

REPLY TO C.P.A.'S "COLLECTIVE STATEMENT" TO SOCIALISM AND HOMOSEXUALITY CONFERENCE.

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I must admit to being extremely surprised to see a "collective statement" from C.P.A. gays at this conference. Repeated rumours of internal splits and upheavels within the collective had made the idea of a "collective statement" seem almost impossible. However, after reading the paper, it seems obvious as to its purpose - an attempt to stop the rumours and subsequent criticism of the party. The document is a bland, noncommittal paper, which looks like an attempt to cover up internal differences by not saying very much at all. It does make, however, some very significant points; points I'd like to comment upon.

First off, there is a statement re: "diversity of views". No reasons are given for Party members' differences except "widening divisions in the broader movement... qualitative changes in the gay subculture". So, what are the differences? What are the issues? I'm intensely irritated by this "coy" approach to political statements. The paper does not mention once the political questions which are at stake within the party and the collective.

In the light of this absence of information, subsequent statements in the paper, such as, "We strive as far as possible to be open about our differences in evaluating strategic questions" seem little more than empty words. You AREN'T open about any differences - after reading your paper to this conference, I've got no idea what you're talking about. As such, debate or analysis is almost impossible.

The next section of the paper is inevitable after your opening remarks. I suppose this paper will be seen as another "disruption" and not worth worrying about. Somehow, though, I get immediately suspicious when a group announces before a conference that it will "not participate with people who wish to behave in this manner" (i.e. groups who attack the C.P.A. "in the name of exposing "Stalinism" or "reformism" or "bourgeois feminism" or "state capitalism" etc etc.) I find this a peculiar and disturbing stance. Who are you prepared to talk with at this conference? I'm attending this conference because I want to work with other homosexuals and socialists to explore new ground and analyse our history. As such, I expect considerate and comradely behaviour from participants. Nevertheless, I'm not going to "not criticise" your party on the grounds of being "non - sectarian". The C.P.A. HAS been guilty of reformism, Stalinism etc and it's important to discuss those very issues you've indicated. How can the C.P.A. say it will "refuse to discuss" them? Are you going to ignore them? We all realise that during periods of crisis, we often agree to "bury the differences" so that we can act as a movement, or within a "united front" structure. That does not mean, however, that those differences do not exist or should not be discussed. And CONFERENCES are the places we can discuss those issues. If theoretical argument is denied at a conference, then hopes for democratic decision - making are impossible.

Now, I realise that the C.P.A. collective will be jumping up and down by now, and pointing to the paragraph where they add

"We are happy to engage in serious discussion of our views and the general position of our Party with people genuinely interested in discussing these issues constructively." Well sure, that's all very fine, but it seems to me that that doesn't happen in conferences - not in the past anyway. As soon as the Party position is criticised, the speaker is labelled "sectarian" and ignored. (e.g. 50 Years of Socialism conf.) I know that the C.P.A. does support the autonomous gay and feminist movements - what I'd like to know is the gay collectives' political position on questions such as "the new masculinity", the role of the Party as a whole in deciding gay policy, the emphasis the Party gives to the homosexual movement etc etc. And, of course, I'd like to know the political basis of "the differences" within the collective.

Basically comrades, I'm angry about this paper - frankly I expect a little more politics from comrades working in political movements. This document merely "ducks for cover" and gives no theoretical or analytical thought to questions on Socialism or homosexuality. I certainly hope that individual members of the Party produce papers on "where they stand", because I think it's vital for other socialists and homosexuals to hear the debates that are obviously raging within the Party and collective..If it's not down on paper, then we'll just have to rely on rumours and nuendo - a situation which is unhealthy, dishonest and intolerable.

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