

CONFIDENTIAL



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.

CONFIDENTIAL

-2-

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

✓
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