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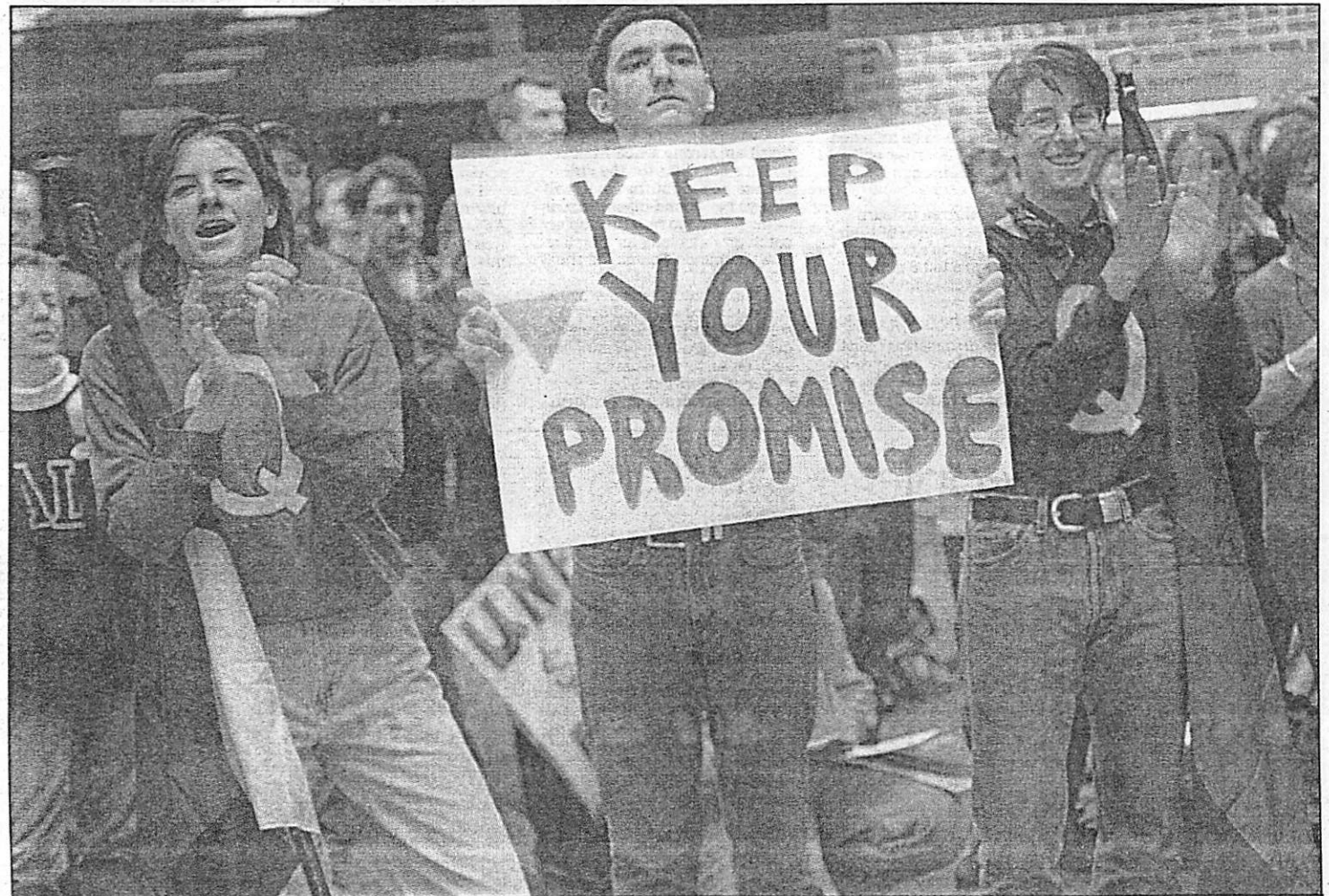
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SECTION C

23-1

GAY CENTER ON HOLD



George Mason University students (from left) Martha Kreiner, Jamie Huret and Cheryl Cort protest a decision to delay funding a resource center for homosexuals on campus. Photo by Karen Ballard/The Washington Times

GMU officials worried about sodomy laws / 4

GMU gay support center awaits funds amid protest

By Rex Bowman
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Homosexual students at George Mason University yesterday rallied for a \$15,000 "support center" while counter-demonstrators urged fellow students to protest use of their tuition to pay for a "gay recruitment center."

University officials, concerned that a center geared to promote homosexuality flouts the state's sodomy laws, appeared hopeful they could drop the whole issue for now.

The face-off was the latest between campus homosexuals who say they need a place to meet safely and other students who say no one group should be singled out for special treatment and funding — especially when many object to homosexuality on moral grounds.

"That's student money," said Oscar Young, president of College Republicans at George Mason, as he passed out leaflets. "I wouldn't mind if it was private money, if some corporation like IBM donated it and wanted it used for a specific purpose. But that's our money; that's my money."

The school's Board of Visitors had planned to discuss funding a "gay, lesbian, bisexual and transsexual resource center" at its meeting tomorrow but decided to leave the matter off the agenda while a review of counseling services on campus is underway.

About 50 homosexuals and supporters gathered yesterday at Student Union I to protest what they say is the board's attempt to sweep the subject under the rug.

"It's a strong strand of homophobia," said Bryan Hubbard, chairman of the Student Senate, of the board's decision to curtail discussion. "But we're intent on seeing the board address this issue. We're not satisfied with them having a pocket veto by not putting this on the agenda."

The school's provost earmarked funds for the center in May, and the governing board considered approving the appropriation at its September meeting. But the 11 Republicans on the board voted to temporarily block the funds, contending that authorizing the center might make it appear the school is flouting Virginia's sodomy laws.

Under state law, sodomy, even between consenting heterosexuals, is forbidden.

Though the three Democrats on the board were prepared to release the money to hire a part-time employee to staff the room

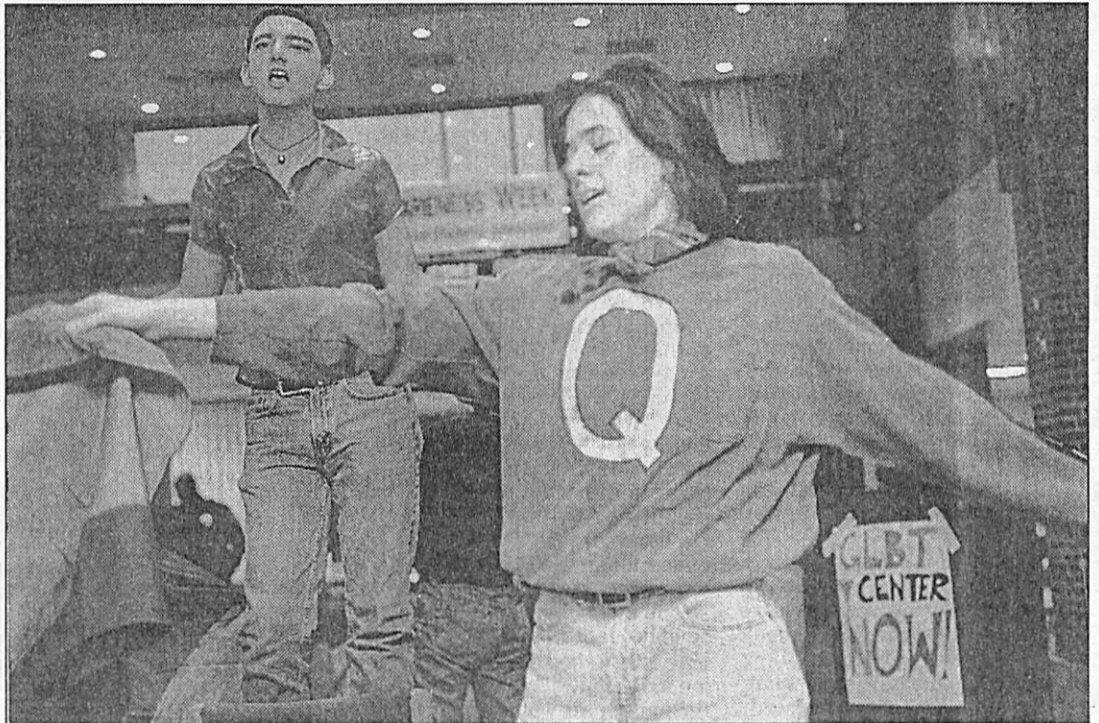


Photo by Karen Ballard/The Washington Times

Jamie Huret (left) and Martha Kreiner rally for a gay support center at George Mason University.

set aside for the center, the Republican majority overruled them. The majority agreed to hold up the funds pending a review of several programs, such as minority student services, black peer counseling, African-American studies and the women's studies research and resource program.

Under the direction of the new university president, Alan G. Merten, school officials are trying to determine if current counseling centers are duplicating each other's work and, if so, which ones to cut or consolidate. No new centers were to be proposed while the review process was going on, a school spokesman said, which is why the homosexual center was not put on

tomorrow's agenda.

Marvin R. Murray, rector of George Mason and chairman of the board, said he has seen no new information in the meantime that would make him reconsider his vote against funding the center.

"I don't think anybody's had a change of mind," he said.

At the Sept. 18 meeting, Mr. Murray said: "The university ought not to be spending resources supporting that sort of activity, if it is illegal. Now, if it's going to be made legal, that's fine."

The center would serve as an information source for homosexuals — with shelves of magazines, books, newspapers and research materials — and as a

place where heterosexuals could learn more about the homosexual community.

Opponents of the project said student fees or tuition money should not be poured into centers that cater to or advance the cause of particular groups.

"I'm sick about the fact that we're trying to allocate money to this center when the university is dying, moneywise," said Matthew Silverman, an 18-year-old computer science major. "That money, \$15,000, is my tuition. Put it back into academics. Academics first, not extracurricular activities."

But Nike Carstarphen, a 37-year-old graduate student and lesbian, said the center is necessary for campus homosexuals because they often suffer harassment and abuse from fellow students and need a place where they can feel safe and supported.

"It's necessary to combat the lifetime of harassment that gays experience," she said. "In a perfect world where gays and other minorities weren't harassed and everyone was a good Christian, it wouldn't be needed. We're trying to level the playing field. We're not asking for anything extra."

But Mr. Young said the board was right to withhold funding and should not have been asked to fund the center in the first place, since the review of the counseling centers is still in progress.

"It was pretty screwed up, the administration was caught with its pants down," he said.

Since September, the student government voted overwhelm-

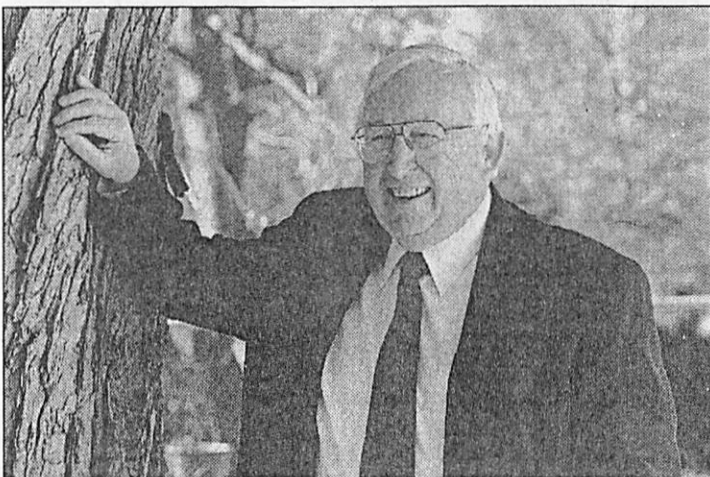


Photo by Bert V. Goulat/The Washington Times

Marvin R. Murray, rector of George Mason and chairman of the board, says the university shouldn't be supporting an illegal activity.

Alexandria mulls gay 'marriages'

By Andrew Cain
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

An Alexandria City Council member wants state legislators to equate same-sex "marriages" with heterosexual unions.

"I think there is room for recognizing the relationships that do exist between men and between women," council member Lonnie C. Rich, a Democrat, said yesterday.

Mr. Rich wants the council to include his proposal in the wish list Alexandria's state legislators take to the General Assembly in January. The council will hold a public hearing on Mr. Rich's proposal Dec. 14.



Mayor Kerry J. Donley

A measure to sanction same-sex "marriage" stands virtually no chance in the legislature, which outlawed all forms of sodomy in 1792.

"They might as well ask for square circles," said Delegate Robert Marshall, Manassas Republican and perhaps the legislature's most outspoken proponent of conservative family values.

"I'd be shocked" if it passed, said Mr. Rich, 48, a married father of three.

But such a measure might "promote stable families," reduce promiscuity, even slow the spread of AIDS, said Mr. Rich, a Baptist who

works as a lawyer in Alexandria.

While Mr. Rich calls the issue a matter of principle, other local officials question the wisdom of taking on a seemingly hopeless cause.

Calling for the legalization of homosexual "marriages" would perpetuate Alexandria's image as "just a bunch of flaming liberals," said council member David G. Speck, a Democrat, who has not decided how he will vote on the proposal.

It could affect the way state legislators view the rest of the city's agenda, he said.

Mayor Kerry J. Donley, a Democrat, supports Mr. Rich and doubts his proposal would hinder other city initiatives.

"Down in Richmond, we're already known as the People's Republic of Alexandria, so I don't know that it would harm us in any way," Mr. Donley said.

Mr. Rich decided the city should take a stand after he followed the debate in Congress over the Defense of Marriage Act, which prevents federal recognition of same-sex "marriages" and allows states not to recognize such unions sanctioned by other states. The measure was passed by Congress and signed by President Clinton.

Maverick proposals are nothing new for Mr. Rich, who was first elected to the council in 1991. A centrist Democrat in perhaps the state's most liberal enclave, he believes in "activist government" but does not always toe the party line.

In 1993, two years before Virginia passed its landmark welfare overhaul, Mr. Rich suggested that Alexandria require its able-bodied welfare recipients to work, and limit payments if a mother on welfare had additional children.

Mr. Rich calls himself a "communitarian with a slight populist streak." His political philosophy mirrors the main tenets of the centrist Democratic Leadership Council, which emphasizes opportunity, responsibility and community.

"This one I see as community," Mr. Rich said.

■ This article is based in part on wire service reports.

ingly in support of creating the center. Yesterday, opponents of the center, including Mr. Young and Mr. Silverman, passed out up to 400 fliers denouncing the center as an "abuse of your tuition and taxpayers' funds." Opponents urged fellow students to let administrators know they don't want it.

Board members who blocked the funding have generally been tightlipped about the matter, but Lilla Richards, a Democratic

board member who urged approval of the funding, said the board already knows enough to authorize the resource center.

"I'm hoping that now that they know the University of Virginia and other flagship institutions in the state have similar centers, they will approve the \$15,000," Mrs. Richards said. "I'm hoping their previous objections were based on what they said, which is that they didn't have enough information."