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Gay Worker

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GAY ? - NO JOB

MELBOURNE: A community education officer employed at Sunshine High School has not been re-appointed after a job selection interview in which he was asked by a member of the interview panel whether or not he was homosexual. The 25-year-old worker, who had held the position for three years, is now without a job.

The Minister for Education's Personnel Task force called on the school to readvertise the position because of dissatisfaction with the way in which the interviews were conducted.

The applicant declined to answer the question about his sexuality and challenged the fairness and relevance of it to the appointment. His objections were supported by other members of the panel. The question was subsequently withdrawn.

Although the applicant was fairly 'low key' about his homosexuality at the school, this is not the first time the question of homosexuality has been raised. He was once threatened with dismissal if he had 'any contact' with gay students! This threat was aimed at preventing the person from giving any support to students who were coming to terms with their sexuality.

At no stage was the applicant's competence questioned. In fact, his work in facilitating home/school communication has been highly commended by prominent people in his field.

He had established migrant parent committees in the district and was instrumental in the formation of a 'parent communications officer' project. He also started play groups run by parents and recently he prepared a document on the development of parent participation. The document was well received and widely circulated by the Community Education Unit of the Education Department.

The applicant has stressed that the discrimination he has experienced was not an argument against the concept of locally based decision making. He said that the problem of anti-gay discrimination exists in lots of employment areas. "It could equally have occurred behind closed doors at Nauru House" (the Education Department's head office).



LABOUR AND GAY RIGHTS IN THE U.K.

LONDON — Labour Party front-bencher Tony Benn gave gay campaigners a major boost when he called on the Labour Party and trade unions to take a lead in the political battle for gay rights. He wanted a Labour Party conference to issue a comprehensive policy statement, binding on a future Labour government. That statement should propose new job laws to protect gay men and lesbians, the scrapping of present laws which discriminate against homosexuals, and equal access for gays to public services including housing.

Mr Benn said: "There should be absolute equality in law between heterosexual and homosexual men and women. The present inequality relating, among other things, to the definition of privacy, the differing ages of consent, the exclusion of the armed services and the merchant navy cannot be justified and must be completely swept away."

These two items abridged from GAY COMMUNITY NEWS, March 1981

ACTU ACTS ON JOB RIGHTS

The Secretary of the Australian Council of Trade Unions, Peter Nolan, has written to all affiliated unions requesting them to insert a draft anti-discrimination clause into federal awards. The draft clause would prohibit an employer discriminating against an employee or a job applicant on thirteen grounds, including sex, sexuality and sexual orientation.

Union have been requested to seek to have the clause inserted into federal awards through negotiations with employers. If the matter is referred to the Arbitration Commission, the ACTU is prepared to assist the affiliated Union.

Under the clause complaints would first be referred to a board of reference, being either a state or federal Committee on Discrimination in Employment and Occupation (CDEO). If a complaint was not resolved within a reasonable period of time, the complainant could refer the matter to the Arbitration Commission for determination.

The draft clause allows positive discrimination when special protection and assistance is required. Rights under federal and state legislation would not be impaired.

A spokesperson for the Gay Trade Unionists' Group said that the ACTU actions were a positive development. "It's good to know that discrimination is at last being recognized as a legitimate industrial issue", he said.

The spokesperson was highly critical of the use of the CDEO's as boards of reference. He said "the committees are a farce. They have a pitifully low rate of resolution of complaints. Our group believes that trade union representatives on these committees should be withdrawn". (The work of the CDEO's was reviewed in *Gay Worker* no.1.)

Gay Trade Unionists' Group has committed itself to fighting for the adoption of a modified version of the ACTU draft clause. Further developments will be reported in future issues of *Gay Worker*.

ATEA POLICY

As reported in issue no. 1 of *Gay Worker*, a motion to recognize the rights of gay workers and pledge union actions to protect them was presented to a general meeting of the Victorian branch of the Australian Telecommunications Employees' Association. *Gay Worker* is pleased to report that the motion was carried. The only opposition to the motion came on technical rather than substantive grounds.

GTUG LAUNCHES DRAFT POLICY

The Gay Trade Unionists' Group has released a recommended union policy on discrimination. The policy has general application rather than being specifically gay-related.

The recommendation will be circulated to Victorian branches of unions and some federal offices of unions shortly. Anybody interested in receiving a copy of the recommendation should write to GTUG.

THANKS

Gay Worker thanks the Victorian Branch of the Australian Railways Union for their generous \$50 donation. The union has also requested one thousand copies of the newsheet for distribution to their membership. Hopefully other unions will follow the lead of the ARU.

Thanks also go to Bob Santamaria and the National Civic Council for the publicity they gave to the Gay Trade Unionists' Group in their journal *Newsweekly*. Although their reporting was not intended to be complimentary, we welcome their serious interest in our group.

CONTACT US! SUBSCRIBE!

Gay Trade Unionists' Group, Phone 419 8129 or write to us at PO Box 19, Carlton South 3053.

- () Please send me more information.
- () Please send me a copy of GTUG's recommended union policy on discrimination.
- () I'd like to subscribe to *Gay Worker*. (\$2 for 4 issues)

NAME:

Union:.....

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