

The Washington Blade

THE GAY WEEKLY OF THE NATION'S CAPITAL

Pedophile groups expelled from ILGA

Members decide that NAMBLA is incompatible with organization's aims

by Kristina Campbell

NEW YORK, June 30 — Emotions and tempers flared on Thursday when the International Lesbian and Gay Association voted resoundingly to expel NAMBLA and two other pedophile organizations from its membership.

A resolution to oust the North American Man-Boy Love Association, the U.S.-based Project Inform/Free Will, and a Dutch organization called Vereniging Martijn passed by a vote of 214-30 and declared that organizations with a predominate aim of promoting or supporting pedophilia are incompatible with

ILGA's aims.

"The question of pedophilia membership in ILGA is closed," said Rebecca Sevilla, a cochair of ILGA.

A barrage of hostility directed at members of NAMBLA surrounded the vote, triggering an exchange of shouts and insults between supporters and members of NAMBLA and anti-pedophilia members of ILGA.

Thomas Reeves, a founder of NAMBLA, complained both before and after the vote that ILGA leadership was stacking the

Continued on page 12

ILGA votes to expel group

Continued from page 1

process against NAMBLA by allowing only voting delegates to speak on the floor and by generating inaccurate attention to the issue.

Although the full body of ILGA did not deal with the issue of the pedophile groups' memberships until Thursday, at least two conferences on Tuesday and Wednesday dealt with pedophilia, and the issue seemed to be at least in the back of everyone's mind as Thursday neared. The workshops were closed to journalists who are not members of ILGA, as was the final vote in plenary session on Thursday.

But during the opening plenary of the conference, it became clear how divisive and contentious the issue would be. A woman from Greece, speaking during time allotted for announcements, said she had been asked to change rooms in ILGA housing after the women assigned to a room with her realized she supported the pedophile organizations membership in ILGA. Her comments triggered a minor, but hostile, debate on the matter between her and the women who had asked her to move rooms.

ILGA's rules require an 80 percent majority to oust a group from its membership; the vote to remove NAMBLA and the other two organizations was 88 to 12 percent, according to ILGA cochair Hans Hjerpeckjon. NAMBLA has been a member of ILGA since the early 1980s, before ILGA developed membership criteria. Hjerpeckjon and others said pedophile member organizations have been a point of contention for ILGA for several years, only to be heightened last year after ILGA gained consultative status to the U.N.



Lisa Powers: "I'm prepared to trade some of my dignity to get an equal age of consent in my country."

20s when Brissett was 13 helped him shape his sexual identity.

"We must talk about the panic of issues around childhood and sexuality," Brissett said. "The presence of this panic is so great that many in this room will not be able to vote their consciences today."

Reeves was visibly upset after the vote to expel NAMBLA, even though he said he'd been expecting the action. He declined to comment to the *Blade* immediately after the vote, saying, "We have just been viciously, violently attacked and abused, so you'll have to forgive us if we're somewhat emotional."

Lisa Powers, a delegate who was a cochair of ILGA from 1988 to 1992, said during debate preceding the vote on Thursday that she made a concerted effort during her tenure as chair to keep discussions about pedophile group memberships contained and civil, but now she has some regrets about that.

"I spent quite a lot of energy trying not to let the issue explode within ILGA," she said. "But I think we should have let this issue explode before now."

The question for some members focused on what ILGA needed to do to retain its consultative status with the U.N.; others questioned whether pedophile organizations have a place in the Gay movement at all; and still others said they saw no justice in expelling the organizations since the groups had done nothing to violate ILGA's rules.

Said Powers, "I think it is a different debate for different people. For me, this is a decision of whether we go back into the ghetto or stay in the real world."

She said some people had asked whether ILGA would be sacrificing its dignity by removing a group in response to right-wing objections.

"I'm prepared to trade some of my dignity to get an equal age of consent in my country," she said. "I'm prepared to trade some dignity to stop Lesbian and bisexual women from being battered all over this world."

Cormac Brissett, a 20-year-old Gay activist from Minneapolis, stood up for NAMBLA and the other groups, saying his sexual involvement with a man in his

He and William Andricette, a NAMBLA spokesperson who is editor of the organization's newsletter, gave a news conference outside the conference headquarters moments later. As opponents filed out, they disrupted the news conference with shouts and insults hurled at NAMBLA and its supporters.

After the confrontation died down, Reeves cried briefly, leaning down and burying his face in his arms.

NAMBLA said in a statement issued after the vote that the group hopes to continue working with ILGA, and that supporters of NAMBLA who will remain in ILGA are likely to continue revisiting the issue of whether pedophile groups can belong to the association.

Andricette charged that ILGA still has members that represent pedophile subgroups. At ILGA's news conference after the vote, Hjerpeckjon refuted that claim but was told by a member of the German group Bundesverband Homosexualität (BVH) that his group, an umbrella group for Gay organizations, did have a pedophile group in its membership. Hjerpeckjon said the association would stand by its resolution that groups whose predominant focus is pedophilia would not be welcome in ILGA, but that it did not apply to subgroups of member organizations.

Several delegates rose to object to a claim by NAMBLA that pedophilia is an accepted practice in their cultures.

"Abuse is abuse no matter which way we put it," said a delegate from South Africa. "And we oppose NAMBLA using our culture to further its cause. Our children are our future, not toys or for the pleasure of older men."▼