

Demanding their rights

Law and gay community subject of conference

by Jacqui Schock
Spectrum Staff Writer

A day-long conference on Gay Rights and the Law will be offered today by the Student Bar Association of the Law School.

"We must show people what they can do to change many of the unfair laws that directly affect the gay community," asserted Shelley Taylor Convissar, conference project director. "The law school offers no courses on this topic and does not train lawyers to deal with gay problems, such as retaining custody of their children," she explained.

"When their homosexuality is discovered, they are fired from federal and civil service positions," she said. Gay law students have difficulty getting accepted into the Bar Association, she added.

Five areas

The conference, which will cover five areas in law of particular relevance to the gay community, will include law school professors, local attorneys, judges, and nationally-known experts in the field. Panel discussions will include: Legislation and Litigation Potential (10 a.m.); Employment Discrimination (11 a.m.); Student-Civil Rights (12 noon); Family Property Law (2 p.m.); and Criminal Law (3 p.m.). A Buffalo Police Department Captain will discuss the constitutionality of the concensual sodomy laws in New York State.

The conference will also

feature nationally-known experts in the field of gay rights, including E. Carrington Boggan, director of the Lambda Defense Fund; Franklin Kameny, well-known lobbyist and President of the Washington, D.C. chapter of the Mattachine Society; Bruce Voeller, executive director of the National Gay Task Force; and local gay activists.

Liberating force

"We hope this conference will be a liberating force for the Gay Movement and will erase many of the stereotypes many people hold. The American Psychological Association has stated that they feel homosexuality is not a mental illness," Ms. Convissar explained.

A film has been ordered which portrays a lesbian family and the children raised in it. The children are all heterosexual and did not display any damaging effects from being raised in this environment. The film will be shown directly after the panel discussion on Family Property Law at 2 p.m.

The conference is being funded by three groups: The Student Bar Association, the Law School Division of the American Bar Association, and the Mitchell Lecture Series, a State University at Buffalo Law School fund.

It will be held in John Lord O'Brian Hall from 10 a.m.—5 p.m. All discussions before 1 p.m. will be in the Moot Court Room. The remaining events and the film will be in Room 106. The event is free and open to the public. Participants are also invited to attend an informal reception immediately following the conference.