

ANOTHER PARTY ... at the Centre

Saturday, 28th June, 8 p.m.

B.Y.O. Grog

NEWS FROM THE CENTRE

The SENTIMENTAL ANZAC PARTY, besides being a financial success - and ensuring the continuation of the Gay Counselling Group, was, according to all the feedback we've had, a really good night. ANOTHER PARTY will be held on Sat., June 28th, 8 p.m. at the Centre.

Response to the last newsletter has been pretty interesting. From people who can't or prefer not to be directly involved we've had generous moral and financial support (\$250 dollars in donations); a men's consciousness-raising group was formed, the first for some time; calls came into the Counselling Group from people who were glad to hear we are still alive; and the publicity for the Anzac Party brought together many old friends. One man who'd never heard of Gay Lib. or any organization of homosexuals - found a copy in the train, and got in touch.

At the recent May General Meeting (3rd Saturday of the month) we decided to allot a percentage of the takings from the next party to buy furnishings - second hand rugs, chairs, etc - to make the Centre more comfortable. The renovations are nearly complete, and when they are a group of us will be trying to develop the larger room (the smaller has the phone in it) as a sort of drop-in place, charging for coffee.

Soon the entrance to the Centre will be from the front door in Brunswick St., adjacent to the Potter's Shop. It will generally not be left open, however a bell will be installed.

If you have any papers, magazines, books that may help make the Centre a more interesting place, we'd appreciate them...or even suggestions as to what periodicals, reports, papers may be worth writing away for. During the month we received a bundle of gay newspapers and clippings from dailies, from a fellow who'd just returned from the States (see excerpts p.). Any information about overseas developments for the homosexual cause is good to hear about. Nor is our local information all that complete. The Gay Counselling Group particularly values information on places or events for gay people in Melbourne. A large number of callers simply want to know of social goings on.

NEXT NEWSLETTER

In the June newsletter we hope to report the outcome of the debates on tertiary campuses around Australia of the A.U.S. Homosexual Motions (see attachment to last newsletter). It appears the motions have been well ratified, but the official voting results will not be in till late May. We would be curious to hear different angles on the Motions, whether it be staffroom comment, quotes from the actual debates, individuals' reactions to the motions, and perceptions of the impact they have had on students. We've heard little from teacher training institutions, which are explicitly the subject of some of the motions.

Contributions on any matter of likely interest are welcome: news, grouches, reviews, poetry, pictures.

WHY SOME OF US DIDN'T MARCH

A paper was distributed at the assembly of May Day marchers stating why the writers, Ken Howard and Steve Oram, were not marching. Essentially they objected to male privilege in the Trade Union Movement, sexist policies and practices directed against women and homosexual workers, and the token recognition given by "left" groups to women's and homosexual liberation. The paper should be viewed against the background of some particularly provocative events at LaTrobe University in the fortnight preceeding the March, when the Maoists (in alliance with Christians) organized opposition to the A.U.S. homosexual motions. The basis of opposition was encapsulated in the statements by Barry York, Maoist activist (reported in National U, 5-5-75):

"Gay Liberation came from the U.S. It is part of the global structure of U.S. Imperialism."

"Motions like this help cause homosexuality among kids". (our emphasis)

So now you know why there are no homosexuals in China. If you don't talk about them, then they won't exist.

Copies of the paper are available at the Centre.

NOTES FROM THE DISCUSSION WITH THE LAWYER WHO REPRESENTED THE TWO MEN RECENTLY PROSECUTED FOR PRIVATE HOMOSEXUAL ACTS (Gay Counselling Group Meeting, 27th April). Report by Gary Jaynes.

We have a tape of the A.B.C. interview with the two men. The following supplements the contents of the tape.

The identity of the person who informed on the men is known to the men and to the lawyer but is not known to the police. That is, the police (from Malvern Branch) acted on information anonymously given to them. It appears the informant had previously approached one of the men, was rebuffed, and this was his reprisal.

The men were separately interviewed in their house by the police, then later more extensively at the Vice Squad Headquarters in North Fitzroy. Encouraged by the conciliatory manner of the police, and believing that their private behaviour was not indictable anyway, they confided explicit details of their sexual activities together. Without these specific admissions the lawyer feels the prosecution's case would not have had a leg to stand on. The men were then charged in a Magistrate's Court with buggery and indecent assault (maximum penalty of 15 and 5 years respectively under Section 68 of the Victorian Crimes Act, 1958), and their case committed to the County Court.

The case was heard by Judge Martin, who, in the lawyer's opinion, is not an especially liberal-minded man, but on the other hand is not as bad as the remarks about him on the tape implied. The confessions alone were so damaging as to leave no room for successfully pleading "mitigating circumstances". Apparently the only effective defence plea against homosexual "offences" is psychiatric evidence testifying that you deserve the court's leniency because you've had such a regrettable life - seduced in adolescence, broken family, failed marriage etc - and you really do want to "change". The lawyer thinks it would be useless, with the law as it stands, to build a defence case on an alternative-psychiatric point of view that homosexuality is not a sickness or perversion. You've got to show that you want to "reform" yourself, not be a law-breaker anymore, which means showing you're prepared to seek out psychoanalysis, aversion therapy or whatever - so long as it's done under the auspices of the psychiatric profession, and so long as it will try to make you not-a-homosexual. The lawyer has pleaded this way lots of times, frequently with success. He hates it, but says that's the only way to get people off, once their denials lack credibility. His advice is: Don't give any statements to police. Deny everything.

Anyway, with a gaol sentence immanent, the Defence Counsel requested that the men be allowed to live in South Australia, where homosexual acts are "not necessarily illegal" (that is, if you get caught, a legitimate defence is that you were "doing it in private"). The Court acceded to the request, with the proviso that the men do not live with each other before leaving the State! There was no appeal made, and the lawyer thinks that in the circumstances of the compromise, an appeal would have been futile.

Transcripts of the case are available from the County Court, but are very expensive.

What seems so politically disastrous about the decision to us is the overthrowing of a growing convention that police do not prosecute private acts. In Queensland a group of twenty senior sergeants in the Police Force recently told Campus Camp (at St. Lucia University) that a complaint would be necessary for any action to be taken against private homosexual acts, and even then, any evidence would need to be corroborated. In other words, the allegations of one person - even a disgruntled ex-lover - would not be accepted unless you made a confession. And although you might get a similar statement from the Victorian Police, it seems we've been fooled into false sense of security because of the lack of complaints. The lesson is clearly this: do not assume that when the police come knocking on your door, or detain you in the street, that they are not after a conviction (but don't provoke them with rudeness either!) Many people, especially those apprehended near beats, have experienced the soft-soap approach of the friendly and reasonable policeman who's in fact eliciting incriminating information. The ploys used are as various as they are devious. Frequently they will separate two people who at first deny everything, then they tell one that the other has "blabbed" (this is obviously why the men above were questioned separately) It is difficult too for police to sustain a loitering charge without the admission of homosexuality - and the means of extracting such admissions are not necessarily friendly nor reasonable. We may not be accustomed to the use of hidden mirrors and cameras for detection purposes in beats, as described in "Tearoom Trade", Laud Humphreys' American study of "impersonal sex in public places", but we certainly have our share of agent provocateurs, sent into beats for the ostensible purpose of apprehending homosexual "criminals". The lawyer has already this year defended three cases of this type - and warns people off certain beats as being particularly dangerous (Como, Parliament Place, Flinders St. Station). In general the policing is likely to be stronger in residential areas, because of the likelihood of residents' complaints.

If you do find yourself detained by police, don't forget that you have a right to know what you are being arrested for. If you are not told, call for a senior member of the station and say you want to make a formal complaint in the Complaints Book. Do this also if you are refused permission to ring a lawyer. You are allowed (strictly) one call. To organize bail you must arrange for the signature of a J.P. A list of J.P.'s is being drawn up by Gay Counselling Group, but you can also get advice from Society in an emergency (ph. 663-4555). Their card summarizing "Policing Powers and Citizens' Rights" is well worth having.

Finally, if you are unfortunate enough to land in County Court, when empanelling your jury, it might be wise to take note of the lawyer's observation, based on fairly considerable experience, about unsympathetic jurors. He thinks that middle-aged women are particularly susceptible to believing the "every-homosexual-is-a-child-molester" myth...and that if we want to direct our energies into one crucial aspect of public consciousness-raising, then that may be it. If we can collate the research which shows the number of child-molesters to be proportionately no greater among homosexuals than among heterosexuals, he thinks that barristers would readily use it as part of a defence plea. Better still, if some of those ardent students of homosexuality in Sociology Departments were to start writing research papers on the irrational phobias towards homosexuals of middle-aged women.

RESERVATIONS ABOUT LAW REFORM

What can law reform achieve? Certainly it can put a stop to the most blatant acts of discrimination, such as the one we've discussed, or the recent idiotic charging for offensive behaviour of two women holding hands together in a tram. It's better too (for most of us) to be, technically, no longer criminals. But more importantly, the lobbying that effects the legal reform may provide an impetus for more far-reaching change. Whether this is in fact happening, say in North America, is an interesting question. Some of the news we hear about California makes us wonder.

When reform stops at legalization of private homosexual acts, I suspect it can provide a smokescreen for homophobia, and legitimate it in some ways. We hear from England, and now from some of the American states, how the soliciting laws have become more stringently policed after the repeal of the criminal sanctions on private homosexual acts between consenting adults. As Dennis Altman said of the pusillanimous reforms in South Australia, the procurement laws stop any homosexual trying to find a partner for the act which has just been made legal. There prevails a hatred and fear of overt homosexuality by people who cannot cope with real live homosexuals acting out their homosexuality; and laws that demand you hide your homosexual behaviour from the public are a convenient means of preventing such homophobia being challenged. (Too often also we make it easier for them by censoring ourselves, or feeling guilty about "flaunting" our homosexuality). Some people react to homosexuality in the way they might to spiders: recoil, or stomp on them, whilst admitting they are nearly always harmless.

At a more fundamental level, many women and some male homosexuals feel that law reform that results from a narrowly-conceived civil rights lobby on politicians, perhaps working through established unions and professional associations, will not have much of a ripple-effect. It will be business-as-usual as far as what is considered women's and men's work, privilege and destiny...except that a handsome new market - the gay scene - will have been opened up for the capitalist entrepreneur to exploit. The pay-off is respectability for the gay.

LETTER TO THE COUNSELLING GROUP

Dear Jocelyn & John,

Firstly I would like to tell you how I appreciated your letters...I know it was a long time ago..so I shall briefly outline my letter.

At the time I was quite depressed and confused so I had a talk to one of my teachers and told her I was gay, which was, for me, a difficult task. We chatted for a while and I also told her that I wanted to do an assignment on the oppression and liberation of the homosexual. I then wrote to you relating the above and asking you for some information on the subject.

I am now 16, doing my 5th year at High School.. and coping well. I subscribe to Dr. Duncan Revolution Bookshop (or more recently Feminist and Gay Lib. Resources) and have brought a few books from them. Titles including: Out of the Closets: Voices of Gay Liberation; Society and the Healthy Homosexual; The Gay Mystique; Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation. All of which I've found very helpful.

Yours...

NOTICES

INTERPRETER SERVICE

Society Five is now able to offer an interpreter service in five languages: Italian, French, Maltese, Turkish and Spanish. Any offers to extend the range would be welcome. Phone 663-4555, and ask any member of the Executive Committee.

LESBIAN FESTIVAL

A group of women has met twice to plan a Festival for the first weekend in October (tentative date). A submission has been prepared for an I.W.Y. grant to fund papers, accommodation, and fares. Depending on the success of the submission, a guest speaker may be Jill Johnston. The Pram Factory will produce a play to coincide with the Festival, and other activities will include a dance, and a Pool Tournament. The next planning meeting is Wednesday, 21st May, at the Women's Centre. 6 p.m. For further information contact Di Oram, 91-6355.

WOMEN AND MADNESS CONFERENCE will be held at Melbourne University over a weekend early in August. (NOTE: changed from June 14-15). Phyllis Chessler, author of "Women and Madness" will address the conference. There will be one session open to men; otherwise, women only. Women prepared to assist with the organizing, or write papers, are welcome to the Thursday planning meetings/discussions, at the Women's Health Collective, 85 Johnstone St., Fitzroy. For further information contact Jan or Alison on 489-7830.

From 27th May-June 21, the Pram Factory is producing a play on the theme of Women and Madness, called "Add a Grated Laugh or Two". Is a group-developed show, on Tuesday - Sunday, Wednesday is women only. Book at the Pram Factory, 347-7133.

YOUNG GAY WOMEN'S GROUP FORMING

A group for gay women of secondary school age is being formed. Phone Bev for details, 783-2135.

A MEN'S CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING GROUP recently formed, and a list is growing of those interested in forming another. Contact the Gay Counselling Group if interested. 41-4926.

FILM ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY

A film, "Vir Amat", used by the Social Biology Resources Centre as part of its programme in educating professionals (especially medical practitioners) about homosexuality, will be shown at the Centre on Sat., June 21st (General Meeting night). It has been loaned free of charge, on the understanding that we will provide feedback.

LESBIAN CONSCIOUSNESS GROUP: Contact Di, 419-5149.

EVENTS

Sat. 25th May Lesbian Social Evening. For details contact Laurie Bebbington, 347-7433.

Sunday, May 25th Counselling Group meeting, 6 p.m. Discussion with representatives of Society Five's Advisory and Referral Group.

Tuesday, May 27th - June 21st "Add a Grated Laugh or Two" at the Pram Factory. See notice on "Women and Madness" Conference above.

Sunday, June 1st "Holly and Friends". Farewell performance by Holly at The Ritz, 44 Errol St., N. Melbourne. Live show and screening of "Love Goddess" (film about the screen's famous sex symbols).

Wed. June 3rd Meeting to decide whether to form a Gay Women's Group. Women's Centre, 50 Lt. La Trobe St. 8 p.m.

Thursday, June 12th 8 p.m. Gisele Halimi, friend of Simone de Beauvoir, lawyer and abortion rights campaigner, will address a public meeting in the Buffeteria, Melbourne University. Details from the Women's Centre. 347-1564.

Sat. June 14th Special celebration of Queen's Birthday at Clubrooms of Society 5, 270 Lonsdale St. Attractions include crowning Queen of Society 5. Drag Floor show.

Sat. June 21st General Meeting at the Centre, followed by showing of "Vir Amat" (see above)

Sat. June 28th ANOTHER PARTY AT THE CENTRE. B.Y.O. GROG. * * * * *

Sunday. June 29th Counselling Group meeting. 6 p.m at the Centre.

STOP PRESS: Next Gay Dance

Gay Rock Palace at Collingwood Town Hall
Friday, 27th June.

Starring: Wendy Saddington
Jeff St. & Band

Plus TOAD

And Floorshow.
Lighting by Clearlite.

9-2 a.m. B.Y.O.

NEWS FROM CALIFORNIA

Below are excerpts from several cuttings and gay papers (very male oriented ones) available at the Centre.

SAFE STREETS GROUP IN U.S.

In the Castro-Market area of San Francisco a "safe streets" committee has been formed to assist gay people who have been intimidated or attacked in public. Working with the police department, this group assists in dealing with the police, the DA's office, and their attackers
(*"THE SENTINEL"*)

EMPLOYER DISCRIMINATION OUTLAWED

Legislators are preparing to make California the first state to outlaw employer discrimination against homosexuals.

CIVIL RIGHTS BILL

Representative Bella Abzum, New York, has introduced a bill supported by 24 other representatives to amend federal civil rights laws to protect homosexuals.

AND ME TOO...

Legal reform has been supported by such prominent national organizations as the American Bar Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Federation of Teachers, American Civil Liberties Union, National Education Association, Y.W.C.A.

..Giant corporations such as I.B.M., Bank of America, American Airlines, Eastern Airlines, C.B.S. and N.B.C. have publicly rejected discrimination against homosexuals in promotion or hiring.

(All the above from "SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER", 21-4-75)

DONATIONS TO HELP COVER THE COST OF POSTAGE WOULD BE APPRECIATED

NAME..... ADDRESS.....

PLEASE FIND ENCLOSED \$ DONATION TO GAY LIBERATION

HAVE YOU NOTIFIED US OF ANY CHANGE OF ADDRESS?