

For critics, Hormel's homosexuality eclipses his diplomatic experience

By KIM CURTIS
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — James Hormel, appointed U.S. ambassador to Luxembourg by President Clinton on Friday, has been dean of the University of Chicago law school and has a reputation as one of San Francisco's most generous philanthropists.

But Hormel, who has diplomatic experience, is likely to be remembered less for his skills than as the nation's first openly gay ambassador.

Clinton's appointment, made while the Senate was in recess, angered Catholics and religious conservatives by bypassing senators who had held up Hormel's nomination since October 1997. They fear that Hormel, who used part of his family's food fortune to help create the Human Rights Campaign, a gay and lesbian political group, will promote a radical agenda.

The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights opposes him because he has refused to condemn the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, a group of habit-wearing drag queens.

"It's not the man's sexual orientation, but his record of anti-Catholic bigotry," said William Donohue, president of the league.

But others acknowledge that sexual orientation is the issue.



James Hormel's nomination had bipartisan Senate support, and officials in Luxembourg, which is 97 percent Catholic, said they would welcome him as ambassador.

"I think that by forcing Americans to be represented by a radical homosexual activist like Hormel, Clinton is showing his contempt for traditional morality, marriage, sexual fidelity and any concept of honor," said Robert Knight of the Family Research Council, a religious lobby.

Hormel, 66, who twice was named to U.S. delegations to the United Nations, made few public comments during the long nomination fight.

"I hardly view myself as a 'radical,'" he wrote to Sen. Gordon Smith, R-Ore., a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

But in 1996 he described himself as a mentor to homosexuals, "part elder statesman for a constituency . . . in its adolescence in terms of experiencing its wisdom and empowerment."

His friends call him charming and

funny, a good listener and a consummate host.

"He has a real sense of foreign relations, always has," said Alice Turner, who was married to Hormel from 1955 to 1965. "He is extraordinarily well-qualified — overqualified — for this appointment."

His nomination cleared the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1997 and had bipartisan Senate support. Officials in Luxembourg, which is 97 percent Catholic, said they would welcome Hormel as ambassador.

But Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott refused to schedule a floor vote.

"On one hand, you have these anti-gay senators saying we don't need legislation to protect gays and lesbians, but you have the United States Senate discriminating against someone because he's gay," said David Smith of the Human Rights Campaign. "It was very un-American and unfair."

Friends say that, far from being a radical activist, Hormel is a devoted family man, to his partner, Timothy Wu, and to his children — four daughters and a son, and 13 grandchildren.

"My father has better family values than most parents I know. He is very dedicated to his family," said James Hormel Jr., of San Francisco.

CULTURE, *et ce*

Kinsey triumph

"I think the influences most people recognize — although they may not understand [sex researcher Alfred C.] Kinsey's role — have to do with the erosion of sexual mores and inhibitions. I'm referring particularly to the ero-



Alfred C. Kinsey

sion of morals as reflected in what is now considered acceptable in popular culture . . . and the steady invasion of more and more sexually explicit and pornographic material into these areas.

...
"Certainly the cultural validating and 'mainstreaming' of homosexuality is one of the major shifts that can be marked down as a Kinsey triumph."

— *Judith A. Reisman, interviewed by William F. Jasper in the May 24 issue of the New American*