

# Where Are We Going?

by Lex Watson & Sue Wills

This is very much a 'Where Are We Going' piece, written as a re-affirmation of our basic aims viewed in the light of a year and a half of existence for the founding branch.

First and foremost it is increasingly necessary to reaffirm that CAMP is a political organisation. Unlike all the previous and current social clubs, dances, bars, steam baths and beats that cater to homosexuals in Sydney — and mainly male homosexuals at that — we aim not to provide facilities within the present society and laws, but to change that society and its laws to the extent necessary to gain full equality and rights for homosexuals. Were the situation in 1970 satisfactory for homosexuals, this society would never have been formed. Were it satisfactory now, then we should cease to exist. Hence it is obligatory that we do not merely or even largely ape the rest of the activities of the homosexual sub-culture, that we do not create just another social club, just an alternative ghetto.

Clearly we have been political to an extent. Most importantly, we have published this journal — the first, and still the only predominantly homosexual publication in Australia. Its impact, while it cannot be measured, has been large. We have also talked to the churches, and to the politicians, about their attitudes and the changes that we would like to see. They are limited aims, largely traditionally conceived and pursued, but it is a start. And beyond that?

Some attempts have been made, through *Camp Ink*, including this column, and elsewhere, to see the position of ourselves in a wider context. The connection with Women's Lib in a wider Sexual Liberation movement has been raised. Censorship, notably in the Thorunka trial, has been aired. Medical opinion, especially psychiatric attitudes, was the question that was going when we started.

Much of the connection with other groups was based on a common attack on authoritarian values. It was based on a common denial of the right of groups, individuals or governments to lay down what others may or may not do. The right to read, see or do whatever you wish is indistinguishable from our right

to sleep with whomsoever we please, subject always to the right of others to similar freedom. These connections cannot be ignored.

If we are to seek for ourselves the rights now accorded only to heterosexuals, then we must not in turn deny full rights to others. We must join together with other groups to further these aims.

In doing that, we must always be aware of the needs of the homosexuals in the camp movement. Because particularly in the short term these needs are not always the same. CAMP contains both women and men. In this we are both rare and fortunate. It is vital that we stay together within the movement, and we hope that our co-presidency will be both symbolic of that mutual interest as well as a practical way of maintaining it. In the long term our interests are similar but in the short run they diverge — law reform and police activity are of far more direct relevance to the male than the female homosexual. But the women are faced with two sets of prejudices — the first, simply because they are women in a male dominated society, the second because they are homosexuals. Job discrimination, moral condemnation and social antipathy are common to both the men and women.

Political attitudes vary from the conservative to the radical, both in aims and in the ways of achieving those aims. It is vital that these different attitudes be recognised as complementary, rather than antagonistic, and that collectively such activities allow for a much more total onslaught on the institutions, values and activities that limit full homosexual equality. CAMP is, especially under our new constitution, a somewhat structured movement rather



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than a society in the normal sense. We hold that it must be made to work this way too.

For there is much more diversity of interest within the movement even than this. For some the view of church leaders and the church are a source of great concern, to be discussed, debated, and hopefully in most cases, changed. To others, the church is of little concern.

To a significant extent, age is a source of diverse demands on CAMP. The needs of older members socially are not necessarily the same as of younger members, and despite the primary aim of the society which is political and directed outwards against society at large, we must always bear in mind that it is the quality of our own lives which is the ultimate rationale for this. To provide social opportunities for camps outside the commercial camp world, to provide a more humanised meeting place for all, is an obligation which we have willingly adopted.

For a variety of reasons — cultural

background, family, jobs and so on — some of us find it much easier to accept out homosexuality than others. For those who are worried about their sex role, CAMP is establishing a Homosexual Guidance Service (HGS) which will use qualified people to provide individual assistance, small group discussion sessions and referral to sympathetic psychiatric help. Equally importantly, HGS will be trying to reeducate the widely accepted notion that homosexuality is a 'personality disorder' and hence should be 'cured' — especially where the method of 'cure' attempted is aversion therapy.

Married homosexuals are another special area of concern with very different problems from most of us, transvestites are another. Some would like to pursue hobbies within a camp context, and perhaps turn these activities towards the promotion of our aims — a drama group doing both straight theatre and devising some street theatre of the type used very effectively by Women's Lib would be a great asset.

There are other areas of concern to us that we should be working on too. For example, there is a definite need for the formation of a sex education group which can prepare submissions to the Education Department to ensure that in any sex education programme for schoolchildren, the matter of homosexuality is discussed and that it is discussed impartially.

There is a need to fully establish our Legal Aid group, and publicise its existence, and we would like to establish a Camp Employment Advisory Service to offer advice on who will employ known homosexuals and to tackle discrimination in employment.

All these matters, and probably many more, should be possible within CAMP. Now that the NSW branch has a formal constitution, it is important to show that CAMP is more of a movement than a society, that it is a formalised collection of Groups who set their own various aims and go about achieving them. The executive should provide a co-ordinating point only for the various groups and for special activities which involve the total membership, such as Sexual Liberation Week.

Sex Lib Week is the last week in July, timed in memory of the passing of the Sexual Offences Act in Britain on July 27, 1967. But that week will not be just about HLR — it is intended to be a nationwide festival providing activities of interest to all our members and an opportunity to involve closely related groups and organisations outside CAMP. It is intended to publicise and discuss the total position of homosexuals in Australia — to air our grievances and make known our demands, to show the public and the politicians that we exist and that we exist in large numbers with significant support.

After a year under John and Chris, we are sufficiently established to launch such a public drive. As the start of our campaign for the federal election in which CAMP is running a candidate, this is the beginning of our political activities.

*Friendship is so much more tragic  
than love. It lasts longer.*

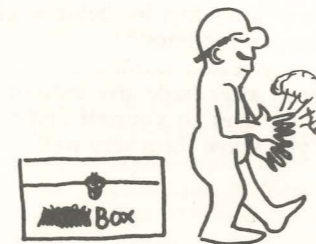
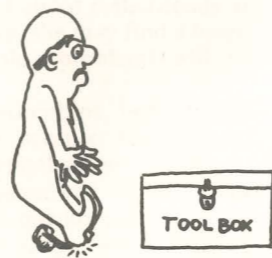
Oscar Wilde

# Perth Scene

Question: When is an advertisement not an advertisement? Answer: If it appears in the Sunday Australian. The proposed Campaign Ad, financed by the States Branches was nearly still-born when we were informed that the editor of the paper had refused to accept it for unspecified reasons. It seems that feature articles on drug-culture, prostitution, even on homosexuality and other emotionally charged subjects are ok. Cigarettes can be freely advertised (there are fags and fags) but a suggestion that there is an organisation in this country which tries to drag Australia screaming out of the nineteenth century is to be strongly resisted.

Fortunately we were able to place the ad in the Saturday Australian of April 8th — not as satisfactory, perhaps, but at least giving us some public exposure. If they find that circulation doesn't drop alarmingly, we might be able to use it as a lever to get it into the Sunday edition next time. Maybe one of the Eastern States, being closer to the centres of influence can have a go in a couple of months. (Will the Sydney Branch please stand up.)

With the approach of the colder season the WA Branch has now moved indoors for the regular Sunday night post-pub dinner and drinks and the changeover has been highly successful. To serve hot meals to a varying number of hungry mouths causes some logistic problems, but if the Hotel Parmelia can do it, so can we. We promise to keep the incidence of Ptomaine down to a minimum. In any case, as we have a medical practitioners' locum service right next door, professional assistance will always be readily available.



REPORT FURCH