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Randy Stevens

University of Maine

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Gay group leader vows 'students will be educated'

by Randy Stevens

"We decided that we shall not be ignored any longer. We are going to educate this campus community."

These are the words of Karen Bye, a self-avowed lesbian and the major force in forming the Wilde-Stein Club. The club is composed of male and female homosexuals who meet each week to find social and psychological support from each other.

Finding help for their personal lives has been easier than establishing public relations with the university. Requests for use of any empty room in the Memorial Union for office space have met with continued setbacks, said Bye.

The Wilde-Stein Club went before the Finance Committee on November 12, with a budget request for office supplies and a mailing list from the Senate. The request was set at a minimal \$50, said Bye. The organization was informed its request could not be met due to a lack of funds.

According to Bye, "(Senate President) Keating has been against us from the start since he believes it would give the university a bad image if the Senate gave financial support to a gay group. And (Jeffrey) Hollingsworth's right-wing faction has been pushing Keating to vote against us when the budget proposal reaches the Senate floor this week."

Ted O'Meara, vice president of the Student Senate, was present at the Finance Committee and reported the request was not denied but merely sent back to the group to see if they could get the supplies from other sources.

"They requested \$50 for books and periodicals not available at the University library or bookstore, and office supplies. The Finance Committee tabled the request because it was for educational materials; we want them to find out if the library or Counseling Center can provide these materials."

"It's common procedure," O'Meara added. "This doesn't mean the group won't get the money; it will be taken up again at the next meeting."

"If the Finance Committee doesn't pass it, it will be brought up before the Senate," added Keating. "The Finance Committee cannot kill the motion." Keating admitted that he was not in favor of allocating funds to the group because he feels such a move would be a political risk for the Senate. He is worried that the resultant publicity could be

harmful for UMO he said, and will speak on the matter when the request reaches the Senate floor.

"I, personally, am concerned about the reaction of the Board of Trustees, the legislature, and the people of the state," he added.

Keating also stated that Hollingsworth did not attend the Finance Committee meeting on Nov. 12, and has not spoken against the group with him, or to the Senate.

The local gay movement began over a year ago with a course offered by the Abenaki experimental college exploring the homosexual lifestyle. The group taking the course eventually formed Gay support and Action with the help of the Bangor Unitarian Church.

The Wilde-Stein Club, named after Oscar Wilde and Gertrude Stein, two famous writers and homosexuals, was formed this semester to offer a choice to students who felt out of place with older members of the Bangor group or found transportation to be a problem.

"There have been no problems along the line of hassles. That has really surprised me," said Bye. She said that the faculty and administrative people who have been a part of the organization's growth have been very cooperative. Most problems have come from peer group joking about those homosexuals who have "come out of the closet" and admitted their true sexual preference.

Attendance at the Wilde-Stein meetings has been strictly students thus far. The average number has been 15. Bye believes, however, that "There are a hell of a lot more gays on this campus that are not showing up."

Asked how many students at UMO are probably homosexual, Bye estimated "15 to 20 percent". She referred to Kinsey's statistic of 10 per cent for the general population and increased the figure because "Thinking on a campus is more liberal." Several campus homosexuals have "come out" and are overt about their sexuality, some have told their parents, and a few are open to everybody, according to the Wilde-Stein founder.



WILDE-STEIN Club organizer Karen Bye says faculty and administration have been helpful in the group's formation. Most

problems have been peer group joking and the reluctance of student government to extend financial support.