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## Gay symposium guests may face housing problems

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# Gay symposium guests may face housing problems

Despite loud dissent from a number of residents, Somerset Hall has been the most responsive Hilltop dorm to a need for housing for guests attending the Maine Gay Symposium on campus this weekend.

Members of the campus Wilde-Stein Club, hosts for the statewide convention, could not get space for weekend guests at Augusta Hall on the Bangor campus, where accommodations are usually made for those attending conventions at the university. Members of the DeMolay are staying there this weekend.

Faced with a housing shortage for many of its expected 125 guests, Wilde-Stein Club members mentioned their plight at a meeting with Hilltop housing directors and resident assistants on March 24. According to a spokesman for the gay club, several housing staff members present offered space for the weekend and said they would ask if any students in the three Hilltop dorms would be willing to share their rooms this weekend.

A conflict developed at Somerset when several first floor residents objected to a neighbor's intentions to house guests of the symposium.

"There were no threats made," a Somerset resident assistant commented. "The others on the floor simply decided they were not going to put up with the decision to house people for the weekend and they made it vocally clear."

She explained those who opposed housing symposium guests did so because they felt their rights as residents of the dorm had been "violated." Those who wanted to house guests on the same floor contended they had a right to have guests staying in their rooms on the weekend as long as parietals were not violated. After other views were known, however, those who had initially offered their rooms withdrew the offers.

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by Kate Arno

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Another Somerset R.A., who asked to remain nameless, explained in most situations if roommates or others residents of the same dormitory floor objected to others housing convention guests, the objectors' wishes were respected and offers for the space were retracted or simply never made.

Gary Connell, head resident of Oxford Hall, said he received no complaints from student residents concerning offers made in his dorm to house guests for the weekend. Connell explained announcements of the symposium's need for weekend housing were the responsibility of resident assistants since no formal request for housing space was made by Wilde-Stein Club. He said he suspected differing interpretations of the request for space might have caused confusion among students or an apprehension that they might be forced to share their rooms. Each R.A. used his own discretion in deciding whether to ask his floor's residents if they had rooms to share for the weekend, and some floors were notified of the convention's housing needs.

"I only asked certain people on my floor," one of the Somerset resident assistants said. "You can tell who would be receptive to the idea."

Tom Rosa, a Knox Hall R.A., said he decided not to ask his floor for space, commenting "I didn't feel obligated to find rooms. We don't give space to other conventions and we don't have to make exceptions for this group."

Rick Greene, head resident at Knox Hall, explained he was not at the March 24 meeting and did not know of the housing needs until late this week, since no member of the WS-C contacted him. He

said his dormitory has not offered space, attributing the situation to a lack of communication between the two parties.

According to UMO student Karen Bye, who is in charge of housing for those attending the symposium, the response to requests for housing space within the Hilltop dorms has been good, particularly in Somerset Hall. She explained a shortage of accommodations for men still exists, but an over-abundance of offers to house women have been received. About fifteen

rooms were offered at Somerset and nine at Oxford.

"I'm surprised," said the Somerset resident assistant, referring to the attitude of Hilltop students to this weekend's Gay Symposium. "At the onset I heard a lot of talk. There were many reasons why people questioned having the symposium—the university budget, what people back home would think—but all that has quieted down remarkably. With the symposium this weekend, I would have predicted the 'resistance to pick up.'"