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Letter summarizing the history of the Wilde-Stein gay symposium controversy

Howard R. Neville

President, University of Maine

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UNIVERSITY OF MAINE *at Orono*

Office of the President

Alumni Hall
Orono, Maine 04473
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March 8, 1974

Chancellor Donald R. McNeil
228 Deering Avenue
Portland, Maine 04102

Dear Don:

Just so that it is a matter of record, I think that we ought to go through the various steps which took us to the Board of Trustees meeting on the Wilde-Stein issue.

When I first learned that there were plans for a state-wide gay conference on the campus, I decided that I would quietly work to have it canceled or delayed. After consultation with my colleagues here, we decided that we would delay it on the basis of the energy crisis until later on this Spring or until next Fall. I did learn shortly thereafter that the Wilde-Stein Club wanted the conference on April 20 and "intended that it be held then."

At about the time I learned this there was an Administrative Council meeting scheduled and you will remember that I asked for time at the Administrative Council meeting to tell the group what I was going to do. I told the group, not so much for their approval or consultation or advice, but so they would understand what we were doing. You will remember that during the discussion we were quite divided and that you and your staff were also split, but that following the discussion it was still left as a campus matter. You did ask that before any final decisions were made and before any final administrative cancellation, I would consult with you.

In the January formal Board meeting, the Wilde-Stein Club issued a news release announcing the gay conference--a copy of which is attached.

Because it had become a matter of public discussion, you suggested that I talk with the Board about it and about

Chancellor Donald R. McNeil....#2

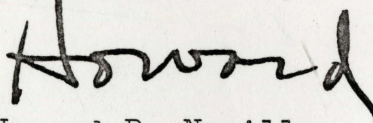
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what actions I was planning to take. We had our first long meeting that night which lasted approximately three hours. My position was that I was going to oppose the conference and thereby send it to the courts for resolution unless I was directed to do otherwise by you or by the Board. I felt then that was the only option open to me.

After much discussion that night and another two hours in the morning, the Board passed the resolution which in effect took the decision-making authority for approval or disapproval away from the campus, and they in effect directed that the conference be scheduled.

I believe the above to be a correct history of how we got to where we are. If you have any differences of opinion on this, would you please let me know.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Howard".

Howard R. Neville
President

HRN:ht
Enclosure