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Elected cowardice: Blaming the constituents

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Elected cowardice: Blaming the constituents

Oh, boy. Here we go again.

First we learn that the UMO Student Senate has suddenly decided they can't give the Wilde-Stein Club \$200 to help finance speakers for their scheduled gay conference. Next, we find out that Republican House members, during a party caucus, decide that they can't consider giving the University of Maine any more money until the Board of Trustees reneges on their decision to let the gays hold the statewide conference at UMO.

Granted, the Student Senate has not condemned the organization or resolved not to approve the gay conference. However, they have resolved not to support the gay conference in any way. Reason: they say their constituents—UMO students—don't want to give the gay organization any more financial help on top of the \$150 they granted two weeks ago.

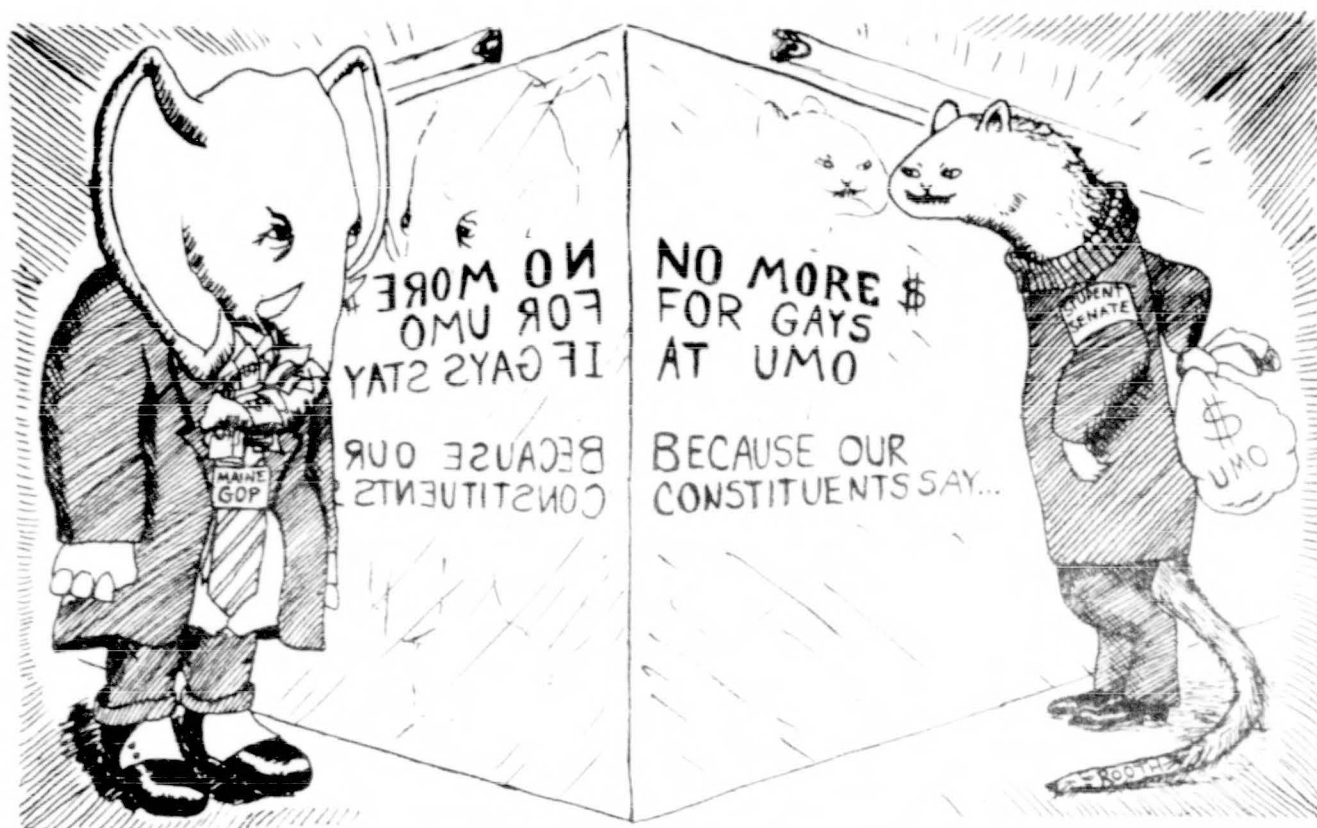
The fact seems to be that the Student Senate copped out. They let the bottom drop out of the proverbial barrel by refusing to back a stand they made only a week before—that the gay organization deserves as much consideration as other student groups. Suddenly, the yellow began to emerge, and many senators showed their true colors and the excuse was "our constituents."

Bravo! Next issue please... Yes, we believe the university is home of civil libertarians. Of course, people should do as they please! An individual has the constitutional right to pursue whatever course he chooses. But money, you say? No, we believe. But can we go beyond the token? No, we have to beg off now. Sorry. Our constituents wouldn't approve of that. Haven't we given enough?

There it is. The issue evolves, carried weakly. But the point is made, the signature is on the dotted line. The duty is done. Now on to the next token action.

Certainly the Student Senate cannot claim the Wilde-Stein has asked for too much. \$150 for materials, \$200 for speakers—no great sum in light of the thousands student government passes out to less controversial organizations. So why the squeamishness?

Perhaps student senators and Maine Republicans are grown in the same garden, fertilized by the same bullshit, and harvested by the same twisted bureaucratic machine.



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Indeed, we are blessed with a bumper crop all around.

The Republican action comes as no surprise to anyone. The Maine GOP for years has been conservative and outrageously ignorant of the rights of minorities; witness former attorney James Erwin's election eve '72 opinion that non-resident students could only vote for national offices. Or, Senate President Ken McCloud's infamous tie-breaking vote which defeated the ERA amendment a year ago.

Still, the threat of financially punitive actions against the university for its affirmation of the rights of the individual and minority groups rings more of Hitler 1936 than Lincoln 1861. And it has implication far beyond the rights of gays. It goes straight to the heart of the Bill of

Rights: are we, or are we not a tolerant people? The GOP answer: we are not.

Further, we don't believe the people of this state—or the people on this campus—by and large oppose the rights of the individual to the lifestyle he chooses. Certainly those not considerate of these rights are the most vocal. But they should not hold the most weight. Not when they are a vocal minority intent on repressing the rights of a less vocal, more dispersed minority.

And we cannot offer a hand of congratulations to the senate for jumping off the Titanic before the women and children. There's no honor in charging Bunker Hill before the British arrive.