

NEWSLETTER

Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Caucus of the
American Psychiatric Association

TASK FORCE CHOSEN

Atlanta May 10-- The APA Council on National Affairs voted to create a Task Force on Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual related issues. Dr. James Paulsen, GLBC Vice Chairperson, was named to head the new group. The charge of the Task Force is still in draft, but issues to be studied will likely include: 1) a survey of gay, lesbian and bisexual psychiatrists; 2) survey of medical school teaching about homosexuality; 3) collection of data on discrimination based on sexual orientation; and 4) definition of priority research.

The vote by the National Affairs Council achieved a goal set by the GLBC at the Toronto convention in 1977 and pursued during the year by chairperson, Dr. Frank Rundle. Rundle was asked by incoming Council head, Dr. Frank Ochberg, to present the Caucus' position at a lunch meeting in Atlanta. Council members voiced support of Rundle's request and voted to reduce existing task force budgets to fund the new activity. Later, Ochberg named Paulsen to chair the Task Force. Other members include GLBC's Dr. Frank Rundle; Dr. Virginia Davidson of Houston and Dr. Richard Arbogast of Maryland from the Council; plus a fifth person to be named. An initial meeting is planned in Washington during October.

The move by the Council on National Affairs was seen as significant by observers in Atlanta. "The APA realizes that there are hundreds and maybe thousands of gay psychiatrists," said one. "It's time for our professional organization to examine the needs we have and the contributions we can make."

APA task forces are created with specific charge to be completed usually within a one or two year period. Existing task forces within the Council on National Affairs include Manpower and Foreign Medical Graduates, Ecopsychiatric Data Base, and Asian-American Psychiatrists. A committee, such as the Committee on Indian Affairs, is a standing body of the Council.

SPIEGEL ADDRESSES BUSINESS MEETING: STRUCTURE VOTED

Atlanta May 9-- Dr. John P. Spiegel, APA past president, addressed the business meeting of the GLBC. Citing himself as an "outsider" elected to promote greater membership participation within the APA, Spiegel urged that the Caucus work to establish a task force on gay-related issues. A primary objective of the task force would be to determine how many gay, lesbian and bisexual psychiatrists exist. "It's not enough to say that you are a certain percent of the population; you need to be specific." Spiegel suggested that the task force also prepare a position statement for action by the APA.

Following Spiegel's talk, the nearly 100 psychiatrists attending the business meeting voted unanimously to adopt a formal structure for the Caucus including by-laws, membership and dues. The group broke into applause as the vote was announced. A second action established a steering committee of five officers and seven Area Representatives.

Current GLBC leadership was elected by acclamation to fill the newly created offices. Dr. Frank Rundle of New York was voted chairperson; Dr. James Paulsen of Palo Alto, vice chairperson; and Dr. Richard Pillard of Boston, NEWSLETTER editor. Later in the week, Drs. Emery Hetrick of New York and Nanette Gartrell of Boston were named secretary and treasurer respectively. Area representatives from the seven APA geographic areas are being chosen and will be announced in a later edition.

Nearly 40 of those present paid \$25 dues to become charter members of the re-organized Caucus. However, the group divided on eligibility for membership: should the Caucus be for APA members only, for all psychiatrists, or for all mental health professionals? This issue was referred to the By-laws Committee for study. The officers were instructed to appoint a Program Committee to plan for next year's convention in Chicago and to fix By-laws and Membership Committees.

Dr. Rundle pointed out that Caucus officers and area representatives will have to represent the group publicly. There followed considerable debate about how the Caucus can serve the needs of those psychiatrists who are not "out" or who do not wish to become involved in political activities.

GLBC OFFICERS

Chairperson: Frank Rundle, M.D., New York City. Rundle, 50, graduated from Northwestern University Medical School and trained in psychiatry at US Naval Hospital, Bethesda and at Payne Whitney Clinic in New York. He has held an academic appointment at the University of Wisconsin Medical School. Rundle's professional interests include community and prison psychiatry. He is an APA Fellow.

Vice Chairperson: James A. Paulsen, M.D., Palo Alto. Jim Paulsen, 55, is a University of Illinois M.D. He trained at VA hospitals in California and at Mt. Zion Clinic in San Francisco. Paulsen is in practice at the Cowell Health Center, Stanford, and the Palo Alto Medical Clinic. He is clinical associate professor at Stanford Medical School.

Treasurer: Nanette Gartrell, M.D., Boston. Dr. Gartrell is a Clinical Fellow at the Harvard Medical School and a Falk Fellow of the APA. She has published research on plasma testosterone in gay women and men and has conducted a psychiatrists' attitude survey on lesbianism in California.

Secretary: Emery S. Hetrick, M.D., New York City. Dr. Hetrick, 47, received his MD from Cornell and trained at Cincinnati General Hospital and the Albert Einstein College of Medicine. He has held academic appointments at Einstein and Mt Sinai School of Medicine. Presently, he is chief of the Psychiatric Emergency and Crisis Treatment Service at Harlem Hospital and assistant professor of clinical psychiatry at Columbia.

NEWSLETTER Editor: Richard C. Pillard, M.D., Boston. Pillard, 44, is a University of Rochester graduate, trained at Boston University School of Medicine. He is associate professor of psychiatry at Boston University doing research in psychopharmacology. Pillard is also director of the Research Training Program at BU and medical advisor to the Homophile Community Health Service. He is an APA Fellow.

WEDNESDAY FORUM

Atlanta May 10-- Dr. Richard Green, Professor of Psychiatry at Stony Brook and editor of Archives of Sexual Behavior, chaired an open forum on "Agelessness of Discrimination: Homosexuality and the APA". Some 50 psychiatrists heard APA past president Judd Marmor review the history of the "homosexuality" diagnosis and its removal from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual. Dr. Robert Spitzer, chairman of the APA's Nomenclature Task Force, took the floor to explain the category "ego-dystonic homosexuality" which is proposed for DSM-III. This disorder is for those who want to increase heterosexual arousal and for whom homosexuality is unwanted and a source of distress.

Comments from the floor suggested that some ego-dystonic feelings are part of the usual development of a gay person resulting from normal social conditioning, not pathological processes. Spitzer replied that the "ego-dystonic" diagnosis would be made only when distress is persistent. Others wondered whether this wasn't similar to the social distress accompanying being Black or Jewish, conditions in which distress is not considered a diagnostic entity. Some participants felt that the matter was not worth spending effort to combat, or could not be resolved without further data.

Spitzer said that those opposing the diagnosis could bring the matter to the floor of the APA next year, but warned that they risked reopening the whole issue of homosexuality as a mental illness. Dr. Kent Robinson, sponsor of the Dallas and Washington panels at which gay persons first addressed the APA, suggested that the Caucus seek minority status in the APA. "This is a political issue," he emphasized.

EXHIBIT, SOCIAL EVENTS OCCUPY MEMBERS

Atlanta-- "Gay Love: Good Medicine" was the theme of an exhibit sponsored by the National Gay Task Force. Photos of happy gay couples including several psychiatrists were featured at the exhibit. Hundreds of convention visitors, including the current president of the APA and two past presidents saw the exhibit which was organized and staffed by NGTF Board of Directors member Ms. Barbara Gittings. A few psychiatrists complained that the exhibit was not "scientific enough" and one or two were hostile, but the general reception was good to enthusiastic, Ms. Gittings said.

Caucus members dined at Backstreet, Atlanta's combination gay bar, disco and restaurant. After dinner, bar owner, Bill Norton, hosted the group at a house-party. Later in the week, Dr. Bruce Granovetter of Key West gave a "Salute to the National Gay Task Force" party at his suite in the Sheraton Biltmore. Members also visited the Caucus' hospitality suite on the 67th floor of Atlanta's Peachtree Plaza Hotel which was open during the whole convention week.

A farewell cocktail party on Thursday, sponsored by the Caucus drew nearly 100 persons to the Omni Hotel's Brampton room. Social events are important, Granovetter explained. They are more significant than meetings in achieving unity and mutual support.

THIS IS YOUR LAST FREE NEWSLETTER!

The blank below will enable you to join the Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Caucus which includes a NEWSLETTER subscription, or to receive the NEWSLETTER alone. The NEWSLETTER will be published in its expanded format three times yearly. Membership and subscription lists will be kept strictly confidential by the officers of the GLBC.

APPLICATION

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

APA Membership Status _____

\$25.00 annual membership fee. Includes NEWSLETTER subscription.

\$10.00 NEWSLETTER subscription only.

Make checks to "Emery Hetrick, M.D. - GLBC" and mail with application to:

Dr. Emery Hetrick
144 East 36th Street
New York, New York 10016

Richard C. Pillard, M.D., Editor
6 Bond Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02118