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just news

Gay rights law insulting, Boston group says

For the first time under Massachusetts law, the bill establishes that sexual orientation is legitimate grounds for discrimination in employment, housing and credit.

U. S. Representative Gerry Studds (D, Ma.), Oscar Wilde, Allen Ginsberg, A. Philip Randolph are among the thousands left unprotected by the recently enacted Massachusetts "Gay Rights" Law. That's because the bill explicitly denies protection to anyone who has any attraction to persons under the age of 18. That means there is NO civil rights protection for two 15-year-old lesbian lovers, or a man in a perfectly legal relationship with a 17-year-old boy.

The Massachusetts bill writes off gay youth, man/boy lovers, or any lesbian or gay person who fails to deny all erotic attraction for young people.

It establishes, for the first time under Massachusetts law, that sexual orientation is legitimate grounds for discrimination in employment, housing and credit.

And that's not all. One amendment safeguards Governor Michael Dukakis's homophobic ban on lesbian and gay foster parents, and bears the clear implication that homosexuals are a threat to children.

What has been won? Virtually nothing of concrete value. This law leaves discrimination against gays and lesbians entirely legal in health care, education and foster care. In the coming years, this law will directly benefit a tiny handful of mostly white, mostly middle-class gays and lesbians — those who can afford to buy justice in America's classist and racist marketplace.

Massachusetts gays and lesbians have

fought for a civil rights bill for 17 years because of its potentially powerful symbolism, not its toothless protections. We have fought to affirm that sexual orientation does not diminish anyone's claim to justice, not divide our community into those who deserve rights and those who do not. We have fought to give gays and lesbians the self-confidence to come out, not require many to deny part of their sexuality.

Instead of mobilizing the gay and lesbian community to fight the bigoted language in this bill, a small group of gay and lesbian "leaders" met secretly with state legislators in October and decided that the bill's flaws were tolerable. They betrayed some of the most vulnerable constituencies of our community for a hollow legalistic victory.

They did this even though many other offensive amendments were successfully struck down, even though some 70 percent of the state electorate supports gay rights, even though two massive demonstrations proved our community's muscle.

This bill is an insult to gays and lesbians. Its ageism and homophobia set a dangerous precedent nationwide. Much more than our progress, this bill shows how far we have to go before we achieve real liberation. We must demand nothing less of those who speak in our name.

— Boston Union of Radical Gays and Lesbians

Radical women plan conference

In anticipation of a rapidly escalating war for women's liberation in the 1990s, Radical Women will sponsor a national conference to chart a course for militant feminist organizing.

Titled "The Third Wave of Feminism: A Candidly Revolutionary Approach," the conference will be held February 17 - 20, 1990, in Santa Monica, California, and will focus on theory and strategies essential to winning permanent social and political equality for all women.

The conference will feature three spirited, controversial and diverse keynote speakers whose ideas have inspired the movement — Martha Cotera, Chicana Feminist theoretician and author of *Diosa y Hembra: The History and Heritage of Chicanas in the US*; Clara Fraser, Jewish labor and civil rights activist and socialist feminist pioneer; and Merle Woo, Asian American lesbian educator and free speech fighter.

Additional conference topics include: exerting the class strength of women workers; waging war on poverty, ageism and ableism; revitalizing campus activism by uniting students, faculty and staff; and affirming global solidarity against the imperial overlords.

For more information, call (503) 249-8067 or write Radical Women, 1510 NE Brazee, Portland, OR 97212.

NLC interim task committee meets

The National Lesbian Conference interim task committee met in Atlanta in October to further define the membership of the steering committee that will guide the planning process for the conference scheduled for April 24-28, 1991 in Atlanta.

The 50 states plus the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and British Columbia have been divided into 10 regions. Each region will have four planning members on the steering committee. Regions were created by considering existing networks, lesbian population and travel distances. Each region is responsible for contributing one-third of all monies raised by the National Office, which is presently located in Albany, New York.

Regional planners will be chosen at regional meetings which are being organized before the next large national planning meeting. The first steering committee session is scheduled for Kansas City, Missouri on Friday, April 27, 1990. The third national planning meeting, to which lesbians from around the country are invited, will be held in Kansas City the same weekend, April 28 and 29. The interim task committee will meet a second time in Atlanta the first weekend in February.

For more information about the conference or to get involved, contact Michelle Crone with the national office at (518) 463-1051, or write NLC, P.O. Box 3057, Albany, NY 12203.