

Homosexual Minister Is Ousted By Southwest Texas Methodists

Action at Convention Follows
Defense of Clergyman by
Gay Liberation Front

SAN ANTONIO, Tex., June 2 (AP)—A homosexual clergyman has been suspended from the Methodist ministry in an emotional meeting that followed a plea in his behalf by the Gay Liberation Front.

Gene Leggett, 36 years old, of Dallas, who has served the United Methodist Church for more than a decade, was suspended yesterday by a vote of 144 to 117 in the second day of the Southwest Texas United Methodist Annual Conference. Only ministers were allowed to vote.

On Monday night, members of the Gay Liberation Front, a homosexual group, confronted the conference delegates with demands that the church "cease the harassment" of Mr. Leggett, who is a member of the resident company of the Dallas Theater Center.

Mr. Leggett also operates a home called "House of the Covenant" in Dallas for people, including homosexuals, whom he feels the church has not reached. He said he planned to continue his work there.

Mr. Leggett, a tall, bearded man with mod clothes and a pink lapel button reading "Gay," told the conference before the vote that he wished to "continue the ministry as a Christian and, hopefully, as a Methodist."

Church officials said that Mr. Leggett could have remained a minister but not assigned to the Southwest Texas conference, and that arrangements could have been made for him to work in Dallas, but they said that he had refused.

Found 'Unacceptable'

Officials of the conference's Board of the Ministry, which handles all matters dealing with clergymen, said that Mr. Leggett had been found to be "unacceptable in the work of the ministry." They emphasized that no charges or accusations had been made against him.

The church annually considers the appointment of each pastor. Mr. Leggett's case was taken under special study by the Board of the Ministry after he announced he was a homosexual at a meeting of Methodist ministers here recently.

Although the board said that he was unacceptable, it did not specify the reasons in its report to the delegates.

Mr. Leggett noted earlier that the reasons were not specified. "I assume it is related



Associated Press

Gene Leggett speaking at Southwest Texas United Methodist Annual Conference in San Antonio, Tex.

to the fact that I am a homosexual," he said.

Within minutes after the vote was taken, the Rev. Richard Heacock, who spent 11 years as a missionary in Alaska, and the Rev. Rob Williams of San Antonio announced they would leave the ministry as a result of the conference's decision.

Mr. Leggett reminded the crowd of 600 or more people of the indignation that arose Monday night when the Gay Liberation group spoke in his support.

"I would be joyous to see one-tenth of the indignation of Monday night directed toward alleviating the problems of homosexuals," he said. "I felt hate and animosity and heard derisive laughter, and I call all of you into account for that kind of response."

Rail Strike Is Blocked

PHILADELPHIA, June 2 (UPI)—United States District Judge Daniel H. Huyett issued today a temporary injunction against a threatened strike of the Penn Central Railroad in a dispute over the cancellation of free train passes for employees using Amtrak facilities.

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