

QUACE

u

g

o

x

e

a

r

p

e

i

p

l

r

n

o

o

s

s

r

i

t

a

t

t

a

e

t

i

o

n

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people everywhere are still fighting for our liberation - the struggle is far from over! Be it the legal system, the church, the media, parliament or the education system, we are consistently discriminated against and oppressed.

But this doesn't have to be so! It is only because of the corporate agenda of a wealthy and elite few in society that millions live in poverty, sexism still exists, indigenous people are consistently robbed of their land and rights, and queer people are subjected to death, violence and alienation.

Last year a new group formed in Brisbane to fight homophobia by targeting the corporate agenda of our society. Known as QuACE, we are a group committed to combating homophobia through the use of militant forms of direct action and linking our struggle to the struggles of other oppressed peoples such as women, indigenous people and the working class.

In Brisbane we were central to organising an occupation of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Offices in the CBD against the blatant homophobia and sexism of the Howard Government in refusing IVF access and reproductive rights to all women.

We also organised for the S11 protests that happened in September in Melbourne - producing material and participating in the queer contingent at the blockade.

This year more action awaits us! On May Day there is going to be a blockade against Stock Exchanges around the country to carry on from the success of S11.

QuACE will be making sure that gays and lesbians participate in this blockade and that homophobia is put on the agenda as a part of the protest.

Later in the year there will be a blockade of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM).

QuACE is open to all LGBT people interested in taking direct action against homophobia and fighting for the liberation of all.

We meet regularly so to find out more ring Katie at QUT on 0413 512 876, Leigha @ UQ on 0400 300 646, or Tim @ Griffith on 0401 278 458, or email quace@hotmail.com.

Fight Homophobia: Blockade on M1!

As we lurch into a new millennium it is pretty easy to see that while much has changed, much remains the same. For example: exploitation, oppression and the domination of the majority of the world's population by an elite few. But it 'aint all doom and gloom, because people around the world aren't just sitting back and letting this happen. People are fighting back...and they're winning.

In November of 1999 corporate scum from around the world converged on Seattle, USA, to discuss how they could further their agenda of free trade and fucking over the worlds' poor in what is known as the World Economic Forum (more like the World Exploitation Forum). Tens of thousands of workers, students, socialists, anarchists, environmentalists, pensioners, indigenous people, and just pissed off people also converged on Seattle to prevent the Forum from happening. Despite violence from the police and military they succeeded in blockading the Forum and shut it down. This inspired millions around the world to take an active stance in fighting for their rights and the rights of others. Now, everywhere the WEF tries to meet it is met by thousands of angry people who are sick of their lives being determined by the rich and powerful.

In Melbourne last year the S11 protests against the WEF rocked Australia. Thousands of demonstrators blockaded the Crown Casino where the WEF was being held and showed that there is an alternative to capitalist oppression and exploitation: People Power!

To carry on from the success of the anti-WEF protests, this May Day (May the 1st) Stock Exchanges around the country will be blockaded and shut down. M1 Alliances around the country are already planning for this mass action involving large and diverse sections of the community directly affected by a profit -driven society. Queers Against Corporate Exploitation (QuACE) is committed to building M1 by highlighting how corporate greed creates and perpetuates homophobia in our society. Our aim is not to try and convince corporations to be 'queer-friendly' but to smash their very existence!

M1 will be an opportunity for queer activists to link our struggle with all other progressive social struggles. By linking arms on the blockades with unionists and environmentalists we will strengthen our fight against homophobia, for it is only when all oppressed people fight against all oppressions that there is any chance of real liberation.

QuACE will be organising forums, debates and actions to build for the M1 blockade ensure that homophobia is recognised as a direct result of corporate greed and ultimately capitalist society. The more successful the M1 blockade is, the more successful the fight against homophobia will be.

The M1 Alliance in Brisbane meets every Wednesday in the Trades and Labor Council (TLC) Building on Peel St at 6pm.

Bomb the Churches, Smash the State, Homophobia is what we Hate!!!

From S11 to M1: Corporate Scum, Here We Come!!!

Commonwealth?

The commonwealth heads of government meeting is taking place in Brisbane this year. Bringing together 54 member nations for a biennial summit. CHOGM's have been held biennially since 1971, prior to that there were irregular summits since the British Empire began. CHOGM is praised by the diplomats and politicians as a chance to talk informally and in secret about mutual concerns, being those things that concern their class; the ruling classes of all countries. The Commonwealths priorities include the promotion of privatisation and foreign investment. Among others, the Commonwealth has a project called 'Removing Impediments to Privatisation' through which the Secretariat has been examining the major causes of the slow implementation of the privatisation programs in Africa.

Of course these poorer countries have a theoretical choice to privatise or not - but with debt worries for many of these countries it should be noted that the Commonwealth finance ministers in 1994 accepted that multilateral debt be further eased by offering easier repayment terms...to the poorest, most indebted countries which have shown the greatest commitment to economic reform

The Commonwealth also has a joint project with the Asian Development Bank, which was the focus of much protest in Auckland earlier in 1995. As part of these moves the Commonwealth Secretariat is encouraging parasitical foreign and private investment in developing countries.

CHOGM works closely with organisations like the United Nations (UN) making both meetings in contempt for human rights abuse across the world. In particular CHOGM supports Beijing platform for action, which was devised by the women's wing of the UN. Beijing platform for action has been responsible for the forced sterilisation of women in third world countries. This only goes to reinforce the danger and power of such an organization like CHOGM.

Many of the member nations of CHOGM are notorious for Human rights atrocities. With Nigeria in collusion with shell, the indigenous people of Nigeria are fighting against genocide. Robert Mugabe, head of Zimbabwe believes Gays are "worse than dogs or pigs" and Malaysian politicians openly viewing homosexuality as a moral deterioration we can see that the British Empire has done well in globalising poverty and injustice. CHOGM itself, does little to discipline its members letting human rights be brushed under the table.

CHOGM like the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the World Economic Forum (WEF) is part of a system that places human rights secondary to increasing profits. Wherever CHOGM travels in the world it is met with protest, we must take inspiration from the Melbourne protests against the WEF in September 2000 and realise that together we stop these tyrants.

Corporatisation of sexuality.

Commodification is not liberation.

Gay and lesbian people today find themselves trapped in an identity that is ostensibly liberated. 32 years after the first large-scale demonstration against sexual repression (Stonewall in 1969) many gay people tend to believe that the fight is drawing to a close. In Australia today Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people are legally permitted to conduct their annual Mardi Gras and since 1993 homosexuality has been legalised in every Australian State and territory. So is the fight over? Signposts for a continuing need for the militant activities of the 70s and 80s however are evident everywhere. Homophobia is perpetuated and aided in capitalised society through the economic rational prioritisation of funds. We are constantly faced with cuts to the public sector in the forms of cuts to public schools and hospitals. The money saved is invested in corporations in the form of tax breaks and corporate subsidies. In 1996, the Liberal government cut over \$1.6m from the public education sector. Corporate subsidies are part of a crazy system that puts corporate profit above the needs of our community. The LGBT community is constantly deprioritised regardless of its needs. For instance, there is still no effective treatment for AIDS, but every year public funding that could further research dwindles. Meanwhile, universities are funded in the millions by corporations to increase research into machinery that allows for greater profit margins. It has been estimated that young gay and lesbian people compromise up to 30% of all youth suicides in the United States. Australia also has the fifth highest recorded rate of young male suicide in the world. Recent statistics on youth suicide show that a majority of these suicides are related to sexual identity crisis. Often the only place of refuge for LGBT youth is Gay and Lesbian community centres. Yet ever since the introduction of these centres, they have constantly been de-funded. The Rainbow Centre in Brisbane, one of the few outreach centres for Brisbane LGBT youth was recently shut down due to underfunding. Previous to its closure it had relied predominantly on the dedication of volunteers and unpaid workers to keep it afloat. This has been the trend across the country with regards to outreach centres. It is also important to note that youth suicides are concentrated in country areas where there is rarely any LGBT information distributed, let alone a new centre established.

The Pink Economy: small concessions for who?

The term pink dollar describes a market that rich or middle class LGBT people can buy into. This market is made up of lifestyle products like clothes, exclusive entertainment services and venues and rarely cater for the average working class person. This pink dollar is often mistaken for liberation. However, all that it really goes on to show is that the only socially acceptable way for LGBT people to exist in this society is as a profitable niche that supports capitalism rather than raises demands for services and essential resources like community centres. Governments and corporations have made small concessions to the LGBT community, that don't challenge the existing status quo in any way. One of these concessions is the street permit for Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, an exclusive event that brings millions of dollars every year to the State Exchequer. But the license for mardi gras only comes with several tricky strings attached. Participants in the parade aren't allowed to stop during the procession. Also, following the parade they are discouraged from hanging out in the streets. The alternative is an after-party with tickets priced at \$50 and above. The original gains of the 1978 Mardi Gras are thus co-opted by making it apolitical, non-confrontational and therefore potentially more marketable. Gay bars are now legal throughout the country, but they are still not safe places. They are also not equally accessible to all members of the LGBT community. Many have introduced dress codes, cover charges and age restrictions which make them fairly exclusive. A renowned lesbian bar in Melbourne, the Glasshouse, has recently enforced an exclusive dress code that stops poorer patrons from accessing it. There are now clothing chains, products and investments that solely target LGBT people. Qantas has a mardi gras flight package with return flight and one night stay for \$447 and up. Oxford Street in Sydney is always littered with Rainbow flags, Lesbians on the Loose, Brother Sister and Out magazines, all advertising Queer friendly doctors, therapists, clothes stores, real estates etc. In the late 90s, Lynx even broadcast an advertisement with sexual undertones, featuring two men. These products call upon LGBT people to buy into this lifestyle as a means of defining who they are. The LGBT community is thus told what is the acceptable way to look and act. Anyone who cannot afford these products is thereby excluded from having a socially acceptable identity.

The Split in the LGBT community

Let's get out there and show these Liberal fuckers who is really fighting for gay and lesbian rights . . . member of QUEER.

Prior to the decriminalisation of homosexuality, there was a perception of unity amongst LGBT people. It was a unity founded upon a shared sense of oppression. Since decriminalisation, that perception of unity has been undermined. Many rich and middle class Queers find satisfaction in striving for equal recognition through means of the pink economy and are content with minimal governmental reforms. And material gains achieved through the corporatisation of sexuality. They can access venues, own companies and walk down streets in clothes that are associated with their sexuality. This popular strategy excludes working class and poorer members of the community. The priority of this pink economy also does nothing to challenge inherent oppression of women, people of colour and indigenous people who often have an even smaller disposable income. With 70% of the world's poor being women and the average indigenous Australian living below the poverty line, the support of the pink dollar economy leaves these people further disadvantaged. The tide however is beginning to turn and splinter groups with Stonewall fervour have emerged. There have been direct action coalitions that have called for a more meaningful liberation, as against a share in the pink economy and the consumer culture that it spawns. Organisations like Outrage, Lesbian Avengers and Act Up in the UK have been at the forefront of civil disobedience demonstrations. They have not been satisfied with creating ghettos like Oxford Street in Sydney. Back in Australia we are seeking a renewed dissatisfaction with the status quo and pink economy, especially within the student movement. The position of Queer officers has emerged across the country as a position of representation within student organisations. While this is a positive development, it has its share of problems too. Queer officers are expected to represent all LGBT students on campus, whether this is through providing services on sitting on equal opportunity committees within the university. This often means that officers are expected to represent even those LGBT people who see the pink economy as the way forward. In recent years student activists have witnessed unchecked right wing politics fermenting in Queer spaces. At the 2000 national Queer conference, participants voted overwhelmingly for a Liberal Party member to be heard as a speaker during a plenary session, regardless that in the same year John Howard had openly campaigned to stop single women and lesbians from having equal access to IVF. At the University of Queensland the Queer collective formed a men's only group and condemned women or men who spoke out against its formation. The men's group was a right wing reaction to Citrus Salad, which was a support group for LGBT women on campus who felt alienated by sexism from the LGBT centre in the student Union. In the same collective, members fought against contributing any money from their budget to S11 because of the possibility that some LGBT people might own corporations! This position was contrary to a leftwing stance that acknowledges that corporations not only exploit us through the pink economy, but also are responsible for human rights atrocities throughout the world. Surely being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender goes not endow you with any special right to exploit people! It was these attitudes that saw Queer collectives split across the country. S11 worked as a catalyst that saw progressive left wing LGBT collective members seeking political affinity elsewhere. Many Queer collectives were forced into defining their position on the World Economic Forum at the time. Across the country within student Queer (LGBT) collectives, supporters of the pink economy clashed with the left wingers. This was especially evident in Brisbane with QuACT (Queers Against Corporate Exploitation) and QUEER (Queers United to Eradicate Economic Rationalism) in Melbourne. Both groups recognised the need to organise within the left. They came together primarily to build an anti-homophobia presence within a broader social justice demonstration (S11). Both organisations shrugged off their respective affiliation with CCSN (Cross Campus Sexuality Networks) as they saw them as groups that came in conflict with the broader concern of social justice for all, in their mindless pursuit of rightwing agendas. This is part of the re-emergence of new Queer politics that prioritises social justice over sexual identity. Many LGBT people now choose to work with the left, rather than buy into the pink economy. This is a recognition that homophobia is a part and parcel of the same system that refuses to crack down on companies like Nike and would rather fund them, than deliver equal rights, equal recognition and liberation for all LGBT people. Progressive LGBTs today are saying that pink economy has no meaningful answers to their problems and the only thing left is to take action against a system that will only benefit the wealthy elite in our society.

Jo Ball