

NARTH BULLETIN

Annual Conference in Los Angeles Disrupted

For the first time since NARTH's inception in 1992, a NARTH Annual Conference was disrupted by gay activists.

Several days before the beginning of the event, scheduled for October 23-24 at the Beverly Hilton, hotel officials warned NARTH that protesters were expected, and extra security would be required. Word had gotten out about the conference through gay websites on the internet, and through a local radio program that encouraged activists to disrupt the meeting. The Hilton said it received calls from dozens of gay activists condemning them for hosting the conference.

Just one day before the meeting, the Beverly Hilton abruptly informed NARTH and the Claremont Institute—co-sponsor of the event—that they were cancelling the agreement. "They just simply dropped us," said NARTH Executive Director Joseph Nicolosi. "We had a signed contract. They had cashed our \$5,000 down payment. Here it was, the day before the event and we had no place to go. You can imagine the monumental task we had to find a hotel that would accept nearly 150 people for a two-day, catered-lunch conference, with substantial security requirements and only 24 hours' notice."

Approximately 150 attendees were registered for the event, many from out of state, and one who had flown in from Germany. NARTH and the Claremont Institute were faced with the daunting task of attempting to

contact the scattered registrants without, also, tipping off gay activists about the new location.

"We went to the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles and told them the story," Dr. Nicolosi said, "and they very graciously agreed to accept us on one day's notice and to provide the necessary security measures."

City Council Condemns "Intolerance and Prejudice in the Guise of Scientific Theory"

On the first day of the hastily rearranged conference, the Los Angeles City Council held a news conference to condemn the meeting, saying it sent a message of "fear and prejudice."

The Council said, "It is essential that the city express its position that it **opposes intolerance and prejudice in the guise of scientific theory** that is the subject of this conference...forums such as this conference...only serve to perpetuate fear and intolerance...The City Council express[es] its condemnation of the conference, 'Making Sense of Homosexuality,'...and reaffirm[s] its commitment to promoting a diverse city which promotes the values of mutual respect, appreciation and understanding...Council also CON-DEMNS the Claremont Institute

and URGE[s] the Institute that in the future, it not be involved in sponsoring activities of this type, which promote divisiveness in our society."

Joe Hicks, executive director of the Los Angeles Human Rights Commission, told the *Los Angeles Times* (October 24, p. B1) that the NARTH meeting "contributes to an atmosphere that allows...hate crimes to take place...We must all stand up in condemnation."

The Council said it is considering punishing the Biltmore for accepting the NARTH conference, by cancelling future events the City had planned to stage there.

Hilton Denies Signing a Contract

The Beverly Hilton—the hotel which had originally held the contract for the event—told the *Times* through Marcia Neuberger, a hotel spokesman, that NARTH had never had a contract with the hotel, and that the hotel had never accepted a deposit. (A few days later, the Hilton nevertheless sent NARTH a \$5,000 refund check.)

One strong local ally jumped in the fray to defend NARTH. The local *Daily News* called the City Council a "board of censorship" which threatened the First Amendment rights of its citizens. In an editorial, "L.A.'s Thought Police," the *News* said, "The Council and other critics of the event tried to link without any evidence the conference with violence

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against gays and lesbians ... the Council is making a fool of itself and revealing just how closed-minded its members are. The very core of American democracy is a belief that the free and open discussion of ideas will lead people to

sort out the sense from the nonsense....Suppressing free and healthy debates on topics as divisive as sexual preference, race, abortion, or any other topics, for that matter, is about as anti-democratic as one can get....The people of Los Angeles are more than capable enough to decide for themselves what to read and what to think about things."

Protesters Controlled

On the second day, gay protesters stormed the door of the conference and were removed by police, who escorted

them outside the hotel, where they continued to wave placards such as one which read, "NARTH—National Association of Repression, Tyranny and Hatred." Hotel security measures proved flawless, and security personnel led the conference registrants through the kitchen and back corridors of the hotel to a private dining room so that they never needed to walk through public areas of the hotel, thus avoiding potential confrontations.

"In spite of the disruption, the conference went well and there was a sense of collegiality and support for the therapists who were presenting their papers," said Dr. Nicolosi. "But it is outrageous that the City Council has the right to put a black mark on NARTH's reputation by condemning us." ■