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## Homosexual funding evokes sharp student opposition

Lisa Halvorsen

*University of Maine*

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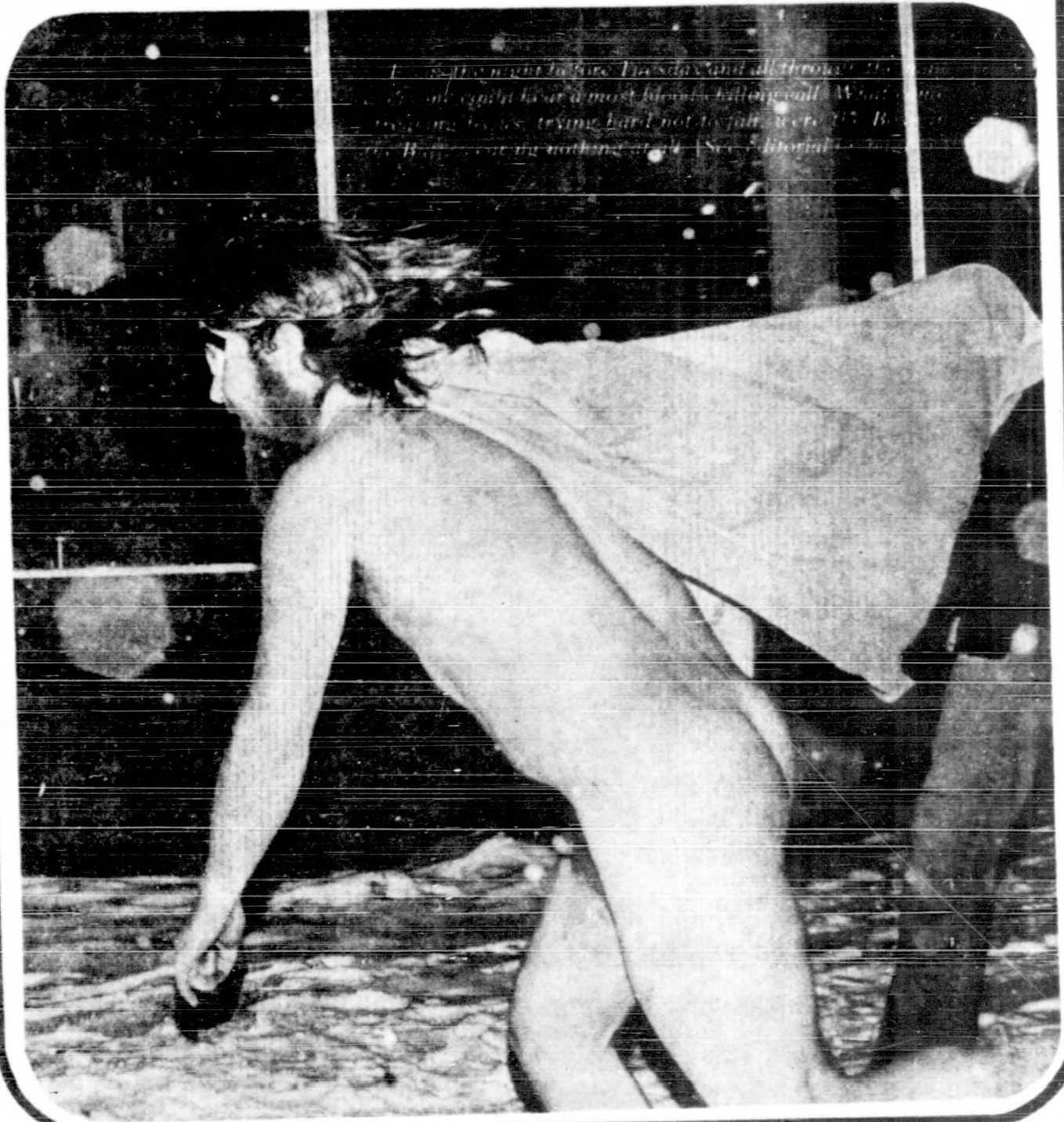
**Midweek**

Feb. 12, 1974

**A broken home  
at FIJI  
p. 2**

# Maine Campus

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# Homosexual funding evokes sharp student opposition

by Lisa Halvorsen

"Every great movement has started out by being a 'pain in the ass'."

"Sure, I recognize them. They've got a right to form a group just like anyone else. I'm all for the senate giving them money to get started."

"Personally, I don't care what they do, as long as they don't bother me."

Reaction to the recent senate vote on the allocation of funds to the Wilde-Stein Club varies greatly among members of the student body.

"No one has any strong objections to them meeting," says Glen Castner, a junior chemical engineering major, "but I think I am speaking for most of us when I say that I don't want my money going to them."

A Hart Hall co-ed echoed these same feelings when she said "why should my money be allocated to recruit homosexuals? I haven't heard of any good reasons for the club or conference yet."

The sentiments of a number of Cumberland Hall residents were more violent. They reacted so strongly against financial backing of the club that a small

delegation attended a student senate meeting in protest. Though they could not be recognized en masse to speak, their senator, Bruce Leavitt, voiced their views.

The delegation opposed the club's request for money to be used to obtain speakers for their spring conference. The senate had previously voted them \$150 for



Jeff Hollingsworth

travel expenses and educational materials.

One of the members of this delegation, Richard Vantine, a freshman from Freeport, explained that he felt quite strongly about how his money was being used. "I don't approve of the club, and therefore, I have no desire to support it. If I give it money that says I'm for it."

Dave Merrill, another Cumberland Hall resident who attended the meeting, was less opposed to the allocation. "I don't mind the first \$150, but the \$200 was absurd." He did object, however, to the Hilltop conference. As he sees it, "sex belongs in the bedroom, or in other words, in its proper place. I don't see what they can spend two days talking about."

An Aroostook Hall resident, Steve Linnell, on the other hand, was willing to let the club have senate funds. He admitted that "the only reason justified for

giving them funds is because if they tried to earn money by holding a fund-raising drive, a lot of people wouldn't go."

The senators, too, had something to say on the question of funding.

Jeanne Bailey, Hart Hall representative, explained that she recognized the club and the idea of backing them financially. "I voted with a split-feeling. I'm open-minded about the group, but I don't know how much aid should be given to them. We (the senate) wanted to give them money, but there are problems involved." Senator Bailey added that it was decided to let the club become more established before

deciding whether or not to give them more money.

Another senator, Steve Aylward, agreed with Miss Bailey's sentiments. According to him, the gay-lib group needs "more self-identification and a good repertoire with the Maine residents."

But at least one senator was completely in favor of giving the group as much money as requested. Peter Simon of Oxford Hall believes the club is justified in asking for backing for a convention, because it would be a good opportunity for everyone to learn about homosexuality. When asked whether

• STUDENTS RESPOND • see page 4



Jeanne Bailey

# Students respond to Wilde-Stein funding controversy

• continued from page 2

or not his constituents supported his viewpoint, however, Simon stated he "always votes by his own convictions." He believes that if the dorm voted for him, then the dorm residents must support his ideas and trust that he will make the right decisions regarding university issues.

There were many, however, particularly within the fraternity system, who took the opposite viewpoint. Some refused to accept formal recognition of the club.

Senior Kim Shepard of Delta Tau Delta fraternity said, "Most clubs I'd recognize, but this particular club, no. I think giving

Anyone wanting to go pays his dollar. Why can't they (the Wilde-Stein Club) do the same?"

Many of the students were not as concerned about the money given to the club as they were about the effect its formal recognition (the concurrent publicity) would have on the university. There was much said about the influence the bad publicity would have on the Maine taxpayers and the state's funding of the school.

A senior Agriculture and Resource major remarked that "the fact that the university now recognizes the club isn't a feather in our hat. The public will take this into consideration when they decide to vote on giving the university funds."

Mike Elwell, senator from Aroostook Hall, also voiced his comments. He didn't like the idea of the gay-lib issue being tied in with the university. He believes that the controversy will have a definite effect on the funds allocated to the university. As he sees it, "they (the gays) have no right to kill majority projects for a minority cause."

Another student stated that because of the present state of the economy, there will be cut-backs all over. The Maine legislators are "just looking for an excuse to reduce university funds" and this issue may be it.

Dunn Hall's representative Jeff Hollingsworth, also considered the possible effects of the controversy on the outside community. He said that he believes "it may develop into a serious issue because the university has poor public and legislative relations." As to whether the matter will have a negative effect on state fund-giving, the senator replied, "I really can't say, but the more

visible the homosexual activities are on campus, the closer scrutiny there will be."

A Knox Hall resident commented that the "one bad thing about the Wilde-Stein Club is not the taboo, but the fact that there's too much publicity." He considers his home state to be very conservative and feels that the taxpayers will react to the issue. "Tuition might go up, if taxpayer support goes down," he warned.

Some students, however, weren't as worried about the funding at they were about Maine's reputation.

A business major from Rhode Island said that "every gay person on the east coast will consider Maine a mecca. Before you know it, Maine will be known as a 'mecca for queers'."

This in turn will have an effect on the student enrollment. High school seniors are apt to think twice before applying to the University of Maine, the student continued.

John Trinward, a member of one of Maine's fraternities, made another point—that of the effect this controversial issue may have on his future. "This is my university and anything that goes on here affects me directly. When I go out to look

for a job (engineering) most of my potential employers are going to be pretty straight. It's a bummer for me if I find myself losing a job because of a label attached to the university."

But in spite of the strong views held against the club itself and the amount of money allocated to it, students seem to have accepted the fact that there will be a gay conference on campus this semester. Views from "the hill," where the conference will be held this April, ranged from "who gives a damn" to the more emotional fear of "guilt by association."

Debbie Gordon, an Oxford Hall co-ed, said she doesn't care if the conference is held on Hilltop, "as long as no one of my sex comes up to me and propositions me." She added that "if the university has given the go-ahead signal, then I don't care. They're people, why not?"

A few other Hilltop residents said that they wanted to avoid the whole thing and were planning to leave campus that weekend.

And there were a few who said they thought they might wander over to the conference, just to see what it's all about.



Debbie Gordon

them the \$150 was wrong." He added that "Neville said that from now on the group reaping benefits from the facilities should pay. Take basketball games, for example.