



The Founding Chapter, 1967

TESTIMONY FROM JENNIFER K. BROWN, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR WOMEN, NEW YORK CITY CHAPTER, PRESENTED IN FAVOR OF INTRO. 2 AT HEARING HELD BY THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL GENERAL WELFARE COMMITTEE, MARCH 11, 1986.

I am proud to be here today representing the New York City Chapter of the National Organization for Women, to speak in favor of Intro. 2, a bill to ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

People often ask us at NOW why we are outspoken advocates for lesbian and gay rights. Isn't the women's movement hard enough without getting into this issue? To them, a civil rights battle for a somewhat small, largely invisible, and "different" group, lesbians, seems less than urgent, or unnecessary, or even embarrassing. But to us, the struggle for lesbian and gay rights is intrinsic to what we do, because prejudice and discrimination against lesbians is part of the same pattern of trying to control women's bodies which has made women an underclass for centuries. Prejudice and discrimination against gay men seems largely to be based on a mental process which equates homosexual men with women, and downgrades them to the same low status women live in.

My comments are directed toward how discrimination against lesbians is part of a pattern of social efforts to control women. Legally, women in general are beginning to be recognized as independent beings who have a right to live as we wish. It is time that this recognition extend to lesbian women, as well.

Since the early days of the women's movement, feminists have asserted that every woman has a right to control her own body. To many, this originally meant making our own choices about sex, birth control and abortion. Then battered women, and raped women began to speak out, and control over one's body, the physical integrity necessary to have a self, was again the issue. In broader and broader circles, women came to insist that our bodies are the means, not the limits of our experience. Women know that control over your own body means control over your life, or at least a chance of control.

Reaching the future of autonomy which is the goal of the women's movement requires destroying some very popular myths which perpetuate control over women's bodies: the notion, for instance, that women exist only for sex; that we are



STATEMENT OF FRED CHERRY ON "SEXUAL ORIENTATION" BILL

My name is Fred Cherry. I am opposed to discrimination. And, because I am opposed to discrimination, I am opposed to the bill presently before the council. It's like this. The bill purports to be an anti-discrimination bill. Yet, by its very terms, the bill itself is discriminatory. The bill defines the term "sexual orientation" to mean "homosexual", "bisexual", or "heterosexual." It thus excludes all other forms of sexual orientation. It even excludes some celibates. That is, if a celibate person were to consider himself or herself as neither homosexual, bisexual, or heterosexual, that person would not be protected under the bill now before the council. This is something entirely new in the history of anti-discrimination laws. There has never been an anti-discrimination bill in the past which was limited in this manner. When discrimination on the basis of religion was outlawed, that bill was not written in such a way as to exclude any particular religion. All religions are protected. When discrimination on the basis of physical handicap was outlawed, that bill was written so that all physical handicaps are protected. I, myself, am physically handicapped by a congenital illness. Because of this physical illness, my sexual orientation is "heterosexual John". That is, because of my poor health I have found that I cannot establish an intimate relationship with a woman, unless I pay that woman. I deeply resent the fact that my sexual orientation is the subject of bigotry and hatred, and that this bigotry and hatred is coming from the very same people who are demanding that the government protect them from discrimination based on their own sexual orientation. There was, for example, an article written by two of the spokespersons of the Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Rights, and published in the NEW YORK POST dated February 20, 1986, page 53. The article said, in part: "This law will benefit all citizens, not just lesbian and gay men." unquote. Now this law certainly will not benefit me or anyone else like me. In fact, it will harm us by stigmatizing us even further than we are presently stigmatized. So, as far as the spokespeople of the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights are concerned, I, and everyone else like me are non-citizens and non-persons. So much for their opposition to bigotry.

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There is something else wrong with the bill. By insisting, for example, that a homosexual coach has a right to be in a locker room with naked high-school boys, the bill again discriminates. Now, clearly a male heterosexual coach should not be allowed in a locker room with naked high-school girls. So, why should a male homosexual coach be allowed in a locker room with naked high-school boys? Now, I am going to make a very unusual request of the members of the council. I am going to ask you to use a little common sense. You have heard, and will hear that homosexual men are less likely to be child-molesters than heterosexual men. Now, please consider the fact that for the past five years The North American Man/Boy Love Association, an organization of homosexual child-molesters, has marched in the annual homosexual day parade. They march with their banners and hand out their literature. This is done with the approval of the majority of the organized homosexual movement of New York City. If The North American Man/Boy Love Association did not have the approval of most of the organized homosexual movement of New York City, then The North American Man/Boy Love Association would not be allowed to march in the annual homosexual day parade. Now, we have to be very careful here. We can't have any bigotry, can we? Of course its O.K. for our beloved mayor to send his representative to a hearing before the New York State Bar Association last October 30 and to have that representative say that the mayor considers prostitutes and their clients to be social and legal poison. Somehow that's not bigotry. We can't have anything like that here, can we? So, the only conclusion I wish to draw from the fact that The North American Man/Boy Love Association marches in the annual homosexual parade, is that a homosexual man is as likely to molest a teen age boy as a heterosexual man is likely to molest a teen age girl, and neither of these men should be given the opportunity to do so.

In conclusion I would like to say that what we have here is not an anti-discrimination bill. It is a pro-discrimination bill. I would like to see a genuine anti-discrimination bill that is reasonable and fair to everyone and does not cater to one particular group.

Fred Cherry
Post Office Box 1017
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11202