

UNIVERSITY OF *Minnesota*

MINNESOTA STUDENT ASSOCIATION • MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA 55455

Reply to: 1139-15th Avenue SE
Minneapolis 55414

August 3, 1971

Walter Barnett
Varsity House Apartment 11
141 Columbia Southeast
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87106

Professor Barnett:

I received your copy of the "brief." Thanx. I agree it should be published. But I have some observations which I will share with you.

First, you mention that the article would be used by persons seeking to lobby for reform of the sodomy laws. That means that its first and primary purpose is to communicate, i.e., persuade. If that is so, then words which inhibit communication must be removed. There are two such words; homosexual and sodomy.

We have found that the term "homosexual" is an emotionally-charged word that prevents communication. It conjures up the boogey-man of everything evil in the nongay person. In that regard, it is a kissing cousin of the word "communist." Reasoned (emotion-less) dialogue ensues only when both parties convey ideas thru the medium of different word choices. It's silly. But it's a fact.

I think you will be better ^{off} if you use the terms Gay and nongay--and same-sex life style for homosexuality. Switching terminology has the effect of opening a window in a stuffy room. It adds a new perspective. That is what we tried to do with the FREE pamphlet (notice it has the word "homosexual" in it only once--and in quotes!) and the brief to the marriage case. Admittedly you run into problems when you try to quote an "authoritative" source. But when haven't nongay people created problems for us? A judicious selection of quotes can be an immense help.

Enough on the term "homosexual." I'm enclosing a copy of an article that we're circulating to the local press. It should give you a greater insight into the reasoning behind the non-use of the term. Also, a better term for sexual preference is "interpersonal orientation." Emphasis should be placed on the broader personality--not on just one subpart of it.

The second point I have is that the term sodomy should be removed also. For most nongay people, sodomy means IPSO FACTO, PER SE homosexuality. Thus, like the term homosexuality, it conjures up all the boogey-man evils you can dream of. Since it will be going to the people who we should be the most careful with--legislators--we should choose words judiciously. It seems to me you'd be a heck of lot better off with a term like "sexual prohibitions statutes." It has the advantage of communicating the idea of "censorship" without the disadvantage of


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identifying whether it is inter-human or human/animal sex or, if inter-human, the genders involved. Thus, I would argue it is a better word choice, even tho longer.

I guess the upshot of all this is that I'm arguing for publication in pamphlet form IF the terminology is purified. If not, then I have serious doubts whether the marginal communication to be gained is worth the cost of printing and distributing in large quantities.

Those are my comments. I hope they help. I'll be interested in knowing what you and the committee finally decide to do.

Sincerely yours,


Jack Baker,
President