

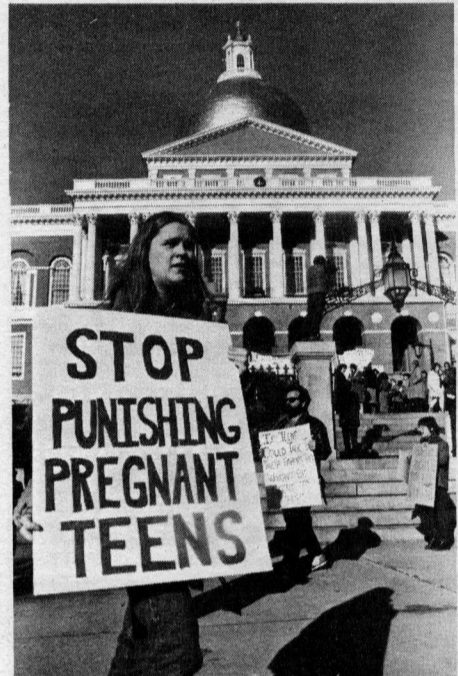
State to trample teen abortion rights

Pro-choice activists decry measure that would allow parents greater influence over their daughters' lives.

By Elizabeth Pincus

BOSTON — A parental consent law limiting the reproductive rights of teenage women in Massachusetts could soon become even more restrictive. A bill currently before the state Senate would allow parents to testify in court deliberations that determine whether a minor is mature enough to make her own decision about an abortion. Present law, in effect since 1977, requires that Massachusetts women under 18 obtain the consent of both parent or a judge to have an abortion. Currently, hearings are closed to minors' parents.

Pro-choice advocates in Massachusetts, a state with one of the most conservative records on abortion, are struggling to com-



Barbara Bolten of NOW joins other demonstrators at the Mass. State House on Dec. 21 to protest a bill restricting abortion rights for teenagers

bat the proposed legislation. A demonstration convened by the Boston-based Reproductive Rights Network (R2N2) drew a coalition of groups to the State House steps on December 21 to protest bill 2375. The measure, heavily pushed by the "pro-family" Massachusetts Citizens for Life, passed the House of Representatives earlier this month by an 111-40 vote.

Approximately 30 people picketed during the noon hour to call attention to the bill some called an underhanded attack on abortion rights. Several protesters accused the state of trying to push through legislation in the final weeks of the session, when attention is diverted by a rush of pressing issues. If the Senate votes in favor of the bill as expected, it goes for final approval to Gov. Michael Dukakis. He has not indicated his position on the matter.

Similar battles over the abortion rights of minors are underway in other states. Pro-choice proponents around the nation are watching the hearings to confirm U.S. Supreme Court nominee Anthony Kennedy. Given a recent 4-4 Court deadlock on an abortion ruling, Kennedy's confirmation would give him the tie-breaking vote on reproductive rights decisions before the high bench. In his judicial career, Kennedy has never had occasion to rule on abortion, though he has expressed skepticism about constitutional protections of "sexual privacy" for youth under 18. He has also, however, cited *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 landmark case that legalized abortion, without criticism.

While progressives have decried Kennedy's record on comparable worth, lesbian and gay rights, and issues affecting people of color, his stance on abortion has been called a "wild card" by some political pundits. Because of his unpredictability on the issue, Kennedy has garnered distrust

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How about those dental dams?

A survey of educators gives mixed reviews on whether the latex squares are useful or effective, if you can get hold of them at all

By Marea Murray

BOSTON — A November survey of health professionals and educators regarding dental dams revealed no consensus about the use or effectiveness of the latex barriers for lesbian, bisexual or straight women who may be at risk for HIV infec-



tion. The survey consisted of a poll of ten practitioners and educators working in feminist women's health centers, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and other sources around the country, undertaken by the Alternative Tests Site (ATS) staff at Boston's Fenway Community Health Center (FCHC). According to ATS, no printed information is available on this subject.

All of the health workers surveyed by FCHC had heard of dental dams and many said they speak with their clients about them. In a December memorandum on the survey, ATS said some of the people interviewed reported that clients raised the sub-

ject of dental dams. Some reported they were unsure about the appropriateness of recommending dams, unsure how to use the squares of latex, or unsure of agency policies about speaking with women and men about dental dams. Dams, usually six-inch squares, can be placed over a woman's vaginal area as a barrier to oral contact with the woman's vaginal secretions during oral sex.

According to the memorandum, a topic apparently not covered in the survey was whether oral-anal contact (rimming) is risky behavior for women or men. And if it is, could dental dams' use prevent HIV-transmission?

Educators, finding that dental dams are not readily available for purchase, said they refer their clients to the companies which manufacture dental dams or to other AIDS organizations they assumed could supply them. None of the health centers surveyed — including the Fenway — sell or are prepared to provide more than a sample dental dam to clients.

Opinions among those surveyed varied about when and if dental dam use is advisable. The majority agreed that partners,

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Controversy emerges about how to fight LaRouche

California activists charge gay 'federation' with adopting exclusive strategy

By Chris Bull

LOS ANGELES — The return of the LaRouche AIDS quarantine initiative to California has sparked controversy in the gay and lesbian community about how to address the homophobic legislation.

Several activists expressed concern that an elite, self-styled "federation" of gay and lesbian leaders are planning strategy behind closed doors. *Update*, a San Diego gay and lesbian weekly, claims that the federation, led by Eric Rofes of the Gay and Lesbian Services Center in Los Angeles, is guilty of "high-handed tactics" and has downplayed the importance of fighting LaRouche. *Update*, in a Dec. 9 article, "Activists Not to Oppose LaRouche," said an important Dec. 5 strategy meeting of 50 gay and lesbian leaders, many of whom played an important role in defeating the '86 LaRouche initiative, was closed to the press as well as to many members of the community.

Rofes told *GCN* that *Update* "didn't have a lot of information" and didn't understand the issues. He explained that the initial strategy meeting, held at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, was closed in order to keep strategy out of the hands of the right-wing. An open meeting will be held January 9 at the San Francisco Women's Building.

Rofes told *GCN*, "We feel that we can't run the same campaign again. It cost us three million of the community's dollars and it was very draining. There will be lots of organizing going on at the grass roots level, which can be just as effective. Money does not buy a campaign." He explained that the federation is attempting to foster cooperation among the many gay and lesbian organizations throughout the state. Not until recently, he said, has the state even had a state-wide lobby group. The federation hopes to provide an ongoing forum for the community, according to Rofes.

Rofes added that the federation is more concerned with bills sponsored by State Senator John Doolittle, Rep. William Danemeyer (R-Calif.) and L.A. County Sheriff Sherman Block, which call for mandatory testing and take away many of the rights of PWAs (See *GCN*, Vol. 15, No. 21). Doolittle alone has sponsored ten AIDS bills. They in-

clude proposals for mandatory testing for prisoners and immigrants, and attempt to make it a felony for HIV-positive prostitutes who know their antibody status to continue work.

Although most activists claim the LaRouche initiative can be defeated easily, they expressed concern that the measure makes other repressive and anti-gay AIDS legislation look legitimate in comparison. For example, California Republican maverick Paul Gann, who has AIDS, is sponsoring an initiative that closely resembles the LaRouche measure; some activists speculate that he intends to denounce LaRouche as extremist in order to make his own legislation seem reasonable. The federation, which plans to meet every three months to network among communities and organizations in the state, will try to expose this strategy, according to Phill Wilson, co-chair of Black and White Men Together in Los Angeles.

Wilson, who attended the closed meeting, said a series of pro-gay bills was also planned to deflect some attention from LaRouche and Gann. State Attorney General John Van de Camp is backing an initiative that would give tax credits to corporations that contribute to AIDS research and care. Wilson said this would give people "a chance to vote for something positive instead of always hearing from us about how terrible the right wing is."

Wilson added that a Los Angeles chapter of AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power (ACT UP) is planning civil disobedience around the state to combat increasing anti-gay panic. The ACT UP civil disobedience, including a Dec. 23 sit-in at the Immigration and Naturalization Service office to protest mandatory testing for immigrants, is intended to radicalize the community. He said that the "old guard," which includes the Municipal Election Committee of Los Angeles and the Stonewall Democratic Club as well as some members of the federation, appeals to the political mainstream by projecting an image of "we are no different than you are" and by lavishing money on politicians. The "old guard" is reluctant to include women and people of color and re-

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Bill doomed at year's end

Mass. Gov. Michael Dukakis draws fire for failing to move gay rights legislation

By Elizabeth Pincus

BOSTON — With only a week and a half remaining in the current legislative session, the Massachusetts gay rights bill teeters on the brink of collapse. Several senators have recently switched their votes to favor discharging the measure from the Committee on Third Reading, but the latest tallies still fall far short of the two-thirds Senate majority required to move the bill forward.

Governor Michael Dukakis, stumping hard on the U.S. presidential campaign trail, remains allegedly supportive of the anti-discrimination legislation which would provide protections for lesbians and gay men in housing, employment, public accommodation and credit. However, Dukakis has yet to use his clout to pressure Senate Pres. William Bulger (D-South Boston) to discharge the bill from the committee, chaired by bill opponent Arthur Lewis (D-Jamaica Plain). Dukakis' apparent reticence on the matter, coupled with his anti-gay stance on foster care, has stirred protest in lesbian/gay communities throughout the U.S. For example, a spokesperson from a Des Moines lesbian and gay coalition reported that a recent appearance by Dukakis in Iowa drew about 200 demonstrators criticizing his stance on various lesbian/gay concerns.

"People all over the country are watching this bill," said Ann Robbart, a lesbian activist affiliated with both the Massachusetts Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus (MGLPC) and the Greater Boston Lesbian and Gay Political Alliance (GBL/GPA). "Dukakis is not getting the gay vote. Now that Simon has signed on the federal gay rights bill, people have another option."

Robbart refers to the recent support presidential contender Sen. Paul Simon (D-Illinois) has expressed for proposed federal legislation banning discrimination

on the basis of sexual orientation. Chris Riddiough, executive director of the National Association of Gay and Lesbian Democratic Clubs, praised Simon for co-sponsoring the bill, but said "his voting record is not perfect." Among the Democratic candidates, Riddiough cited Jesse Jackson as clearly most supportive on lesbian/gay issues, and chided Dukakis as "among the weakest." She stated her belief that front contenders must be mindful of the lesbian and gay vote.

Robbart agreed, claiming that Simon's move may force Dukakis into more aggressive pro-gay action on the Massachusetts bill. "Dukakis would be the key," Robbart stated, "in cutting a deal with [Senate President] Bulger."

Dick Kendall, legislative director for Dukakis, told *GCN* the governor continues to support the gay rights bill. He claimed that Dukakis has lobbied senators and "had conversations with Bulger." Kendall would not specify if Dukakis has more concrete plans for moving the bill in the next two weeks.

GPL/GPA member Michael M. Scully spoke harshly of Dukakis' inaction on the bill, which has been stalled in committee since initial Senate approval on Nov. 23. "We'd like to emphasize," Scully said, "that at this point Dukakis is the only one who can move the bill. If he can't exert pressure over a very Democratic Senate [32-8], how can he expect to influence Congress as President of the United States? Isn't it ironic, isn't it disgusting, that five out of eight of the Senate Republicans have voted to discharge the bill, while a smaller percentage of the Democrats have come through?"

Scully added that the GBL/GPA, working along with the MGLPC, is making every

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Abortion

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from such disparate sources as conservative Sen. Jesse Helms (R-NC) and the National Organization for Women (NOW). Many of the established liberal groups that opposed the confirmation of Robert Bork have taken no formal stand on Kennedy, though some individuals have expressed vehement opposition to his nomination.

Said Barbara Bolten, vice-president for public relations of Boston NOW, "Kennedy's not as loud or outspoken as Bork, but his philosophy is just the same. He's a part of Reagan's right-wing agenda. Kennedy has ignored or condoned some of the worst blatant sex discrimination cases in court."

Bolten said she fears that Kennedy's tendency to rule against women poses an overall threat to reproductive rights. Susan Worgaftik, from the Boston chapter of the Alliance Against Women's Oppression, agreed. "The proposed inclusion of Kennedy on the Supreme Court is the latest attempt by the government to restrict women's rights," she said. Worgaftik explained that her group, a nationwide anti-racist women's organization, has joined with NOW and other groups in Boston to fight the proposed state bill attacking the rights of minors.

"The gradual narrowing of existing legislation is one way that the new right is whittling away at abortion rights," Worgaftik stated. "The issues particularly affect a large number of poor women and women of color. This new state bill is clearly a racist attack against these teenagers."

She explained her view that the media perpetuate a false impression that teenage pregnancy disproportionately occurs among women of color. In fact, Worgaftik said, incidents of unwanted pregnancy among young women of color have decreased relative to the population since 1960. She said she believes more restrictions on access to abortion will intimidate teenagers already frightened by pregnancy and possible family censure. Young women who may be uninformed about their choices could be further confused by the new legislation, according to Worgaftik.

She and Bolten were among the protesters at the Dec. 21 demonstration. Gay men and lesbians joined the picketers, citing connections between the legislature's attempt to limit reproductive rights and current stalling on enactment of a Massachusetts gay rights bill. "They're both examples of bigotry by the state that we find inexcusable," Bolten said. "The legislature has a tendency to trample individual rights."

Bolten added she finds it outrageous that Sen. Arthur Lewis (D-Jamaica Plain) is ignoring his constituency and blocking further action on the gay rights bill. Hilary Roberts of R2N2 also stated that the stalemate on pro-gay legislation reflects the same attitude that encourages erosion of abortion rights. In a brief speech to the assembled protesters, Roberts said, "There is a subtle attack happening on all our rights. It's no coincidence that the gay rights bill is being squelched while more vulnerable women are slowly losing access to abortion. The bill before the Senate violates teens' constitutional rights.... We don't believe that family communication can be legislated."

The proposed law would not require the court to notify parents, but would allow them access to the proceedings for the first time. Jamie Sabino, who heads a panel of attorneys representing minors in abortion hearings, said the bill could frighten young women away from the court process. Currently, about 700 to 900 minors unable to obtain parental consent seek court permission each year. According to Sabino, many of these young women already have severe family problems at home. She explained that she believes the so-called "pro-family" bill will only add an additional burden to already vulnerable teenagers.

"Every step of the way, teens are being hampered in their efforts to seek information about abortion," said Marlene Fried of R2N2. "Schools are hesitant to provide information — it's similar to the current hysteria concerning education about sexually-transmitted diseases. Kids are confused. The confidentiality of court hearings are threatened by the bill."

Fried added that the state legislature has always been "out of synch" with the public's attitude on reproductive rights. Ideally, she said, steps should be taken to rescind the 1977 law requiring parental consent, a regulation existing in varied form in 15 states. Fried chided the Catholic Church

for exerting a disproportionate influence against reproductive rights in Massachusetts, a state she believes is largely pro-choice. Although she expressed that the Senate will reject the bill, Fried said she hoped the demonstration would help educate people about growing restrictions on reproductive rights for young women. □

Dams

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regardless of risk for HIV infection, should refrain from oral sex with a woman who is menstruating in order to avoid oral contact with menstrual blood. Beyond that, those surveyed were unclear whether oral sex with a woman who is HIV-positive or with a woman who has engaged in any risky behavior is unsafe.

One practitioner said the epidemiology of hepatitis B and gonorrhea have proven to be the most accurate indicators of who will be affected by HIV and by what means. She added that neither of these infections have been traditionally serious health problems for lesbians who only have sex with other women. If there is any risk of transmission through mucus, she states it would only be through the eyes since saliva kills the gonorrheal virus before it can travel into the body and be exposed to unprotected membranes. She suggested undertaking research on the incidence of gonorrhea and hepatitis B as sexually transmitted disease (STD) between women who only have sex with other women.

Some of those surveyed also expressed concern that discussion of dental dams deflects attention from the issue of IV-drug use among lesbians. Although statistics on the numbers of lesbians who have AIDS are not compiled by the Centers for Disease Control, lesbians do, in fact, get AIDS. The frequency of HIV-transmission between lesbians through IV-drug use should not be overshadowed by concern that main mode of HIV-transmission between lesbians is sexual. Some health educators also view the use of dental dams as another way to complicate sex for lesbians and other women without benefit of adequate information about their effectiveness as a barrier to STD transmission. Evidence for this skepticism, one practitioner stated, is the fact that cervical caps and diaphragms better contain vaginal secretions yet have both proven ineffective as barriers to transmission of STDs between women. She pointed out that lesbian health concerns are often caught in a gap between gay men's health (and safer sex information geared to that population) or reproductive health — "neither being truly appropriate."

Frequent criticisms of dental dams cited by those surveyed include their thickness, smell and taste. These factors limit sensations during oral sex and thereby inhibit pleasure. Without research on dental dams' effectiveness in preventing the spread of HIV, health practitioners and lesbian, bisexual and straight women ought not to assume that dental dams are for vaginas what condoms are for penises. The ATS group concludes that there needs to be more open dialogue about dental dams among health educators, practitioners, and women. According to the memorandum, "Some level of consensus on both the role and the practicality of the dental dam needs to emerge so that women can be better informed."

Comments may be directed to the Alternative Test Site staff at Fenway Community Health Center, 16 Haviland St., Boston 02116. □

LaRouche

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jects civil disobedience. A new gay/lesbian community is beginning to assert itself, said Wilson, by demanding rights for all, not just for rich, white men.

"The old guard fails to address the anti-gay climate of today. Their philosophy is that they are the parents and we are the children. We feel that we have to be out front protecting prisoners and immigrants and not just reacting when white men are threatened. This is a moral issue." Wilson added that the "old guard's strategy of assimilation and politics of indebtedness" led to much of the anger expressed in the *Update* editorial.

Not allowing gay press to attend the meeting was a mistake, according to Wilson. "It's bullshit to treat the gay and lesbian press like the *L.A. Times*, the gay press is about strengthening the community, not just reporting the facts. Nothing was said at the meeting that couldn't be known anyway," said Wilson. □

□filed from Boston

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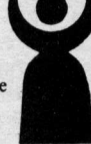
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