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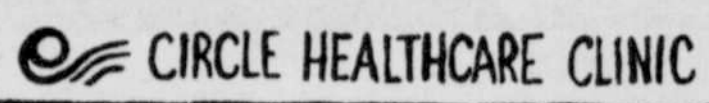
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national news



PHOTO BY CAROLINA KROON

Bigots rain on Irish parade

More than 200 protesters, including openly gay City Councilman Thomas Duane, were arrested in New York on St. Patrick's Day for violating a court order barring the Irish Lesbian and Gay Organization from the traditional parade on Fifth Avenue. Mayor David Dinkins, like tens of thousands of others who usually attend the parade, stayed home. Sidewalks usually packed like sardine cans for the parade held only 120,000 people lined up about three deep.

The arrests are the latest development in ILGO's fight to participate in the 232nd annual St. Patrick's Day parade. According to ILGO, noted Irish civil rights lawyer and former president of New York's City Council, Paul O'Dwyer, will defend those arrested in court. A statement from ILGO said that some protesters were hurt during the arrests and that as of March 18, only one remained in jail.

ILGO's route to the parade has been a bureaucratic swamp. When the Ancient Order of Hibernians refused to allow ILGO to join the parade, the St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee, Inc. formed and challenged them in court for the parade permit. A three-ring circus involving various levels of Hibernian bureaucracy ensued. Some divisions of the AOH did want ILGO to join the parade. The AOH and the local Catholic Church prepared to boycott the parade when the new group won the permit. The parade committee held the prized permit for just two days before voluntarily surrendering it. The AOH reapplied and won the permit.

Throughout the struggle, both ILGO and Irish American conservatives have been unwavering. "Being on Fifth Avenue on St. Patrick's Day is a symbol of being Irish," ILGO spokeswoman Eileen Clancy told New York's *Irish Echo* newspaper. "We belong there too. This is a matter of civil rights."

Conservatives have tried to paint the parade as a religious event. One woman sent a letter to the *Irish Echo* going so far as to say gay and lesbian Irish Americans "can never be part of our Irish Christian heritage." The *Echo's* coverage of the controversy has focused more on conflict between various factions of the AOH for control of the parade than on ILGO.

Last year, ILGO did march and Dinkins joined them. He said afterwards he was shocked by the hatred that greeted the contingent along the route. Ironically, a gay organization marched in Dublin's St. Patrick's parade this year without any significant controversy. Last year, a float entered by a gay group won a prize in Cork's parade, in Ireland.

Irene K. Hislop

Violent threats against Clinton continue

Members of a white supremacy group have been calling the national March on Washington phone number and leaving threats against Presi-

dent Bill Clinton. The calls have been reported to the Secret Service.

"It looks like Bill Clinton, America's presidente [sic] and leftist leader has some sort of love for homos and a secret fetish for men in uniform. Maybe that commie bitch wife of his has something to hide. Is Hillary really a he? Maybe she used to be a man or a faggot. With queers in the military, this nation's military strength will all but diminish...." began one message. "If Bill Clinton can make it through his four-year term without a chunk of lead in his head...who really cares anyhow? Of course victory is ours," continued another.

These messages and dozens more like them have been left over the past few months on the March on Washington phone lines. The group claiming responsibility for the majority of the messages identified itself as the White Aryan Resistance. Many of the messages include derogatory remarks against women, people of color and Jewish people, as well as gays and lesbians.

Threats against the president of the United States are taken very seriously by the Secret Service. These threats, as well as the ones directed against Clinton from within the military, are being investigated.

Ariel Waterwoman

Seattle lesbians stand up to gun-wielding homophobe

When Carla Stevens and Kim Mathey crossed a busy street hand-in-hand on their way to Greenlake Park in Seattle, anti-gay harassment was not an expected concern. However, as they passed a truck containing three young men they were barraged with taunts addressing them as "fucking dykes." At first the women ignored the shouts, but then, Stevens said, something "like a dam just broke inside," and she turned to confront the men. "I realized that my dignity was in question, and when that happens, I will fight. I didn't learn that lesson in socialization where the 'good little woman' is supposed to take verbal abuse from men."

After initially attempting to discourage Stevens from responding, Mathey followed Stevens as she returned to confront the occupants of the truck. When the men ignored Stevens' challenge to get out of the truck and face her, Stevens threw dirt at the truck. The enraged driver pulled out a handgun and yelled, "Bitch, I'm going to kill you, I'm going to kill your ass right now!" Stevens responded, "I will not live without my dignity, so get your ass out of the truck and kill me right now!"

Mathey said she was terrified, "Then I saw Carla stand up to them and immediately noticed that they did not know what to do with her in the face of that power. When I saw that, I knew the guy wasn't going to use the gun," she recalled. At that point the driver also realized he was blocking traffic and sped off.

Steven and Mathey decided not to report the incident to the police. "Historically they, (the police) haven't helped us, and I was not prepared to take one more minute of abuse, even with a cop," Stevens said.

Seattle Gay News reports that several similar incidents have been reported to Seattle police, even with license plate numbers, and police have discouraged citizens from reporting the incidents as hate crimes.

Steven says the answer is for lesbians and gay men to stand up to the harassment themselves. "Whether we have a handful of dirt or nothing at all, we can stop these terrorists from attacking us anywhere we are by showing that we are not afraid of them," she said. Stevens believes her courage comes from her heritage. "It was a lesbian who threw the first punch at Stonewall. I believe that it is a lesbian tradition to stand up and fight back."

Jim Hunger