

COLLECTIVE STATEMENT OF COMMUNIST PARTY GAYS TO THE SOCIALISM AND
HOMOSEXUALITY CONFERENCE APRIL 1981.

As lesbian and male homosexual members of the Communist Party we welcome this opportunity to meet with other socialists to discuss the significance of gay liberation for the wider struggle for socialism. We hope that we will be able to contribute our views and those of the party in a constructive way to help achieve the success of the conference.

OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE AUTONOMOUS GAY LIBERATION MOVEMENT.

From experience in the Women's Liberation Movement feminists in the C.P.A. have always fought for the right of activism within social movements as Autonomous movements - with significance in their own struggle for liberation which should not be subordinated to the struggle for socialism, nor directed by any left parties. C.P.A. members in social movements seek to strengthen these movements and develop a socialist perspective within them but we do not seek to control them.

Some of us have prepared papers for this conference which reflect our experiences as gay activists and as members of the Communist party. There is a diversity of views amongst us. We make no secret of this and many comrades here will be aware of the various questions which we debate amongst ourselves. Such differences are inevitable at a time when there are widening divisions in the broader movement- divisions which themselves result from the qualitative changes in the gay subculture over the recent period. We strive as far as possible, to be open about our differences in evaluating strategic questions. We believe that in this way, a revolutionary party may gain the respect and support of politically conscious gay people, and in deed, of all class conscious workers. We hope that our experience in maintaining unity with diversity will be of some value in building a broad coalition of gay socialists.

However, we are aware that this very openness often makes us the target of other groups who may wish to use ~~our openness~~ of this sort not really to debate issues and develop a socialist perspective, but to demonstrate that they are right and everybody else is wrong. All of us have had experience where groups of this sort have ripped of our time and energy by disrupting meetings in the name of exposing 'Stalinism' or 'reformism' or 'bourgeois feminism' or 'state capitalism' etc. etc.

We believe this sort of sectarianism damages the entire socialist movement and we want to make it clear that we will not participate in discussion with people who wish to behave in this manner. We are happy to engage in serious discussion of our views and the general political position of our Party with people genuinely interested in discussing these things constructively.

We also wish to make it clear that the position of the C.P.A on Gay Liberation is to be found in the Party Program, and in other CPA publications and in the Communist newspaper Tribune. Of course the CPA position on Gay Liberation

must be seen in the context of how we envisage the socialist transition in Australia (see CPA Program). The contribution of individual communists at this conference will reflect this general position as well as the many years of experience which our comrades have had in the gay movement. But the position of the Communist party as an organization or of it's gay collectives is only to be found in statements designated as such.

THE CONFERENCE.

We see the Socialism and Homosexuality Conference as orienting towards two main areas:

- 1/ the role of socialists in building a strong autonomous gay movement.
- 2/ the building of socialist and feminist perspectives within the movement.

The construction of a socialist feminist perspective does of course raise questions of relations to the labour movement and the organised left- but this cannot be divorced from building of an autonomous gay movement, which draws on the mass of gay people in subcultures and elsewhere. There is a necessary interdependence between these two areas.

* The conference agenda at present, seems too narrowly oriented towards the organised left- the labour movement and political parties. While these organizations are important we question whether they should be the main focus for a conference such as this. Making them the main focus seems to reflect a very narrow definition of what is political and what is socialist. It also blinds us to the very real problems we have in relation to the mass of unpoliticised gays. We need to consider the changing nature of the gay subcultures and how this reflects our political work as feminists and socialists.

* Opening each day of the conference with what might be seen as fairly distinct political lines could mitigate against a dialogue between positions. the point of the conference should not be to prove the superiority of any one line, but to provide a forum for political debate which will draw upon all of the different experiences and politics represented in order to construct strategies for socialists in the gay movement. The struggle for gay liberation will not be won by any one party or particular individual.

We are hopeful that the Melbourne collective will be able to take these points into consideration in the final planning stages. In particular we would like to see more consideration being given to what we see as some of the urgent questions:

- * the relationship of lesbianism, feminism and gay men.
- * the relation of the gay liberation movement to the changing gay sub culture.
- * questions of the construction of sexuality - masculinity/ femininity and implications for our political work.

We extend our socialist greetings to all comrades at this important conference and we will try to ensure that it contributes to our common goal of Gay Liberation through socialist revolution.

SYDNEY C.P.A. GAY COLLECTIVE.

March 1981.