threat over her sponsorship of the measure. Primary opponent of the ordinance is the Full Gospel Fellowship Association, a Christian businessmen's club.

Supporters include the Washington State Conference of Bishops, the League of Women Voters, the local Service Employees Union, the State Municipal Employees Union, Washington Educational Association, Seattle Council of Churches, Washington State Association of Professional Psychologists and the King County Democratic Party Committee.

Return of the ordinance to committee is a move supported by most local activists.

According to Jim Arnold, publisher of the *Seattle Gay News*, the move means the ordinance will probably not be reconsidered until after the fall elections. "It looks like it will moulder in committee until fall," he said.

In addition, gay activists are putting pressure on Washington Gov. Booth Gardner, who promised an executive order protecting employment rights during his last campaign. The city's ordinance, already in effect for city employees, is also "being strengthened" and that action is "going well," Arnold said.

King County councilors reported receiving thousands of phone calls opposing the ordinance. Opposition on the council was spearheaded by Councilor Paul Barden, ex-marine and ex-police officer, who accused gay men and lesbians of "mockery of God." Fundamentalist Dr. Paul Cameron was flown into Seattle to testify and Gay News Editor George Bakan said, "The organized fundamentalist effort is absolutely incredible."

Postponement of action on the ordinance stalled the fundamentalist campaign. Councilors are "intimidated as hell," Bakan said, especially since several are up for re-election

in November.

Opponents were also ready to gather signatures to force a referendum if the ordinance passes. A referendum is still a possibility if the measure is held in committee until after the election.

Activist Caitlin Sullivan said the strong anti-gay campaign could force the gay and lesbian community to "coalesce" and may raise the consciousness of heterosexuals supportive of gay rights.

Ex-nuns banned in Boston

by Lynne de Mont

Rosemary Curb and Nancy Manahan, editors of a new book entitled *Lesbian Nuns: Breaking Silence* were "disinvited" in early April from a scheduled May appearance on Boston television.

The Boston Globe reported that Station WBZ-TV cancelled the appearance of the women in response to protests from the local Roman Catholic community. Reverend Peter Conley, secretary of community relations of the Boston archdiocese, complained that the appearance of the two women, both lesbian ex-nuns, was "insulting and the book itself exploitative because only nine of the 51 women interviewed are nuns now."

Conley notified local Catholic lay organizations of the scheduled appearance and "urged them to do what they felt appropriate." The station received letters and petitions requesting that Curb and Manahan not appear on the May 9th program, "People are Talking."

The station defended its action in a letter to Fr. Conley which read in part that "many, many letters about the booking revealed that it distressed a great portion of the audience, and we would respond in kind to other issues of kind that affect large numbers of people."

In response to the charge that her book is exploitive, editor Curb replied, "I'd like to ask who's exploiting whom, if exploiting exists where there's an imbalance of power, where one group is empowered to dictate rules to another deferential and powerless group and if the power is patriarchal which is the rule in the Catholic Church and in other male-dominated institutions."

She added that "anyone who reads the book will see that the only exploitation in the lives of the women is the patriarchal power [of the Church] over them."

The book contains 49 autobiographies of present and former nuns who identify their sexual orientation as lesbian.

Barbara Grier, representative of Naiad Press, predicted that Curb and Manahan will gain national attention. "These women will be talked about at every breakfast table in America," she said. "They're going to be two of the best-known women in the country and — I don't mean this as a challenge — but there's nothing the Catholic Church can do about it."

Naiad Press has arranged an extensive national author's tour including radio, television and bookstore appearances to promote the book.

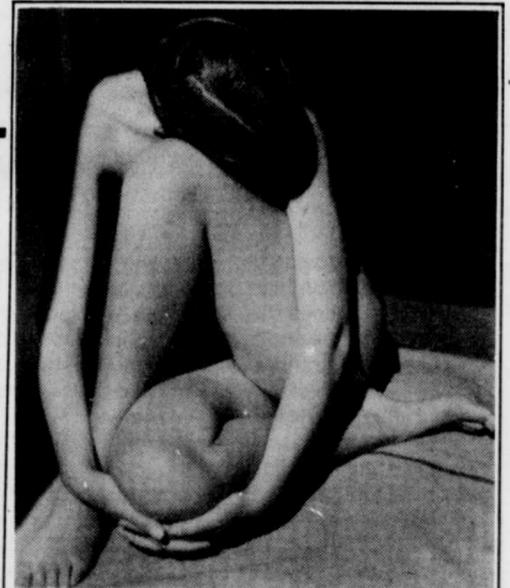
Curb and Manahan will be in Portland Friday, June 14, for a speaking engagement sponsored by A Woman's Place Bookstore as part of Lesbian and Gay pride Week.

Gay Choir wins cash settlement from Archdiocese

The Archdiocese of San Francisco has agreed to pay Dick Kramer's Gay Men's Chorale \$2,250 to stop a lawsuit from going to trial where Archbishop John Quinn could be forced to testify. The cash settlement is to compensate the Chorale for losses incurred when Quinn arbitrarily cancelled a contract for Kramer's Spring 1983 performance at St. Boniface Church. The lawsuit was filed last year by National Gay Rights Advocates and Paul F. Wotman of the San Francisco law firm, Wotman & Hall.

Leonard Graff, NGRA Legal Director, said: "There was an express written agreement for the use of the space at St. Boniface. The Archbishop had no legal basis to unilaterally cancel that contract." The Chorale suffered a severe financial loss because it had to settle for a performance hall with a smaller capacity as a last minute replacement.

Jean O'Leary, NGRA Executive Director, said: "We're not going to allow our local cultural groups to be treated this way. The Church should be aware that we intend to fight homophobic actions such as this." O'Leary noted that NGRA successfully sued the Church a few years ago when they failed to keep a similar commitment.



Nude, 1936 by Edward Weston

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