

## Religious Right Group Denounces Prez For Pushing 'Gay Agenda'

### Memo Claims "Disturbing Trend"

by Ron Gunzburger

The Family Research Council (FRC), one of the nation's largest Religious Right organizations, sharply criticized President George W. Bush for giving an "implicit endorsement" to the "homosexual political agenda." The criticisms were contained in a memo written and distributed in late September by FRC President Ken Connor.

In the open memo, Connor outlines a "disturbing [pro-gay] trend" in Bush Administration policy. Connor denounced Bush for a litany of events, including allowing openly gay Congressman Jim Kolbe to speak at last year's Republican National Convention, naming former Massachusetts Governor Paul Celluci ("a militant advocate of homosexual rights") as Ambassador to

Canada, and selecting "prominent gay activist" Scott Evertz to be the head of the White House Office on AIDS Policy.

Connor further blamed Bush for the recent vote in the U.S. House that allowed the District of Columbia to fund its domestic partners benefits program. "We lost this vote because 41 Republicans bolted to join 184 Democrats. Doubtless some of these GOP defectors took a cue from the White House," wrote Connor. [See related article on page 9.]

U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell was also singled out for criticism because he presided over the September swearing-in of "openly homosexual foreign service officer" Michael Guest to be Ambassador to Romania and recognizing "[Guest's] 'partner' of six years, who reportedly will live with the

ambassador" in the official residence in Bucharest.

The FRC places much of the blame for this supposed pro-gay policy on FRC President Ken Connor. Republican political consultant Mary Matalin, who currently serves as a senior White House advisor. Matalin, who is married to veteran Democratic consultant Jim Carville, was described as someone who "worked behind the scenes at the [2000] Convention to remove the strong pro-family planks from the GOP platform." Matalin was a co-founder last year of the pro-gay Republican Unity Coalition. She declined to



comment on Connor's memo.

According to the *Washington Post*, the reason Connor released the memo now is because "we waited and we waited" but were forced to act "in the face of a whole pattern of activity demonstrating that people were using the cover of war as a vehicle to advance controversial issues."

"There is a time and place for these types of debates. Now is not that time," said Human Rights Campaign spokesman David Smith.

The FRC was founded by Dr. James Dobson, head of the conservative Focus on the Family group and host of a daily radio show carried internationally on over 5,200 radio stations. Focus on the Family is estimated to have approximately 500,000 annual contributors and a mailing list of around 5 million names. Connor, a wealthy attorney, lost a race for Florida Governor to Jeb Bush in the 1994 Republican primary.

## New Reports of Torture and Legal Misconduct at Cairo-52 Trial

### Final Sentences Expected This Month

The trial of the 52 men detained in Egypt because of their alleged homosexuality continued October 3rd with new allegations of beatings and procedural irregularities.

Court observers believe it is likely that the hearings will end and sentences will be pronounced before the end of the month. International human rights organizations have repeatedly expressed concern about this case and have requested that the men be released.

At Friday's hearing, one of the defendants testified that he was arrested at home and contended that his mother was beaten and humiliated during the arrest. According to his testimony, he was beaten up by police officers while they dragged him to the street, blindfolded to the police station, where he received more beatings together with other defendants.

"We have been concerned since this case began about credible allegations of torture," said Surina Khan, Executive Director of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC). "These stories

are multiplying. We fear for the physical safety of the defendants in detention."

Local gay activists have uncovered additional irregularities surrounding the arrests in this case. Contrary to previous news reports, not all of the defendants were present at the Queen Boat the night of May 10 or were arrested there. Out of the 52 defendants, 19 were arrested elsewhere. Some of the other detainees were picked up by police for minor violations: one reportedly was a street vendor arrested for selling watches without a license at a teahouse, another was cleaning his motorcycle on the street without his ID, and still another was initially arrested for having a fight with an off-duty police officer. After their arrests, they were placed in the ranks of suspected "homosexuals" by police eager to stimulate a scandal.

A media campaign ensued in the days following the arrests, with the tightly state-controlled media broadcasting names and addresses of some of the detainees, and peppering reports with allegations of

debauchery and Satanism. Egyptian legislation prohibits the publication of details concerning an ongoing investigation or trial that would influence the course of the proceedings, yet the government has refused to apply its own laws.

"If the government of Egypt wanted to create a scandal out of this case, they have managed to do so," stated Ms. Khan. "People of good conscience around the world are watching."

Fifty defendants are all charged with "obscene behavior" under a law against prostitution. Two more men are charged, in addition, with "contempt for religion" under Article 98f of the Penal Code. All 52 have pleaded innocent and are presenting individual defenses. As of yesterday 22 defenses have been heard. The next hearing was set for October 10. Decision and sentence can be pronounced by the Court either immediately after all the defenses have rested, or at a special session soon thereafter. The Special Emergency Court delivers rulings which cannot be appealed.



Surina Khan, Executive Director of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC)

A teenager, tried in a juvenile court because of his age, was sentenced September 18 to the maximum penalty allowed by law: three years in prison, to be followed by three years of probation. Because of his age, he is allowed to appeal, and a hearing before the juvenile court has been set for October 31st.

## Czech Gays Hope to Legalize Registered Partnerships



PRAGUE, Czech Republic (AP) — Czech gays and lesbians soon could become the first in a former communist country to be allowed to register their partnerships.

Prime Minister Milos Zeman's Cabinet has thrown its support behind a draft law granting homosexuals equal rights with the rest of the population. And backers of the legislation say they've never had a better chance for passage of the measure.

"Our deputies will not want to vote against the Cabinet," said Petra Buzkova,

the deputy speaker of the lower chamber and a senior member of the governing Social Democrats. "I'll do my best to push it through."

The bill gives gay and lesbian couples the same rights as those of heterosexual ones in areas such as inheritance and health insurance. Couples would be allowed to seal their partnerships at local government offices, and severing a union would require a court-approved divorce.

The draft, approved by the Cabinet Monday, bars couples from adopting children.

Legislation that would allow homosexual unions already has been turned down twice by the Czech parliament, in 1997 and 1999. But this time will be different, gay activists say.

"Public opinion has changed," said Jiri Hromada, an activist. "Any deputy should listen to that."

A May survey by the state-sponsored CVVM polling agency said only 33 percent of those polled opposed such a law, compared to 42 percent in 1999. The margin of error was 3 percent.

To pass, supporters of the law need only a simple majority in the 200-seat chamber. Since the ruling party holds 74 seats, supporters say they only need just over two dozen votes to make the measure pass.

Several other European nations already extend legal rights to same-sex partners. Denmark granted legal rights in 1989, a move followed later by other countries, including Sweden and the Netherlands.

Germany recently began to allow gay couples to register their unions, and in the United States, Vermont became the first state to recognize same-sex unions last year.

The Czech Republic would be the first post-communist country, however, to approve such a measure. Most post-communist societies, burdened with massive economic troubles, have largely neglected such social questions.

Opponents are bracing for a fight. The

Roman Catholic Church, which has long opposed such unions, sponsored a petition to pressure the parliament to reject the measure.

Petition organizer Josef Zeman of the Brno-based group National Center for Family says 72,000 have already signed. Some 2.7 million people in the Czech Republic say they are Roman Catholic.

"It will have an irreversible impact on those young people who still are not clear about their sexual orientation," Zeman warned.

The draft law should be discussed in the lower chamber, the House of Deputies, by the end of this year.

## Romania Lauds Gay U.S. Envoy



Michael E. Guest

Romania's Foreign Ministry on Tuesday criticized a letter by a far-right group to President George W. Bush protesting the appointment of a new U.S. ambassador who is openly gay.

In a statement, the ministry said Romania welcomes Michael Guest and praised the career diplomat's professional abilities as an expert on NATO and Eastern and Central Europe.

"The attitude of intolerance, of interference in the personal life of any human being" was "not characteristic" of the Romanian people, the statement said.