

## US fundamentalists fund New Zealand anti-gay campaign

On March 8, 1985, the Homosexual Law Reform Bill was introduced into the New Zealand Parliament. This bill would decriminalize homosexuality and include sexual orientation in the N.Z. Human Rights Act to give basic protection in areas of housing, employment and access to goods and services for lesbians and gay men. Currently gay men are subject to seven years imprisonment for anal intercourse, and there is no human rights protection for gay men and lesbians.

The Law Reform Bill which was introduced by Labor Party member of Parliament Fran Wilde is subject to a "conscience vote," not a party vote. On its first reading (three readings are necessary for passage) the bill passed with a large majority. It is presently before a Parliamentary Select Committee which is hearing submissions both for and against the Bill. This committee will report back to Parliament, either recommending that the Bill proceed unamended or with a recommendation for amendments. The bill will then return to Parliament for a second and third reading.

The Gay Task Force of N.Z. and a number of other lesbian and gay groups have been preparing for the introduction of the bill for some time. Public opinion surveys indicated that reform would receive widespread support. Gay and lesbian groups have been politically active in N.Z. since the early 1970s.

To the surprise of the lesbian and gay community, a well organized and financed attack against the Bill was launched by four MPs and by right wing religious groups. A petition op-

posing the Bill is being taken door to door throughout N.Z. by the Salvation Army (the N.Z. branch of the organization which in New York City has refused to comply with NYC Executive Order 50 which requires groups or businesses doing business with the city to sign a non-discrimination statement regarding sexual orientation), supported by the Reformed Church, the Assembly of God and other fundamentalist sects. This petition is also being taken to work places, schools, hospitals and homes for the aged with petition stands being set up in shopping centers and other public places. The petition campaign has so far gathered 750,000 signatures and aims for one million. N.Z. has a population of three million.

Many people including gays and lesbians have been pressured into signing the petition in workplaces for fear of losing their jobs, and 60% of the students at a teachers training college signed under the threat of being considered unsuitable as teachers if they did not. A climate of homophobia is being created which is intimidating people who are called "anti-petition."

The religious right is also running full page ads throughout N.Z. in newspapers and magazines which carry headlines such as "Don't legalize the spread of AIDS" or "We've had enough — this bill is an attack on family life."

Literature is also being printed, most of it U.S.-sourced, with misinformation about AIDS, lies about the lesbian and gay communities in the U.S., and quotes from people such as Judge Murtagh and Dr. Paul Cameron.

Further, hundreds of anti-lesbian and gay rallies and meetings have been held featuring campaigners such as Pastor Richard Flinn

who is calling for the death sentence for gays and lesbians, and Keith Hay who is demanding quarantine on a waterless volcanic atoll.

The petition, the ads, the literature and the meetings are costing huge sums of money which the right in N.Z. does not have. The Gay Task Force of N.Z. does not believe that this campaign is being funded from within. "We think," said Alison J. Laurie, spokesperson for the Gay Task Force of N.Z., "that this campaign is being financed and organized by U.S. fundamentalist groups including the Salvation Army. Apart from the use of American material, the sums of money involved and the style of the campaign bear all the hallmarks of the U.S. moral imperialism."

"Furthermore," she said, "it is hardly coincidental that this campaign was started so soon after N.Z.'s implementation of our anti-nuclear policy which forbids U.S. naval vessels carrying nuclear weapons access to our ports. This decision is said to have placed the ANZUS Treaty (mutual defense treaty between N.Z., Australia and the U.S.) in jeopardy, and U.S. Secretary of State Schultz stated, 'New Zealand has weakened regional stability.' " The policy of N.Z. is considered very dangerous by the U.S. government as it sets a precedent which may be followed by several NATO member nations including Holland, Denmark and Norway.

"Is the U.S. religious right attempting to destabilize the N.Z. government by scapegoating gays and lesbians?" asks Laurie who noted that N.Z. Prime Minister David Lange, a Nobel Peace Prize nominee, debated Jerry Falwell at Oxford on the issue of nuclear policy. (Lange won) "Could such a campaign have received the approval and covert support of the U.S. government?" continued Laurie.

"The accumulating evidence and the record of U.S. interventions around the world lead to the conclusion that the involvement of the U.S. government in this matter is not out of the question," concludes Leslie Cagan, Program Coordinator of the Mobilization for Survival.

## BWMT convention sparkles

by Morgan Pinney

John Bush, a black professor from Boston, was re-elected co-chair of the National Association of Black and White Men Together at its fifth annual convention in Los Angeles, July 20. He emphasized a platform of renewed militancy for the organization. Tim Wilson, of Denver, re-elected as the white co-chair, said that several member chapters are now positioned for direct action after extensive documentation of racial discrimination at gay bars in their cities.

Seventy-five year old veteran black civil rights activist Bayard Rustin told the delegates that gay rights is the most difficult struggle of all because it is labeled anti-God, anti-family, and anti-children. "No other civil rights movement faces such heavily emotional charges from its enemies," he said. Rustin, whom Bush described as a role model for black gay youth, emphasized the need for homosexuals to build coalitions with other minorities — and with the vast wave of workers displaced by "an economic system which must be re-ordered to provide jobs for all."

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