

CAMPAIGN STATEMENT

AUSTIN WADE

I have been persuaded to run for a position on the Board of Directors of the Mattachine Society because of the regrettable atmosphere of divisiveness which has pervaded this year's elections. My own feelings have always been that the less electioneering within the Society, the better. The Society has a job to do, and, in the eyes of all but an insignificant minority, it is doing this job very well -- in truth, exceedingly well, when one considers how much has been accomplished with the limited resources, both human and financial, which have been made available to it. This is not merely the view of members who are close to the centre of the Society's activities -- their opinions might be considered self-serving -- but it is the unchallenged testimony of observers from without the homophile movement, both within New York City and in the country at large, whose high regard and unstinting praise for the Mattachine Society of New York are the most eloquent proof of the extent to which M.S.N.Y. has become the authoritative voice of the homophile movement.

In truth, the Society's prestige and reputation is currently such that there is no person or position of power in the greater New York City area, from the Mayor's office down, to which it does not have easy access, and my own travels throughout the country in connection with the work of the North American Conference of Homophile Organizations (N.A.C.H.O.) -- to the chairmanship of whose legal committee I was recently appointed -- confirms the extent to which this is also true for the nation as a whole. Whilst this condition should constitute cause for pride, it is well to remember that this was not always so. Until comparatively recently, the Mattachine Society of New York was run -- most regrettably -- like a Saturday afternoon sewing circle, and exerted a sewing circle's influence on the local community. The meetings of the Board of Directors were taken up with such weighty matters as discussions on how the books in the Society's library were to be catalogued, or on whether or not to place a \$5.00 advertisement in the newspaper announcing the next monthly speaker. Even the most cursory perusal of the matters in which the Society is now involved, and of the roster of eminent persons who enter its doors for discussions on a host of different subjects, testifies to the extent to which M.S.N.Y. has come of age. With one possible exception, M.S.N.Y. is the only homophile organization in the country which maintains a full-time office, with a full-time executive director -- an office which is staffed throughout the week with persons who have become specialists in their work.

Unfortunately, there has always been a small minority within the Society -- represented mainly by a residue of disgruntled office-holders from bye-gone days -- who have not accepted the present state of affairs. They resent the professionalism which now permeates the organization, and hanker for "the good old days" when anyone, no matter how incompetent, could attain office. Normally these malcontents are without influence within the Society, and are ignored by the great majority of the membership. But, during the past few months, an aura of ~~responsibility~~

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bility has been given them by Mr. Ed Trust's ill-disguised attempts to remove Dick Leitsch and the present administration from office. In his personal vendetta against Dick Leitsch, Trust has allied himself with these retrograde elements in the hope that they may be useful in his power-play for authority. This is indeed tragic. It is a measure of the extent to which Trust has permitted personal animosity to dominate his reason that he has caused to be nominated for vice-president Al DeDion, whose tenure of office as head of the Society more than a decade ago was one of the most pathetic examples of blundering incompetence that the Society was ever obliged to endure. During DeDion's incumbency the Society reflected his own pathological distrust of talent, with the result that the organization remained an inhospitable ground to all persons of competence and ability, and it made no effort to enlist their services. In resurrecting this voice from the tombs, Trust has been guilty of a great disservice to the Society, since, if persons like DeDion once again hold office in the organization, the Society will be doomed to the same sepulchral existence which it had when he was in charge. It is shocking enough to think that the Society has not yet gotten around to expelling DeDion, who absconded with the Society's private membership lists, who refused to return them after persistent demands, and who finally forced the Society to threaten legal action in order to obtain them. To nominate him for vice-president is the crowning outrage. (DeDion had to be ousted from the office because, as a volunteer worker in charge of a book-selling project which had been set up to bring in revenue for the Society, he attempted to convert the program into a private profit-making business of his own.) I recount these delinquencies with deep regret, mindful, however, of the duty of every member rigorously to expose and extirpate them when they come to light.

The one redeeming feature of the Trust slate of candidates is the man he has selected to run for the three-year vacancy on the Board of Directors. The Reverend Henry Wiesbauer and Robert Wood are both dedicated men of parts and ability. Rev. Wood's Christ and the Homosexual has become one of the classics in the literature of homosexual reform, both legal and social. Both he and Rev. Wiesbauer have demonstrated their devotion to the Society's cause on countless occasions. It is to be most regretted that they have unwittingly permitted their names to be used to promote Trust's designs. Neither of these men has been in close contact with the Society for a number of years, and they have been quite ignorant of what is transpiring. It is highly unlikely that either of them would consciously lend themselves to the underhanded political maneuvering engaged in by Trust and his cohorts. It is because both of these ministers have always been so distant from the immediate affairs of the Society that their suitability for membership on the Board of Directors is open to question. Rev. Wiesbauer lives in Massachusetts, and has been a member of the Board for the past three years. It is only with difficulty that he is able to attend meetings. With the exception of one occasion last autumn, he has not been present at a single Board Meeting for the past year. It should be self-evident that, with certain salient exceptions, membership on the Mattachine Board of Directors should be composed of persons who have at least some experience in the affairs of the Society, and who are able to bring to its deliberations the fruits of that experience. And it goes without saying that Board membership entails diligent attendance at Board meetings. The time is long since past when one can satisfy one's obligations as a Board member by good intentions plus a single appearance. M.S.N.Y. now has a working Board of Directors, several

of whom are active members of the permanent staff of professionals who are in charge of the Society's programs. The Society has a right to expect hard work and conscientious efforts from each Board member.

Mr. Jerry Chandler, the third Trust nominee for the three-year position on the Board of Directors is also a person of ability and talent. Several years ago he was placed in charge of the Society's fund-raising program. After a promising start, he dropped out of sight, and has not been seen nor heard from in any working capacity since. There has been far too much of this kind of dilettante involvement in Mattachine by people who claim deep interest in the homophile movement, and then disappear from view when confronted with the responsibilities of their job. M.S.N.Y. has long since passed the stage where its programs can be successfully administered by drop-outs who have never manifested any dependability.

I repudiate the suggestion that people should run for office within the Society, and then cavalierly absent themselves from all duties of the office to which they have been elected. It is to repulse this theory that I am presently a candidate for membership on the Board of Directors. If elected to the Board, I pledge a continuation of the same hard work and reliability which I believe I have consistently demonstrated in the past. I am a charter member of the Society, having joined it at the original organizational meeting convened by Mr. Thomas Morford in 1952. Prior to that I belonged to the old "League", the first homophile organization in the East. I can bring to the Board my own legal experience, my work as chairman of the constitutional advisory committee which drafted the Society's present constitution, and, finally, my more recent work as national legal chairman for N.A.C.H.O. During the dark days of DeDion's presidency, when the Society was forced to wallow in the muck of incompetence, I never permitted my own personal disillusionment to take the form of dropping out. With the exception of a two-year hiatus during 1963 and 1964, when I was teaching at the University of Texas, I have been a continuous active working member of the Society for almost 17 years, a record which I do not believe can be equalled by any other member. It is my view that the Society is currently in able hands, and that the present administration should be permitted to continue its good work.

Austin Wade