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INTRO 475: WESWUNG AND MISSED. NEXT?



Protesting Intro 475's defeat, 20 gay liberationists were arrested near Brooklyn Bridge.

BY LEO SKIR

New York, N.Y. Wednesday, April 25, 10:45 a.m. The Firehouse, 99 Wooster Street. Firehouse is full of folk but mostly not newsfolk but regular GAA meeting-tonight folk, jolly as jumping beans and grabbing the news releases like party favors. A general jolly air. It seems in the bag and from the Firehouse the perspective is good. It's a press meeting but with Victory almost on the horizon everyone wants to be a parent.

GAA President Bruce Voeller introduces the speakers. There is a list circu-

lated of 24 who will speak. About ten show up. But it doesn't dampen spirits. On Friday the General Welfare Council will meet at City Hall. There are 15 members. If seven vote for Intro 475, it will get out of committee. And almost all bills getting to the floor of the council go through. And it seems enough of the councilpeople are committed.

No one seems disturbed that not one of the committed councilpeople from that committee are in the Firehouse this morning.

Bruce Voeller tells of the million gay New Yorkers urging the bill on, "ten per-

cent of the city's population." The bill will ensure fair employment, fair housing, fair public accommodations for them.

The "news" is that the people who backed the campaign continue to back it. To prove this, Clingan and Burden, who sponsored the bill, say they are for it. Ditto Herman Badillo, Edward Koch, a Mr. David (for Eleanor Holmes Norton), Bronx Borough President Robert Abrams, Wilma Gottlieb of the National Organization of Women, Roberta Weiner of the Manhattan Women's Political Caucus, Marie Rothman of Americans for Democratic Action.

This is hardly news or drama. We have overcome nothing.

There is a cloud, but it doesn't seem that large. Cuite (pronounced "cute"), the majority leader, will not accept proxy votes. There are no fixed rules about accepting these. One of the bill's possible supporters, Matthew Troy, is in Florida. There is word he is driving home.

But the only problem seen is getting the people on the council who will vote for the bill to the council.

DiBlasi may sneak away on vacation. Should we lie in front of the wheels of his car?

Thursday, April 26, 9 p.m. The Firehouse. General Meeting. Cheerleading. And now: Power-of-the-Mimeograph-to-be-demonstrated. One sheet to be distributed through the city: "We Are On The Verge of Victory . . . but the help of everyone is needed." Out into the streets! "Why, I can call the fisher from the sea." "Why, so can everyman but will they come?"

Friday, April 27, 10:30 p.m. City Hall. They don't. About 100 people, mostly old familiar GAA faces, get wet waiting in the rain across the street from City Hall behind barricades. From time to time we get reports. There is a discussion of small two-family houses, of the issue of transvestites. Two transvestites, Marsha Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, have neared the

GAA loud-hailer and members of the council are informed they are motherfuckers (Is this the issue? Incest? Are we against consenting-parents-with-children?). The recess is ended. Aileen Ryan has not come back. And hers is to be a deciding vote. We sing (to the tune of "Frere Jacques"):

*Aileen Ryan, Aileen Ryan,
Where are you? Where are you?
Hiding in the closet, hiding in the closet
Shame on you, shame on you.*

One of the women tells us she called Aileen Ryan at 7:30 a.m. and was told Ms. Ryan would have to read the bill. Slow reader. Late lunch. We lose.

It's about 3 p.m.

"This has been a peaceful demonstration," a police captain tells us (they are lining up in preparation for a demo, a paddy wagon is on hand). "Please disperse peacefully."

"Move to the subway entrance!" cries GAA President Bruce Voeller. We follow him to the entrance near Center Street bordering the approach to the Brooklyn Bridge. It's raining hard.

"I don't know what you are going to do," he says, "but I'm going to sit in the road and stop the traffic."

That's what we're going to do. We are wet and tired and angry. We line up across the road and sit down. The cars stop. The police come and carry us off. The first carried off—I'm among them—are not arrested. The rest are. Our president, vice-president, press relations man are taken. I, unarrested, only slightly bruised, hop over to GAY office, tell Jack Nichols the result, go back to the Firehouse to await the results.

The 20 arrested are all charged, then released on their own recognisance. Fifteen men and five women. Louis de Vito, the police liaison with the GAA, had been at the stationhouse or the court. I remember that the mayor had publicly come out in favor of the bill.

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Laura Kenyon, an extraordinary singer, is currently packing them in at the tubs, as she flourishes in Ron Fields/Tom Tolla's superb show, "Pizzaz '73." Don't miss her at the Continental Baths Friday and Saturday (Eves) through May 26th. See photo interview in our next issue. (Photo by Eric Stephen Jacobs)

INTRO475:



Intro 475's defeat brought tears to some who waited in the rain at City Hall.

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Bruce, returned, takes command. He brings out the photostats of the signatures of support given by Ryan and Manton. Ryan had been absent; Manton had abstained.

"They signed petitions," Bruce says. "They lied."

There is a discussion of what to do. About 50 people are present. There is much anger at Ma. Ryan but Bruce Voeller says that Cuite, who did not openly oppose the bill, had engineered its defeat. The account of his tactics, later confirmed, seems believable:

1. He had offered the black Councilman, Taylor, concessions to the black community if he withdrew support from the gays.

2. Cuite had gotten Manton's aged father to the City Hall and made him force his son to withdraw his support, threatening the son that he could not enter his father's house again.

That night, about midnight, the GAA members and others at the Firehouse march from Soho to the Village and through the Village stopping at the gay bars trying to pick up more marchers. They stop at Bonnie and Clyde's, Trude Heller's, Julius, Danny's. Police cars follow us. Most of the people in the gay bars stare out fearfully. They don't know about 475. They're not angry. We're scaring them.

Two of our newly militant members, angry at their gay non-angry brothers, scream outside Ty's. "Assholes! What do you need? To be killed?" Faces pressed against the glass. Some of the marchers overturn garbage cans. One hits a police car, yells, "Cocksucker!"

The march ends at the site of the Stonewall. Ron Gold, GAA press secretary, urges the marchers to wait for the media to come and photograph them. About 300 have accumulated. The media fail to come. They disperse.

That weekend there is an emergency executive meeting. It is decided to demonstrate at the Monday meeting of the Council.

Saturday night. Midnight. I am at the Continental. Tally Brown is singing. No one mentions GAA or the defeat of 475 or a demonstration.

Monday, April 30, 2:30 p.m. I am inside the City Hall. The GAA demonstrators have been kept outside until the session begins. I speak to Robert Postel, (Dem. Manhattan). He tells me that Friday, directly after the negative vote, he filed a discharge petition, which would bring the same bill (or rather his duplicate of it) past the committee to the floor if he could get enough votes.

Did he think he could get the votes?

He doubted it. Ma. Ryan had given accounts of obscene and threatening phone calls. She was to have her nipples cut off and be strangled with her son's jockstrap. She now has police protection. The council members are very angry.

The council session begins. I show my press credentials and sit in the press box. I am asked to show them five times as police circle the court. The session is called to order. From the balcony, going by twos, whistles, voices, the random gays interrupt the session. They are removed. The council session continues.

I send a note to Ma. Ryan asking to interview her. She tells the attendant to tell me that after the actions of the gay community she will not speak to a gay reporter.

The whistles are all stopped. Cuite spoke from the floor. Quietly. He is strong. He has the votes.

If we have a million fish we must call them and they must come. We must be on that floor. Not gay sympathizers, not people pro-gay. Gay councilpeople. Voted in.

Not with "Motherfucker!", not with a blowing of a whistle. But from the closet known as the voting booth.

When we are on the floor of the council, not in the balcony as spectators we will talk.

We are not fishes. We have voices.

And if not now, then when?

Now.

health related professions is welcome."

The meetings are democratically run with open-ended discussions, sometimes lasting three hours, of the social, personal and political problems facing gays working in medicine.

"Medicine is a very closeted field," Hellman observes. "Many people have called or had friends call but were afraid to give us their name or come down to a meeting."

Only a couple of women have joined the group, which Hellman partially attributes to the fact that only 10 or 15 per cent of practicing physicians and medical students are women.

"Gay people in medicine are alienated and isolated," he elaborated. "Gay medical students who take courses in psychiatry find themselves using books which are very offensive."

One member of the Alliance had a long argument with his instructor over the chapter dealing with homosexuality, during which the instructor admitted he was "biased" and could only treat homosexuals with the idea of "curing" them.

Hellman termed the level of sex information available to most medical students as "poor but rapidly improving." He described the books used as a "mixed bag" and was pleased that a book on venereal disease had a thorough, comprehensive and accurate chapter on "Homosexuals and VD."

The group has not been able to determine the extent of discrimination against gays in the medical fields and has asked members of New York's Gay Legal Caucus to research the area for specific factual cases.

"The problems do not revolve around getting into medical school," he noted, "but in getting licensed after you have

graduated.

"After taking the required pre-medical courses, you take the Medical Commission Admission Tests which are objective tests of your technical knowledge. After you've passed those, they ask you to come in for an interview.

"We have some people in the group who are 4F for being gay and they got into medical school," Hellman confided.

After graduating from medical school and completing internship, the physician-to-be is then reviewed by a Board who reviews the applicant's record and examines the applicant's character.

Hellman said that seven or eight medical students had managed to attend all of the group's five meetings held to date. Others attended less regularly.

"Some people would like to attend more frequently," he added. "We have one physician from Mexico who comes whenever he happens to be in town and another from Italy who does likewise."

He said that the group had not yet issued any literature but was very interested in hearing from medical professionals throughout the country and being informed of any problems or experiences they had encountered.

Hellman noted that they had been asked to write an article on gays in the medical profession for the *NYU Medical Newsletter* which is widely circulated in the field.

He asked that those with information or anyone wanting to attend the group's meetings contact him by writing to: Ron Hellman, 111 Woodruff Ave., No. 4D, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11226 or phoning (212) 693-8301. The group also lists its meetings with New York's Gay Switchboard (212) 924-4036.