



DIGEST

*The newsletter of the World Congress of Gay & Lesbian Jewish Organizations
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Fall '90

Conservative, Reform Rabbis Take Major Steps Toward Acceptance

Both the Conservative Rabbinical Assembly of America and the Reform Central Conference of American Rabbis adopted significant resolutions at their annual meetings this year affirming the rights of Lesbian and Gay Jews. In each case, however, the rabbinic body qualified and stopped short of full acceptance.

On May 15, the Rabbinical Assembly adopted a resolution supporting "full civil equality for gays and lesbians in our national life," deploring "the violence against gays and lesbians in our society," welcoming Gay and Lesbian Jews into Conservative congregations, and calling upon Conservative synagogues and movement arms "to increase our awareness, understanding and concern for

1.5 million members, or nearly 40 percent of affiliated Jews in the United States. In 1987, the Rabbinical Assembly adopted a resolution urging an end to AIDS-related discrimination and calling upon Jews to provide support and compassion to those with AIDS. With the Rabbinical Assembly's latest resolution, all of Judaism save for Orthodoxy is on record favoring equal rights for Lesbians and Gay men.

Six weeks later, on June 25, the CCAR, on record opposing anti-Gay discrimination since 1975, became the largest United States religious body to agree to ordain clergy "regardless of their sexual orientation," culminating a four-year study of the question. Reform Judaism now joins the Reconstruction-

with the Federation of Reconstructionist Congregations and Havurot.

Like the Rabbinical Assembly resolution, the CCAR report "affirms that heterosexuality is the only appropriate Jewish choice for fulfilling one's covenantal obligations." The minority report, "affirming the equal possibility of covenantal fulfillment in homosexual and heterosexual relationships," was not adopted. In addition, the report urges Lesbian and Gay rabbis to remain in the closet.

Commenting on both the Rabbinical Assembly and CCAR resolutions, World Congress Executive Director Barrett Brick noted the "ongoing phenomenon in Judaism of Gay men and Lesbians being included as a vital and vibrant

our fellow Jews who are gay and lesbian." A preamble to the resolution notes the history of homophobia and anti-Gay violence, and the impact of the AIDS crisis.

During the floor debate, which was one of the most well-attended in recent years, an amendment to the resolution "affirming our tradition's prescription for heterosexuality" was adopted with only two dissents. However, the Assembly soundly defeated amendments which would have found that the Torah and Judaism condemn homosexual acts and homosexuality.

Conservative Judaism counts about

1st movement, which has ordained openly Gay and Lesbian rabbis for years. Rabbi Denise Eger, of Los Angeles' Beth Chayim Chadashim, called the CCAR vote "an incredible moral victory," and Rabbi Yoel Kahn, of San Francisco's Sha'ar Zahav, noted it as "a breakthrough for Gay and Lesbian Jews." Both congregations are members of the World Congress and also the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Reform congregational body.

Reform Judaism represents some 35 percent of affiliated Jews in the United States. Five World Congress members are UAHC affiliates, and one is affiliated

part of the community." Nevertheless, he stated, the CCAR telling Gay and Lesbian rabbis to stay in the closet is "neither useful nor helpful. We are well aware of homophobia within the Jewish community. The CCAR needs to address this problem, not avoid it."

Though linked to statements proclaiming the favored position of heterosexuality, both resolutions are major steps forward for the rabbinic community and for Judaism. Clearly, however, major educational work still needs to be done. The World Congress and its member groups and friends will continue to do so.

World Congress Marks 10 Years of Growth

Founded in San Francisco on August 31, 1980, the World Congress marked 10 years of growth at the annual meeting of the Board of Directors, which took place July 2-3, 1990, in Toronto, Ontario, following the Third Midwest Regional Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews, hosted by Toronto's Chutzpah. Twenty-one member organizations participated in the meeting, making it the largest ever.

In addition to meeting in Canada for the first time, the Board further emphasized the international focus of the World Congress by electing Belinda Ganon of London's Jewish Gay and Lesbian Group as President, the first non-USA resident to hold this position. Jack Malick of New York's Beth Simchat Torah was elected Secretary, succeed-

ing James Baaden of London's JGLG, who will succeed David Freedman of Paris' Beit Haverim as **Digest** Editor.

The Board heard staff reports, received copies of the World Congress' new information brochure, approved bylaws and conference guidelines, and discussed resolutions from the plenary of the 1989 11th International Conference. Looking to the future, and recognizing the increasing demands on the World Congress and its staff, the Board approved a budget for FY 1991 of \$9600, an increase of over 20% from previous years.

The Board selected London as the site of the 13th International Conference in 1993, and New York for the 14th International Conference in 1995. With a view toward making World Congress meet-

ings as accessible as possible, the Board discussed strategies to combat the US government's exclusion of Gay, Lesbian, and HIV+ visitors.

Not only has the World Congress itself achieved record growth, but the Gay and Lesbian Jewish community as a whole has grown and strengthened itself, as remarked upon by all Board members. Discussions of future directions for the World Congress and its member groups reflect this, focusing on increasing the services we provide to our members, and the fact that we as a movement are here to stay.

Following the Board meeting, two additional groups joined the World Congress: Yakhdav (Montreal) and Hineinu (London), the latter a group for Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Jewish youth.

Amsterdam, Toronto Regionals are Largest Yet

Two of the World Congress' four Regional Conferences of Gay and Lesbian Jews were held outside of the United States in 1990, and both attracted record-breaking crowds.

118 women and men from nearly a dozen countries gathered in Amsterdam April 27-May 1 for the Second European Regional Conference. In addition to the Netherlands, attendees came from Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Switzerland, the USSR, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Coinciding with the Dutch national holiday of Queen's Day and Israel's Yom ha-Atzma'ut, participants enjoyed several days of workshops, celebrations, and solidarity. Perhaps one of the most moving and meaningful events was a Kaddish and Havdalah ceremony on Saturday evening at the Homomonument, the memorial to Lesbian and Gay victims of oppression and persecution, which had not yet been completed at the time of the 10th International Conference in 1987. The Regional Conference also sparked the birth of a new Gay and Lesbian Jewish group, L'chaim, in Berlin.

Two months later, 113 men and women gathered in Toronto for the Third Midwest Regional Conference, June 29-July 2, the World Congress' first event in Canada. Keynoted by openly Gay Canadian MP Svend Robinson of Vancouver, the conference provided stimulating workshops, Shabbat and Canada Day celebrations, and the magnificent voices of Kol Nashim, a women's cantorial choir. In addition to attendees from Canada and the United States, participants also came from France, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom, to



The CN Tower rises over the skyline in Toronto, site of the Third Midwest Regional Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews and World Congress Board of Directors meeting.

attend the World Congress' annual Board meeting in Toronto July 2-3.

Upcoming Events

1991

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|----------------------------|---|
| May 23-24
San Francisco | World Congress Board of Directors Meeting |
| May 24-27
San Francisco | 12th International Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews |
| June 16-22
Guadalajara | 13th Annual ILGA Conference |

World Congress Member Organizations

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May 28-31
Paris

3rd European/Israeli Regional Conference of
Gay and Lesbian Jews

World Congress Joins ILGA in Stockholm

The International Lesbian and Gay Association held its 12th annual conference in Stockholm July 1-7, with participation by the World Congress through our delegate, Denise Fetonte. Through her, the World Congress was instrumental in establishing an ILGA information pool against fascism, which will operate under the leadership of a group in Koln.

Homosexuella Judar, Stockholm's Gay and Lesbian Jewish group, hosted a reception for the visiting Jewish delegates from 32 countries on July 3. Members of Homosexuella Judar have also participated in World Congress conferences, and the group hosted a Shabbat celebration during Stockholm's Gay and Lesbian Pride Week in August.

Lisa Power of London was re-elected as co-Secretary General of ILGA. Succeeding the late Jean-Claude Letist as co-Secretary General is John Clark, an American-born Gay Jew living in Vienna. The site of next year's ILGA conference is Guadalajara, June 16-22, 1991.

PART-TIME RABBI SOUGHT

Bet Mishpachah in Washington, DC, has established a search committee to hire a part-time rabbi, the congregation's first. The rabbi's primary duties would be instruction and pastoral care, as well as providing guidance on religious policy and leading selected services. Candidates should submit resumes by October 15 to Bet Mishpachah, P.O. Box 1410, Washington, DC 20013. Or call (202) 387-7078.

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