

*PART II of An Interview With
LARRY BAGNERIS, JR.

Delegate, Texas Fifteenth Senatorial District;
Democratic National Convention 1980



Larry Bagneris Jr. of Houston was the first openly gay person elected to any Texas delegation to a Democratic Party National Convention. In last week's TWT, he gave readers a personal insight into how politics work on a practical level. This week, in the conclusion of his discussion with Contributing Editor William French, Mr. Bagneris provides an assessment of the reality of gays' political status and the need for gay voters to become involved in the political structure in order to achieve and maintain our objectives.

In order to recognize the important contribution of all gay Texans, TWT wishes to supplement last week's part of the interview which stated that, in addition to Larry Bagneris, there were two alternate delegates from Dallas and two from Houston. We have been informed that, after the convention began, two additional alternates from Austin were seated.

We saw in the convention overall tones of division. Did the unity of the Gay and Lesbian Caucus feel the strains of that polarization?

I think the Caucus was strictly for Kennedy. When Kennedy lost the nomination, the gay delegates accepted that they were going to have to deal with Carter. But, we also realized that the best way to deal with Carter is to let him know that we expect him to deliver what he promises and that we expect him to at least take into regard everything that is spoken to in the platform.

How is it expected he will regard the platform's gay-supportive position?

Gay rights, defined as "sexual orientation," is part of the platform and the President

has agreed he can live with this. Carter made a compromise with Kennedy's support. We had both candidates' support for our inclusion in the platform. There was no "platform fight". When President Carter made his speech accepting the nomination, he mentioned discrimination against "other minorities". He's bending the issue slightly in order to be able to feed the American people something. For 200 years, we, as gay people, by staying in our closets, have let negative rhetoric build in people's minds. We have to start tearing that down.

How will guarantees against discrimination be made to us?