

FREE'S Campaign to SAVE MCCONNELL  
Background Information

FREE's campaign to SAVE MCCONNELL rises three important questions:

1. What events lead up to the SAVE MCCONNELL campaign?
2. What does the SAVE MCCONNELL campaign indicate about the relationship between FREE and the University of Minnesota?
3. What are the national implications of the SAVE MCCONNELL campaign?

Events Leading to the SAVE MCCONNELL Campaign

In February, Jim McConnell applied for a library position in the University of Minnesota Library system. In April, McConnell interviewed with Dr. Hopp, Associate Director of the O. Meredith Wilson Library. On April 27, Dr. Hopp officially offered McConnell the position of Head of Cataloging Division of the St. Paul Campus Library. In no way did the letter indicate that the appointment was conditional upon the approval of any University committee or the Board of Regents. Dr. Hopp has not been able to fill the position for over one year and McConnell was lead to believe that he was one of the first candidates who did possess the qualifications for the position.

On May 18, McConnell and Jack Baker applied for a marriage license in the Hennepin County Court House. Because a legally recognized relationship would provide security for the relationship, a legal bond which allow the two to work harder to make the relationship work, and because the legal bond symbolized the love relationship, the two made the application. FREE endorsed the application and is curenly filing appeals to the Minnesota Supreme Court because:

1. "Any relationship that promotes honesty, self-respect, mutual growth and understanding for two people and which harms no other person should be accepted by the law."
2. "Homosexuals are entitled to the same rights enjoyed by heterosexuals with the full dignity of the law."
3. "Procreation cannot be the only stanard used to legally recognize a significant love relationship."

On June 24, six days before McConnell was to begin his active work in the library, Mr. R. Joel Tierney, University Attorney, informed McConnell that the Faculty, Staff, and Student Affairs Committee of the Board of Regents had voted not to recommend his appointment and that McConnell should not report for

employment on July 1. McConnell had already turned down another employment offer, resigned from his present position, allowed his apartment lease to expire, severed financial ties, and made provisions for a permanent relocation from Kansas City to Minneapolis. The letter from the University Attorney provided no reason for failing to approve the appointment yet the Attorney says that McConnell can request an appeal hearing on July 9. Without knowing why the appointment was not approved, preparation for the hearing becomes extremely difficult. FREE believes, in the absence of any clarification by the Committee upon request after receiving the letter, that McConnell's membership in FREE and marriage application are outstanding factors. FREE would further contend that an individual's private sexual relationships with consenting adults are not a basis for University employment if no person is harmed.

#### FREE and the University of Minnesota

By in large, FREE feels that its objectives and activities are consistent with the larger objectives of the University and that most members of the University community have accepted FREE in this way. However, some have felt that the existence of an organization, which in part, seeks to obtain equivalent rights for heterosexuals and homosexuals is undesirable. In part such a reaction stems from the feeling that Gay people ought not be seen or heard. For Gay people, it is difficult to understand how one can obtain equivalent rights if no one knows who you are. Moreover, dishonesty in relationships simply does not appeal to many Gay people--the question often becomes, "Why should I lie about mysexual preferences with adults in private when they harm no other?" The University is dedicated to truth and such an attitude does not seem inappropriate.

There has also been some misunderstanding regarding the objectives of FREE. Some have felt that the organization, FREE, promotes homosexuality. FREE has never advocated homosexuality for anyone--not even admitted homosexuals. FREE has sought to achieve those economic, social, and legal rights enjoyed by straights but denied Gays.

In addition, some perceive FREE as an organization of "mentally ill" people. One can draw such a conclusion, as many clinical psychologists have, if one only examines those individuals who seek out clinical aid because they believe they have mental problems in the first place. However, if one takes random samples of both heterosexuals and Gay people, there is no significant difference on seven of the major clinical tests. That is exactly what Dr. Evelyn Hooker, Chairman of President Nixon's National Institute of Mental Health Task Force on Homosexuality and a UCLA psychiatrist, did and she found no significant difference between the straight and Gay community.

Others claim that FREE functions to promote "unnatural acts." FREE does not, number one, promote any form of sexual act. But second, homosexual acts are no more unnatural than heterosexual acts. Dr. Pomeroy, one of the co-authors of the Kinsey studies, aptly notes:

When we examine other species of mammals, we find homosexual activity, sometimes to the point of ejaculation, in all of the species studied. This is true of animals in the wild as well as animals in captivity. It is rare, however, for individual mammals to show an exclusive pattern of homosexual behavior. The majority have both heterosexual and homosexual activity, but heterosexual behavior predominates. Thus homosexual activity is "natural" in the sense that it occurs commonly in nature. Instead of asking, "Why do human beings engage in homosexual behavior?" it is more meaningful to ask, "Why doesn't everyone engage in homosexual behavior?" inasmuch as it is part of our mammalian heritage.

Functioning with education as the major concern, FREE, then, hopes to achieve four objectives: (1) Equivalent rights for Gay people; (2) Respect for the individuality and identity of Gay people; (3) Recognition that a Gay relationship is a legitimate relationship; and (4) Greater understanding, pride, and honesty for Gay people in all of their interactions with the rest of society. To do this, Gay people cannot remain in their "gay ghettos" never heard, never seen. Gay people do exist, will assert that existence, seek those rights enjoyed by straights so that their existence is meaningful, and develop both pride and power to sustain that meaningful existence.

#### The McConnell Case, FREE, and the Nation

In one sense, the McConnell case is not unusual for the Gay community. In

a rather tragic admission, Gay people have known for years that as soon as straights "find out" a person is Gay, the Gay can lose his job, security, and sense of motivation. In the National Institute of Mental Health's 1969 study on homosexuality, Dr. Gebhard (Director of the Institute of Sex Research--Kinsey Institute) noted that, "16% of the sample had had employment difficulties attributable to attitudes toward their homosexuality, including 9% who had lost jobs on these grounds." Thus, the McConnell case is not an unexpected even in the Gay community.

What does make the McConnell case unusual is that McConnell is willing to have FREE fight for his rights. FREE's position: A man has a right to a position if he is qualified for it and his sexual practices occur in private among consenting adults and no person is harmed. Many means might be used to achieve

that position. For years, the "homosexual" hide, stayed out of the way, lied,

and did stay in his "gay ghetto." The times are changing. In New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles last weekend over 20,000 Gay people marched. Gay people will assert their existence now, work for their rights openly, and develop an identity that is not imposed upon them by the straight community. "Gay Pride" and "Gay Power" are only the beginning of the new ideology of the Gay Community. Over

150 organizations now exist for the homosexual. Of those, 40 are Gay Liberation organizations and generally located on all of the major college campuses. The groups will act and are. FREE is only one part of these groups. The groups are beginning to unite--The National Gay Liberation Alliance has been outlined by FREE to over 24 Gay Lib organizations with very favorable response. FREE hopes to have all Gay Lib organizations working together shortly. Gay people will assert themselves, will seek those rights enjoyed by heterosexuals, and will create their own identity. We hope our straight brothers and sisters help us in this effort, not fight us.

The McConnell Case, FREE, and the Nation

In one sense, the McConnell case is not unusual for the Gay community.