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GAYS ZAP

L.A. POLICE COMMISSION

NATIONAL GAY NEWSPAPER

By MIKE MANNING

On April 2, Atty. Thomas F. Coleman read to the Commission from a transcript of a KHJ-TV Tommy Hawkins Show with Chief Davis, broadcast on Jan. 10. Davis' statements ranged from incorrect to untrue or illegal. He had said that homosexuality is "a felony in the State of California, and has been as long as I have been Chief of Police, and long before that."

Coleman denied that being gay is a crime. He lashed out at Davis' statement that City Attorney Burt Pines "has announced that he has hired homosexuals on his staff. A few, he says, and I suppose you can be a homosexual and an attorney, I don't think you could have a homosexual prosecutor, I don't think you could handle a homosexual crime; now Burt Pines does not, to my knowledge, have any homosexuals as prosecutors."

Coleman said these statements totally distort the truth, as Davis tends to do, and he should be instructed to refrain from such statements unless he clears through the Commission (which is supposedly his boss). The Commission denied that they have any control over Davis.

However I find in the City Charter, Section 202, that the Commission indeed has control over the Police Chief, and can request investigative action by the Civil Service Commission.

THE COMMISSION'S GAY DAY

On May 1, May Day, or Gay Day, as we call it at the Commission, I asked about the progress of their investigation of the "memo." Commissioner James G. Fisk said the report would be out soon. Unimpressed, I suggested that the Chief's recent comments about gays, about the Brown bill, and such items as the Sports Arena busts, evidence a sick mind. Pursuant to Section 202 of the City Charter, I requested that Davis be investigated by the Civil Service Commission and terminated.

The Commissioners were not happy to see three of us there again: myself, Jeanne (Jeannie's Lamp) Barney and Attorney Coleman. Before our arrival they were wrestling with Davis over the Sports Arena fiasco, and he was instructed to make a special report on that action.

Jeanne Barney spoke as a heterosexual and a mother. Quoting the "memo." she castigated the police for doing such disgraceful things to law-abiding people.

In a written statement she said, "My daughter is nearly 15, and VD is reported at epidemic proportion... I was taken by the (memo's) statement that '75 to 80 percent of the syphilis in the Los Angeles area can be attributed to homosexual.' Those figures alarmed me. I learned that the L.A. County Board of Health does not break down the figures according to sexual preference.

"They have absolutely no way of knowing how many of the 7440 cases of syphilis were reported by gays and by non-gays. They can only estimate... A representative on the Board of Health replied... 'These (statements) are frightening and definitely not true... it's the official policy of the LAPD to harass gays more often because of belief that there is a higher rate of VD in the gay community.'"

Gay attorney Thomas Coleman spoke next, though the Commissioners clearly didn't wish to hear more. Commissioner Robert L. Weil had left when he saw who was to speak, and Commissioner Mariana Pflizer had said she must leave shortly for other engagements.

ILLEGAL LOBBYING

This did not deter Coleman from attacking LAPD lobbying efforts both in the City Council and at Sacramento. He charged that illegal lobbying was being practiced by Chief Davis, Commander Joseph Gunn, (leader of the bloody Black Cat raid on Jan. 1, 1967), and Deputy Chief R. L. Vernon (alleged author of the 12/19/74 "memo.).

Said Coleman: "The Los Angeles Police Commission has not taken a position on either AB 633 (the Foran Bill) or SB 513 (Moscone on solicitation). Neither has the Police Commission authorized anyone from the LAPD to speak for the Department or to lobby on these bills.

"Yesterday, Commander Gunn of the LAPD testified before the State, County, Federal Affairs Committee... as the position of the LAPD ON AB 633. He did not have authority to so testify. His testimony in that respect constitutes illegal expenditure of taxpayer's funds. His testimony was the sole or major testimony on that agenda item."

Coleman reminded the Commission of a 12/4/74 letter from the late Councilman Robert Stevenson asking the Commission:

- "1. Has the Police Commission authorized a Department?
- "2. Has the Police Commission authorized comments by any sworn personnel?
- "3. Has the Police Commission authority over expenditure of City funds to lobby on this issue?"

On 12/3/74 the Commission replied "No" to the first two questions, and to #3: "The Police Commission has the authority over the liaison section within the office of the Chief of Police."

Coleman charged Davis with illegal lobbying, with spreading his personal anti-gay opinion throughout the Department and with spending considerable taxpayers' funds to carry this out. An Internal Affairs officer questioned Coleman and carefully wrote down his allegations. Coleman was assured that the Commission would investigate.

Commissioner Salvatore Montenegro assured the complainants that the Commission is aware of and concerned with the problems. As to my mention of three incredibly brutal murders in the gay community being possibly influenced by dissemination of this "memo," he said that there are murders all over L.A., so we aren't unique.

It seems a sad commentary on city government that officials explain away and practically justify murder by such incredulous statements!

The meeting adjourned with the promises we've been hearing for years: "We are concerned"... "We can't control Chief Davis"... "We will investigate"... "Send a letter to the Mayor."

As of this writing, the Willie Brown Bill has been signed and we are no longer the criminals Chief Davis has repeatedly labelled us. Officials now have to deal with the problems of our community. If the Commission and Chief Davis (Is there no hope?) refuse, then we must for our own personal safety and well-being apply pressure. The cost for our freedom might be high, but it seems to me that we must all fight for it.