

Orrin Hatch continues move from 'rigid right'

Orrin Hatch and Jake Garn were among 39 Republican senators who recently voted in favor of S-419, the "Hate Crimes Statistics Act," which would instruct the Justice Department to collect statistics about crimes that are inspired by prejudice.

Among the "crimes" covered by S-419 is "intimidation" caused by prejudice based upon "race, religion, sexual orientation or ethnicity." Predictably, the inclusion of "sexual preference" among the protected categories has provoked controversy: The "hate crimes" bill has been a high priority for the gay rights lobby.

Sen. Hatch has explained that he supported S-419 because "No one should have ... violence directed at him ... for any reason, including sexual orientation."

But if the objective of S-419 were equal justice, it would be, at best, redundant. Furthermore, an activist who supported the "hate crimes" measure believes it will ensure that "attacks (upon) people because of their heritage will be punished more severely" than would ordinary crimes against non-minorities. If this is true, S-419 is a renunciation of equal justice.

S-419 may have the effect of making a person a sinner (or a criminal) for a word. Prominent among the lobbies working on behalf of the "hate crimes" act was the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. According to the task force, 80 percent of the "hate crimes" committed in 1988 were of the "name-calling" variety. Such acts would qualify as "intimidation" under S-419.

If it becomes law, S-419 would place the government in the dubious role of discerning motives behind crimes and tutoring offenders in "correct" attitudes about matters of race and sex.

The proper role of government regarding crime is to determine facts and administer equitable justice. Authorizing government to probe motives, and to correct "improper" attitudes, is an ominous innovation. Accordingly, it is not alarmist to believe that "hate crime" should be contracted into the term "Hatecrime" — with all its Orwellian overtones intact.

Nor is it paranoid to suspect that S-419 would enlist the government in the crusade against "homophobia." The term is a rhetorical coup. It stipulates two profoundly questionable ideas — namely, that homosex-



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uality is a perfectly benign lifestyle and that opposition to it, for whatever reason, is a psychological malady (a "phobia" or unreasonable fear). Or, as a taxpayer-funded study by the National Research Council asserted last year, that Christian disapproval of homosexuality is a "deeply rooted social pathology."

In the prosecution of the war against "homophobia," we can anticipate more incidents like the recent one involving Andy Rooney. Following "homophobic" remarks in a television special, and the publication — in a Gay activist newspaper — of "racially insensitive" remarks attributed to him, Rooney was temporarily dismissed from his position at CBS. The network also began a regimen of internal "sensitivity training" about homosexuality.

Rooney was preceded by Roseanne Barr, who angered the gay rights lobby by describing the movie "Steel Magnolias" as "faggy". The gay rights lobby demanded an apology. Barr went before the press and read this carefully-crafted recantation: "I will continue to work against racism, sexism, classism and homophobia. I will add 'faggy' to the list of unsayable, hateful words." S-419 offers the possibility of a government-complied list of such "unsayable words."

Dr. Paul Cameron of the Family Research Center in Washington, D.C., is particularly astounded by Hatch's support for S-419. "I am surprised with Hatch, given where he came from. The implications (of S-419) regarding free speech are appalling." The Salt Lake Tribune editorialized that Hatch's support for S-419 is "yet another indication that Hatch is successfully distancing himself from the rigid right." Utah voters should consider such an endorsement to be fair warning: Sen. Hatch's political "growth" continues.