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Memo from Peter Fitzgerald to Howard Neville

Peter H. Fitzgerald
University of Maine

Sturgis Haskins
Vice Chairperson, The Wilde-Stein Club

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UNIVERSITY OF MAINE *at Orono*

Office of the President

Alumni Hall
Orono, Maine 04473
207/581-7477

January 11, 1974

To: President Howard R. Neville
From: Peter H. Fitzgerald

I was visited this morning by Mr. Sturgis Haskins, Vice Chairperson of the Wilde Stein Club. Mr. Haskins presented me with a letter (attached) asking for a meeting with you, Dr. Fritsche and Mr. Sam Nezbit, the student attorney, as soon as possible after your return from vacation in Tuscon. Mr. Nezbit protested verbally to me that the University administration was in a deceitful manner denying the members of the Wilde Stein Club their rights as students and as citizens. He observed that the conference facility for the state-wide meeting of "gay groups" had been reserved for a long period of time, and that the cancellation by Mr. Benoit on the basis of Vice President Poulton's memorandum cancelling conferences had been merely a subterfuge. He indicated to me that he had learned from various sources that you had instructed various members of the University administration to make no comment on the Wilde Stein Club. He had also heard that you had given instructions to the University Librarian not to order two publications the Wilde Stein Club had requested, according to the policy that permits student groups to request such publications (he made it clear that this information had not come from the Librarian). He further noted that he felt there was wide-spread support among faculty and other lower echelon administrators in the University for the Wilde Stein Club and its activities, and that he felt, he didn't use this wording exactly, that you were taking a repressive position with respect to the club in response to Dr. Bubar's fulminations in the press.

I made three points with Mr. Haskins. The first was that it was your position that this University belonged to the people of the State and that it was your judgement that the people of the State would not tolerate the use of facilities at this institution for social events or conferences for homosexuals. I indicated that you felt a responsibility as President for the stewardship of the campus and that you would act accordingly. Two: I indicated that you understood very well the tradition of the University as a free market place for ideas and that you would defend the right of any student group to gather as a student group for discussion purposes regardless of what the topic under discussion was.

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Three: I indicated that it was your feeling that no gain would be made on either side if the University administration and the Wilde Stein Club got into a public debate and/or confrontation over the question of the use of facilities for conferences or for social events.

Mr. Haskins reminded me that a number of state universities have already gone the route of permitting gay students to use facilities for just such purposes. He indicated that there was legal precedent to suggest that the Wilde Stein Club would be successful if it brought suit against the University upon the grounds that it was being unfairly discriminated against. Mr. Haskins made clear his feeling that the homosexual in American society had been mistreated in a discriminatory manner and that he was no longer willing to accept such mistreatment at the hands of any individual or institution. As a result homosexuals, it is his belief, will be more militant in demanding their rights. He indicated to me that should the conference facility be denied, the Wilde Stein Club that he would call for a demonstration of "gay people" from around the State on this campus on the date for which the conference center was originally scheduled.

Mr. Haskins and I agreed that the contents of our conversation would be confidential.

PHF:jab

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115 North Estabrooke Hall
University of Maine
Orono, Maine
January 11, 1974

Dr. Howard Neville, President
The University of Maine
Orono, Maine

Dear Dr. Neville;

While we understand that you are presently on vacation -until the 18th of this month- we respectfully request a meeting with you as soon as convenient after that date.

We think it appropriate that Dr. JoAnn Fritsche, of the Equal Opportunity Office, and Sam Nesbitt, the student attorney, also be present at that meeting.

Sincerely,

Sturgis Haskins

Sturgis Haskins
Vice Chairperson
The Wilde-Stein Club

WILDE - STEIN CLUB

University of Maine

ABENAKI — MEMORIAL UNION

ORONO, MAINE 04473

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 22, 1974

CONTACT PERSON:
Sturgis Haskins
Room 115 North
Estabrooke Graduate Hall
Tel.: 866-4476
581-7381

no public
mention
of name

UNIVERSITY GAY RIGHTS ORGANIZATION TO SPONSOR CONFERENCE

ORONO - The University of Maine Wilde-Stein Club, an officially recognized student organization on the Orono campus, will host the first state-wide Gay conference. The conference, which was postponed from March 21st at the request of the University because of the energy crisis, has been rescheduled for Saturday, April 20 at the Hilltop Conference Center pending final approval from Vice-President Poulton.

The conference will be open to Gay and interested non-Gay people alike. This conference follows a New England Gay conference on the Emerson College campus in Boston on March 15, 16 and 17. Emerson College has provided space and financial support to Gay people to make the conference possible. Another state-wide conference is scheduled in February at the University of Rhode Island campus.

At Orono, student organizers for the Maine conference are scheduling a full day of activities for those who plan to attend. The highlight of the morning's activities will be two featured speakers, one male and one female, who are

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active in the national Gay movement. While the male speaker has not yet been chosen, Ms. Nathalie Reckhill, women's coordinator for the National Gay Task Force in New York will address the meeting. The President of the National Gay Task Force is Dr. Howard Brown, former head of Mayor Lindsey's Health Services Administration.

Following lunch at the Hilltop Center, workshops will be scheduled for conference attendees on such varied topics as bi-sexuality, problems of rural gays, 'coming out', organizing for political action, and Lesbianism. A supper and dance will follow at the Unitarian Parish House in Bangor.

Child care services will be provided for children of Gay parents who wish to attend the conference.

Participating in the Conference will be Gay organizations from various parts of the state. There are presently eight groups located throughout Maine.

In addition to sponsoring the state-wide Gay conference the Wilde-Stein Club holds weekly meetings at the student Union Building. The Club, named in honor of writers Oscar Wilde and Gertrude Stein is also a pun on the Maine Stein Song, the University anthem.

The purpose of the organization is to provide an acceptable social outlet for the University homosexual community and to enlighten the public on the unfair and

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inaccurate stereotypes and misconceptions its holds
with regard to its Gay citizens.