Gay group leader vows 'students will be educated'

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Gay group leader vows
'students will be educated'

by Randy Stevens

"We decided that we shall not be
ignored any longer. We are going to
educate this campus community."

These are the word of Karen Bye, a
self-avowed lesbian and the major force in
forming the Wilde-Stein Club. The club is
described as a group of male and female homosexuals
who meet each week to find social and
counseling support from each other.

Finding help for their personal lives has
been easier than establishing public
relations with the university. Requests for
use of any empty room in the Memorial
Union for office space have met with
continued setbacks, said Bye.

The Wilde-Stein Club went before the
Finance Committee on November 12, with
a budget request for office supplies and a
mailing list from the Senate. The request
was set at a minimal $50, said Bye. The
organization was informed its request
could not be met due to a lack of funds.

According to Bye, "(Senate President)
Keating has been against us from the start
since he believes it would give the
university a bad image if the Senate gave
financial support to a gay group. And
(Jeffrey) Hollingsworth's right-wing faction
has been pushing Keating to vote
against us when the budget proposal
reaches the Senate floor this week."

Ted O'Meara, vice president of the
Student Senate, was present at the Finance
Committee and reported the request was
not denied but merely sent back to the
group to see if they could get the supplies
from other sources.

"They requested $50 for books and
periodicals not available at the University
library or bookstore, and office supplies.
The Finance Committee tabled the request
because it was for educational materials;
we want them to find out if the library or
Counseling Center can provide these materials."

"It's common procedure," O'Meara
added. "This doesn't mean the group
won't get the money; it will be taken up
again at the next meeting."

"If the Finance Committee doesn't pass
it, it will be brought up before the Senate,"
added Keating. "The Finance Committee
cannot kill the motion." Keating
admitted that he was not in favor
of allocating funds to the group
because he feels such a move
would be a political risk for the
Senate. He is worried that the
resultant publicity could be

WILDE-STEIN Club organizer
Karen Bye says faculty and
administration have been helpful
in the group's formation. Most

problems have been peer group
joking and the reluctance of
campus government to extend
financial support.

harmful for UMO he said, and will speak
on the matter when the request reaches the
Senate floor.

"I, personally, am concerned about the
reaction of the Board of Trustees, the
legislature, and the people of the state,"
he added.

Keating also noted that Hollingsworth
did not attend the Finance Committee
meeting on Nov. 12, and has not spoken
against the group with him, or to the
Senate.

The local gay movement began over a
year ago with a course offered by the
Abenaki experimental college exploring
the homosexual lifestyle. The group
taking the course eventually formed Gay support
and Action with the help of the Bangor
Unitarian Church.

The Wilde-Stein Club, named after
Oscar Wilde and Gertrude Stein, two
famous writers and homosexuals, was
formed this semester to offer a choice to
students who felt out of place with older
members of the Bangor group or found
transportation to be a problem.

"There have been no problems along the
line of hassles. That has really surprised
me," said Bye. She said that the faculty
and administrative people who have been a
part of the organization's growth have
been very cooperative. Most problems
have come from peer group joking about
those homosexuals who have "come out of
the closet" and admitted their true sexual
preference.

Attendance at the Wilde-Stein meetings
has been strictly students thus far. The
average number has been 15. Bye believes,
however, that "There are a hell of a lot
more gays on this campus that are not
showing up."

Asked how many students at UMO are
probably homosexual, Bye estimated "15
to 20 percent". She referred to Kinsey's
statistic of 10 per cent for the general
population and increased the figure
because "Thinking on a campus is more
liberal." Several campus homosexuals
have "come out" and are overt about their
sexuality. Some have told their parents,
and a few are open to everybody, according
to the Wilde-stein founder.