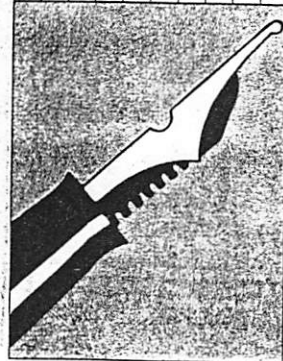


THE GAY WEEKLY OF THE NATION'S CAPITAL

The Washington Blade



NIH panel calls deaths 'inavoidable accident'



ILGA's crisis

NAMBLA vote could mean end of organization

by Lou Chibbaro Jr.

The status of the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) as the recognized representative of Gay groups throughout the world will be at stake later this month when ILGA's 16th Annual World Conference votes on whether to expel a controversial pedophile group from its ranks.



by Kristi K. Gasaway

Julie Dorf, ILGA's chief representative from the United States

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Vote could overshadow conference

Future of the international Gay organization hangs in the balance

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The conference, scheduled to be held in New York City June 24 to July 3, is expected to draw 300 delegates representing Gay organizations in as many as 60 countries, according to ILGA officials.

The event also marks the first time in over ten years that ILGA has held its world conference in the United States.

Officials say they had hoped to focus on such topics as the expanding Gay movement in Eastern Europe and human rights abuses of Gays in Asia, Latin America, and other regions. But virtually all of ILGA's officers have conceded that those and other international issues will be overshadowed by the group's vote on whether to oust one of its most controversial members — the North American Man-Boy Love Association (NAMBLA).

Hanging in the balance, ILGA members say, will be ILGA's prestigious status as a non-voting, consultative member of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). U.N. officials, reeling over complaints by the United States and other nations about ILGA's links with NAMBLA, have said ILGA itself will be expelled from the U.N. if it does not sever its ties with NAMBLA and other pedophile organizations.

NAMBLA supports the repeal of all laws banning sexual relations between adults and minors. Although the group has said it opposes all forms of sexual exploitation of minors, its press releases and position papers have said juveniles and adults should be free to enter into "non-exploitive" relationships, including sexual relationships.

ECOSOC admitted ILGA as a special status member in 1993 after years of lobbying by ILGA and its supporters. Gay activists hailed ILGA's acceptance into the U.N. as a major breakthrough for the Gay movement. The special status enables ILGA members to attend U.N. meetings and events associated with human rights and health-related issues, giving them direct access to lobby U.N. delegates.

Most Gay activists believe ILGA's ouster from the U.N. would be viewed as a serious setback for Gays. U.N. officials have said it will likely take years for another Gay organization to build the support it needs to gain acceptance to the U.N.

The repercussions from a decision by ILGA to retain NAMBLA would go beyond the U.N., ILGA members say. Julie Dorf, ILGA's chief representative from the United States and a member of the group's six-member secretariat, or governing body, said at least four secretariat members will withdraw their names from consideration for reelection as officers if ILGA does not expel NAMBLA.

Dorf, who said she is among those who will withdraw her name, noted that



A withdrawal of ILGA's secretariat members could trigger other resignations and the mass withdrawal of many of ILGA's member groups.

all the secretariat members voted last November to urge the ILGA world conference to oust NAMBLA. Thus a vote by the organization to retain NAMBLA, Dorf said, will be viewed as a vote of "no confidence" in ILGA's leaders.

A withdrawal of ILGA's secretariat members could trigger other resignations and the mass withdrawal of many of ILGA's member groups, officials say, a development that could lead to the disintegration of ILGA itself.

"It would be a blow from which the organization would have a hard time recovering," said D.C. Gay activist Rick Rosendall. Rosendall said he will attend the ILGA conference as a representative of the D.C. Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance and the Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses.

He said he will vote for NAMBLA's expulsion and will lobby other U.S. delegates to do the same.

"ILGA doesn't deserve to survive if it decides to retain NAMBLA," said Rosendall. "NAMBLA's positions are at odds with the positions of the Lesbian and Gay movement."

Rosendall and other activists have said they will look for another international Gay group to replace ILGA at the United Nations if the ILGA conference does not expel NAMBLA.

Under ILGA's constitution, the group's annual world conference is the only body empowered to expel member groups. The constitution requires that 80 percent of the member organizations attending the conference must approve an expulsion.

Hans Hjerpekkon, a university professor from Oslo, Norway, who serves as ILGA's co-chair, has said he believes most ILGA members support the secretariat's proposal to expel NAMBLA. In a presentation at the secretariat meeting in New York last November,

Hjerpekkon said ILGA accepted NAMBLA as a member over ten years ago when ILGA was dominated by radical leaning Gay groups in Western Europe.

Hjerpekkon and other ILGA leaders said then that a large number of new organizations have joined ILGA in recent years that represent mainstream Gay groups in Europe as well as North America, Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Asia. These newer groups, ILGA leaders say, will likely support a pending resolution to expel NAMBLA and any other group that espouses NAMBLA's views. Dorf, a resident of San Francisco, said she met last month with ILGA members in Europe and returned with a perception that most of the European members support efforts to expel NAMBLA.

"I'm more optimistic than I have been before that we will get the 80 percent we need [to remove NAMBLA]," Dorf said in a telephone interview this week.

A pre-conference schedule released by ILGA last month says the NAMBLA vote is scheduled for the morning of Thursday, June 30.

Dorf and other ILGA officials said the conference will also discuss many other topics deemed important to Gays in all regions of the world. Literature released by the ILGA Committee of the New York City Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center, which is hosting the conference, states that members will give presentations on specific subjects at a series of workshops. The literature says policy decisions and future ILGA activities will be debated and decided at several plenary sessions.

Among the topics slated for the workshops are Gay movement activity in most regions of the world, including Eastern and Western Europe, Asian, Africa, Latin America, and North America.

ILGA supporters say a list of Gay groups slated to be admitted into ILGA at the conference in New York illustrates how the Gay movement appears to be growing in developing nations. Among those applying for membership are five separate Gay groups from Mexico and two each from Indonesia and Lithuania. Other Gay groups seeking membership hail from India, Turkey, the Philippines, Romania, Ukraine, South Africa, Finland, Nicaragua, Columbia, Chile, Brazil, and Argentina.

Other topics at the conference include relations between Gays and other human rights organizations, global AIDS policies, relations with the U.N., Gays and immigration, Lesbian health, techniques for fund-raising and "nuts and bolts" organizing, Gay youth, seeking ties with labor unions, and responding to right wing groups that oppose Gay civil rights. The conference will be held at New York's Fashion Institute of Technology at 27th Street and 7th Avenue in Manhattan.▼