

TO: TOM COLEMAN, CRAIG PATTON, ARTHUR WARNER
FROM: TONY SILVESTRE
DATE: AUGUST 1, 1977

Excuse the impersonality of this type of communication but I feel that it is necessary to get it out as soon as possible.

I am still glowing from Columbus. I feel a surge of energy that I have not felt since my appointment to the Council. In Columbus, I became more convinced that my assessment of administrative change as a valuable strategy in the movement is correct. I am more than ever convinced that other states and the national movement should move in this direction. Thanks for reconfirming my conviction.

Since Columbus I have thought more seriously than ever about tactics to establish a national council. I want to share my thoughts with you and hope that in your busy schedules you may find time to respond.

I have since the Ford administration, been working for a council at the federal level. My work so far has been limited to writing to Ford and Carter urging the establishment of a council, having Shapp write to Carter asking for a visible commitment to gay rights and contacting Spencer Cox and Ellie Smeal (ACLU and NOW president respectively) asking for a meeting to develop tactics.

My visit to Columbus has led me to reevaluate my approach.

As I see it now the following may be a better approach. I do not know who will work to implement it. I am willing to devote much energy and I hope you will consider active participation as individuals or in the name of the committee. I feel some urgency because I anticipate other attempts by other persons which may defeat our purpose and because the approach needs three or four years before a Council would be established.

Bruce Voeller made it clear that NGTF can not pressure for a national council. At the same time, he said he would welcome pressure from other groups. The field is, therefore, open to all kinds of initiatives.

The following ideas are not new; we did discuss them at Columbus but I would like to outline them here.

A. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A BLUE RIBBON PANAL OF CREDIBLE PEOPLE TO EXAMINE THE PROBLEMS OF GAYS AT A NATIONAL LEVEL.

1. This panal should be set up by a non-gay and credible organization or organizations. The National Council of Churches may be such a group. I am feeling out a few friends in the NCC but am quite open to other suggestions. (As a convenience, I will refer to the core group of organizers of this approach as we.)

- a) We need to decide what sponsoring group to approach, how to approach them, and who will approach them.
- b) There should be a committment by them to work in consultation with the committee.
- c) Funding should be from the organization but we may have to consider raising some private funds.
- d) We should plan a schedule for the panal, place to meet issues to be raised and outside consultants and, of course, a list of possible panal members.
- e) Once there is an agreement to set up the panal, we should consult with gay "leaders" around the country. Each of us has rapport with various leaders and segments of the community. We could use our ties and contacts to get cooperation and support. At the same time, we need to have a mechinism for their input eg. naming some people to the advisory board of the blue-ribbon panal. Such choosing must be done carefully. We could rely on geographic, sex and racial representation to limit East and West coast stars. The panal would make the final decision anyway and so we could avoid blame.
- f) Even during this process there must be political pressure and education at the Federal level. (SEE ATTACHED)

B. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL TASK FORCE TO STUDY THE PROBLEMS OF GAYS ON A NATIONAL LEVEL.

The task force should be established for a year, mandated to issue a report for Carter with recommendations.

- a) The task force should be structured to include
 - high-level and empathetic representatives of FED. depts.
 - representatives of gay grps. (sex, race and geography used as criteria)
 - Community Representatives, nationally known, non-gays
 - an important aide to the President

- b) Consultation with all segments of the gay community is important. As the task force gets active it could recruit gays from around the country to work on special projects.

C. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL COUNCIL ON GAY RIGHTS TO WORK TOWARDS ENDING DISCRIMINATION.

As with the other two steps, I suggest that the experience of Pennsylvania be considered.

There is no question that the Council can only be effective if competence and not ego determine its structure and functioning. It is absolutely necessary that competent people direct the process. At the same time, "stars" will try to control the process. From the beginning, it must be assumed that geographic representation is essential. This assumption will limit the numbers and influence of the large coast cities with all of their "stars". Of course, it will be necessary to identify competent people in areas of the country not on the front pages of gay newspapers. I believe that the Committee can certainly contribute here.

No matter how carefully the gay representatives are chosen, all of the plans could be radically changed by the White House. No matter who is recommended Carter will do the appointing. It will be necessary to see to it that there is pressure on him that will counteract pressure by any groups. (I am working on a project which will give us some kind of presence at the White House before the formation of even the blue ribbon panel.)

Pressure on Carter could be from the group establishing the blue ribbon panel and allied groups, politicians and bureaucrats, and by potential supporters for his 1980 race. We could work actively behind the scenes drumming up the pressure.

It seems to me that the process begin as soon as possible. A blue ribbon panel should be established during 1978 so that the issue of a Task Force could be raised as long before the 1980 campaign as possible. The National Council could not be established until 1980, but should be organized as soon after 1980 as possible. I have not mentioned Republicans but we will need to take some initiative to at least neutralize them as much as possible and get whatever support is their.

Although I am able and willing to do some of the work involved, I cannot do all or most of it. In all honesty, I must say that the Committee represents to me the people who could successfully implement this entire project. I see consultation and input from many people important but I feel that a core group of competent people are needed to establish basic strategy and direction.

I am anxious to know your reactions and your willingness to become partners in this project. I assume it will be necessary to have a day or two together to meet and discuss some of the issues raised here. I think that is the only commitment needed now.

I am asking that you keep this memo confidential. I, of course, trust that anyone you may share it with will be willing to keep it private. I am afraid that even rumors of such a strategy would precipitate unnecessary opposition from those who have staked out particular areas as their own.

Many good wishes for a pleasant summer.

ATTACHMENT

Carter has decided to make the issue of family stability and growth a concern of his administration. He has issued statements on the family and has a number of aides studying the issue and making recommendations to him. The issue, so far, has focused on the traditional family-husband, housewife and two children. It seems to me that other families and family forms must receive the same attention and support if Carter is serious. Single-parent families, childless families, same-sex parents, two-career families are just some forms that could be neglected. Blacks, Women and other groups should also be interested in having the administration widen their interest.

I intend to contact Mondale as well as some of the president's aides working on the issue asking for a meeting between them and us. Us includes me, a representative of the women's movement and the black movement, a professional sociologist on family, and a legal or religious representative. Although I have specific persons in mind, I welcome suggestions about specific persons you may think should be present.

A prime concern for the minority views is to establish continuing contact and input on the issue. This will serve the purpose of helping us identify key supporters in the administration, build that support and gain credibility.

The family program might also provide us with back-door entrance. Studying the gay issue and taking actions in the context of the larger issue of family might be the quickest approach for change.

I will have to contact other attenders in the next three weeks so please send me your suggestions as soon as possible. I would like to write for meetings during the first week of Sept.

Possible people for meeting with Mondale

Ellie Smeal- President of NOW
Coretta King
Jessie Bernard Wash DC Sociologist

Tom Coleman
Lyman Ogilby Bishop of Philadelphia
(Episcopal)

Meetings with President's aid

Basically professional bureaucrats and family specialists to be named by Women, Black and Gay representatives