

## A step backward

# *Nicks' decision at APSU lacks political courage*

With the announcement that a coalition for gay rights will be formed on the Austin Peay campus, Board of Regents Chancellor Roy Nicks has closed the closet door.

His announcement falls nearly a month after the 10th anniversary of Stonewall. On June 27, 1969, the New York City police raided the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar on Christopher Street. Acting under a search warrant authorizing them to investigate reports that liquor was sold illegally, hundreds of men went on a rampage protesting the harassment. Only soft drinks were being served.

Within a month, the Gay Liberation Front was organized, and six months after that, the Gay Activist Alliance was formed. Since that time, riots, such as the recent one in San Francisco in protest of the Dan White case, have allowed the homosexual population to make a forward step in expressing themselves and making their presence known. It is now estimated that 10 percent of the world's population are ex-

clusively homosexual and 37 percent have had one or more homosexual relationships.

**Chancellor Nicks' statement that formal recognition of a gay rights group at Austin Peay would endanger students and increase criminal activity is instead a step backward. By denying this group's formation, Nicks is in violation of First Amendment rights of assembly and free speech.**

Perhaps Nicks is instead taking an "easy way out" — faced with a conservative Clarksville community, he is being politically safe. His statement that recognition of the organization would "present a substantial danger to students" is based on opinion, not fact. By going through proper administrative channels to establish their group, they are obviously not being subversive in their actions.

**They are not trying to persuade all members of the APSU campus to join their group, they are seeking recognition.**

When MTSU students established their coalition for

deregulation of marijuana laws (NORML) there was no apparent opposition. However, in the logic of Chancellor Nicks, the establishment of a NORML coalition on campus could increase criminal activity. Instead, the group was formed and has little impact on the student population.

The diversification of student organizations on any university campus is essential. Without the expressions and ideals of groups such as the ASB, fraternities and sororities, or even a gay coalition, a school falls stagnant to administrative control.

Senator Norway from California very inappropriately expressed himself this way, "Every one has a right to be as sick as they want to be." If one particular lifestyle is to be classified as "sick," it tends to limit individuality. Chancellor Nicks' decision has continued down that road.

— Bill Ray