

# Maine called crucial area for homosexual movement

Describing homosexuality as the "Crime too heinous to be mentioned by the parents of today's youth," Dr. Howard J. Brown, founder of the National Gay Task Force, issued a plea Wednesday night to today's generation to join the fight against homosexual discrimination.

Speaking in Lengyel Gymnasium, Brown received a standing ovation from the 50 people who attended the DLS program. He addressed the group for 90 minutes in a session dominated by a question and answer period.

New York's first Health Services Administrator, appointed by then Mayor John Lindsay, defined Maine as a "crucial area" in the homosexual movement and saluted the members of the Wilde-Stein Club.

"They fight not just for themselves, but for those on campus, for those coming to UMO in the future, and for those after them who will know pride, not shame. My generation knew only the shame and not the pride."

Brown was selected by Lindsay to fill the health services post in 1966 and resigned

by Debbie Winsor

his position in 1968 rather than face public disclosure of his homosexuality. He publicly admitted his sexual preference in 1973, and the story of his announcement appeared on the front page of the *New York Times*.

"Thanks to the *Times*, I'm the best known homosexual in the East," Brown quipped. "I represent the millions of homosexuals who fear to speak." He estimated more than 95 per cent of gays remain hidden.

"Some opponents of the WS-C fear UMO will become a mecca for homosexuals. It will become a mecca for those of us who believe gays have a right to be accepted."

The Illinois native who entered medical school at the age of 19 urged the "straight leaders of Maine to speak up" for the rights of homosexuals. "The student body should show more support, not tolerance,"

Brown added, also stating he wished

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faculty support for the gay group was stronger.

"I don't know if I'd feel comfortable living as a gay in a small Maine town," he said. Brown claims Greenwich Village as his present home.

The gay activist warned members of the WS-C not to judge the world by the haven of acceptance a university provides. He characterized the homosexuals' problems as different from those of any other minority. "Homosexuals usually have to go it alone, hidden; we don't know others like us."

Brown stresses gays will find acceptance only as more come out publicly. "We must raise the consciousness of gays—there are many who don't feel pride in being homosexual."

The Gay Task Force, which functions as a clearinghouse and coordinator for other homosexual organizations and as a homosexual civil rights group, is presently acting to abolish sodomy laws, gay discriminatory laws, and is working with the media "to get them to stop showing objectionable homosexual stereotypes." He cited media reaction to the gay movement in the late 1960's as "mixed", but applauded the recent "coverage phenomena".

"In the late 60's when the homosexual liberation movement ignited I didn't regard myself as a person oppressed, though I was. I never dreamed we'd be actively seeking laws and protection.

"I'm as welcome in City Hall as a homosexual activist as I was as Health Commissioner." Brown admitted there are many older, conservative city councilmen from Catholic areas who don't support gays but attested to growing support from younger local political candidates.

The Task Force is also working with boards of education to permit recognized gays to teach, and Brown expects an order from the N.Y. Board of Teachers

condemning discrimination against gays.

The nationally known physician doesn't believe psychiatry can change sexual preferences, and says he and other N.Y. doctors who treat only gays believe psychiatrists have done more harm than good.

"I've been approached by many psychiatrists, and most who say they're free from homophobia are not. The psychiatric profession doesn't know many gays, and so they don't really know what homosexuality is. If a gay wants help, I recommend a gay group, not a psychiatrist."

Brown added that serious damage has been done to homosexuals treated to have their sexual preference changed.

Responding to a question concerning the validity of an often-heard accusation that gays are dangerous influences upon children, Brown said adolescents need homosexuals as someone to talk to.

"The loneliness of a gay coming out is something which should be understood. There should be open gays in elementary schools, high schools and colleges." He has been more successful at New York University since he's come out, because more people come to him now, he said. Brown holds two full professorships at N.Y.U.

The admitted homosexual says he most regrets the years of agony he experienced coming to grips with his homosexuality, and the six years he wasted going to a psychiatrist. "I didn't start to live until my late 20's. I wish I'd come out sooner," he added, emphasizing the freedom one enjoys when no longer "hiding."

Brown has also held professorships and medical lecture chairs at Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons, Mt. Sinai Hospital, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Yale College of Medicine and Beth Israel Medical Center. He is listed in *Who's Who of America*, and is a Fellow of the American Public Health Association and the New York Academy of Medicine.