

MANIFESTO OF THE SOCIALIST HOMOSEXUALS

Why We Oppose Capitalism

All around us we see capitalism in crisis. Not only have there been anti-imperialist victories in places like Indochina and southern Africa, but within imperialist societies themselves the economies are in disarray, political structures have been shaken (France, May 1968; Australia, 11 November 1975; and Watergate) and dominant ideologies are beginning to crumble.

The single most important conveyor of such ideologies has been the family — this too is losing its grip on the lives of individuals. The nuclear family has been important for capitalism. It has enabled the labour power of the predominantly male workforce to be maintained and reproduced through the housework of women. It has served as the unit for the bearing and rearing of children, tomorrow's labour force. It has been the centre for the transmission and legitimisation of the inheritance of private property. It is still the prime socialising force aimed at creating docile workers for capitalism who accept such structures and values as male supremacy, racism and authoritarianism.

Above all children are socialised into roles according to their sex; they are expected to have either "feminine" or "masculine" gender identities depending on whether they are male or female. These sex roles and gender roles are necessary for the preservation of our class society, based as it is on private property the exploitation of labour power and the sexual division of labour.

Lesbians and male homosexuals are seen to subvert these gender roles by not fulfilling our "family obligations", i.e. homosexuals have a relative autonomy from the nuclear family due to our preference not to reproduce. Moreover, the assertion by lesbians of a sexuality

Socialist Homosexuals. Emerging out of a number of critical strands inside Gay Liberation, including feminism and socialism, a definite tendency developed which sought to come to grips with the split between women and men through a general struggle against sexism and which sought to place the struggle for homosexual liberation in the context of total social change. This tendency has been slow to take organizational form.

independent of men is seen as a fundamental threat to male power. By association, effeminate men are seen as subversive to a class society where femininity is equated with a position of subordination. This is not to say that homosexuality per se is revolutionary, since it is possible for capitalism to allow some degree of non-conformity to heterosexuality (for example, celibate monks and nuns). What it cannot afford is the isolation of a significant proportion of the population from the ongoing functions of the family. That is why we are oppressed.

All of capital's institutions are arrayed against homosexuals: from the central influence of the family to psychiatry, psychology, the churches and the educational institutions. This is reflected in persecution of and prejudice against individual homosexuals, to such an extent that we have been forced to closet in order to survive. Naturally, the effect of such a situation does not leave homosexuals unscathed: they hate us, we hate us.

This means that lesbians are doubly oppressed, as homosexuals and as women.

The recent growth of tolerance towards homosexuals should not be misinterpreted as acceptance of the validity of homosexual expression. It has been possible for capitalism to allow some liberalization of sexual expression in an age of the re-emergence of a feminist movement. Homosexuality has even been developed as a product to market: notice the spate of advertisements that use homosexuality to sell products to the heterosexual majority by appealing to repressed homosexuality and channeling it into consumerism. In this context, law reform has clear limitations in that it leaves untouched the fundamental social relations of capitalism. This new found tolerance is founded on the radical section of the petit-bourgeoisie, a class unable to effect decisive change in this society. Tolerance is not acceptance.

Women's Liberation and Homosexual Liberation.

The women's liberation movement was the historical beginning of the fight against sexism (male supremacy and male chauvinism) in recent times. As such it allowed homosexuals to see themselves in an oppressed situation, able to attain liberation in a similar way. And so gay liberation emerged after the women's liberation movement, as an autonomous movement, using similar methods to achieve its aims. These were the formation of consciousness-raising groups and militant activism. Special features for homosexuals were "coming out" and "gay pride"; these correspond to women's assertion of independence as women and the need to assert some autonomous power that goes with that independence.

Thus women's liberation and homosexual liberation obviously have a close relationship. Theoretical and organisational developments have helped to elaborate on this relationship, and made important distinctions. The central aspect of the relationship is involved with sexism, since this is the central theoretical basis for the Women's liberation movement. How is homosexuality related to sexism?

Theories of sexism have emerged which place it within the history of the development of Western civilisation and now, specifically, with the development of capitalism. Thus male supremacy, patriarchy, is the "main enemy" in terms of the liberation of sexuality, but the defeat of this enemy requires the overthrow of capitalism. Hence the developments have been based more decisively on the experience that men are the main enemy. And the logic of this experience is one that leads to lesbian separatism.

By now it is clear that lesbian women play many of the leading-roles in the women's liberation movement (split

into several tendencies — radical feminist, Marxist-feminist, etc.). Since sexism is the key theoretical base for all that movement it is quite logical that lesbians, those most clearly self-defined as sexually independent of men, would be playing leading roles generally. Hence when lesbians are considered, there is a fundamental connection between the women's liberation movement and female homosexuality.

Historical developments with regard to male homosexuality delineate another aspect of the relationship between the women's liberation movement and homosexual liberation. From an early stage of a mixed Gay Liberation grouping, a stage has now been reached where virtually all lesbians and some male homosexuals have broken from what is now a residual Gay Liberation group, noted by those who have left if for being confused in its politics and especially for having no clear relation to an understanding of sexism. Lesbians and male homosexuals began feeling united in their homosexuality, but the split has occurred because of the relation to sexism.

This has required more theoretical work on the part of the male homosexuals especially. They can only work with women when they have a common view of sexism as the fundamental reality of the oppression of women and the oppression of male homosexuals. The sense of unity as homosexuals that is involved is tempered by the reality of men being able to benefit from the dominant patriarchal society, but not women. Thus this unity is important but goes hand in hand with the general struggle against sexism. A Marxist-feminist perspective would allow for a clear position by lesbians and male homosexuals with regard to the women's liberation movement as a whole (as the general struggle against sexism).

Why We Are Socialists.

History has shown that capitalism cannot be changed to serve the interests of the broad masses of the people rather than those of a parasitic, minority class. Exploitation and oppression are its very nature. For the liberation of humanity, including homosexuals, there has to be a totally new social system.

That's why we stake our lives on socialism. Socialism as we see it is a society where private ownership of the means of production is abolished, and thus the capitalist class is abolished. In the place of capitalist class rule is substituted the rule of the working class: the majority of the people become the rulers of society. The state still exists, but it serves the class interests of the workers not the capitalists. Classes still exist, but a class is in power which has no interest in maintaining class rule since it represents the majority and can work towards a classless society. Inequalities still exist, because capitalism still leaves a lot of debris to be cleared away, but the way is made open for the creation of new social values.

can be continued to be challenged, with greater success. Ideologies have a relative autonomy from the economic base of society, so we cannot expect to have new values overnight. The workers who lead the socialist revolution will still be influenced by capitalist ideologies: so after the revolution we will still need a strong, revolutionary homosexual movement. What socialism does is provide us with the material conditions for our liberation; it is not liberation itself. But the struggle for liberation will be made easier by the fact that the structures which maintain and reproduce the ideologies will be smashed.

Socialism is not a utopia that someone has made up. The potential for it can be seen in experiences of the international labour movement, from the Paris commune of 1870 to Soviet Russia of the early 1920's to the Czechoslovakian workers' councils of 1968. Attempts to create socialism have been brutally suppressed and degenerated. In particular, in those societies in transition from capitalism to socialism — where private property has been abolished but political power is not held by the workers, such as the Soviet Union and China — socialism is still a long way off. They have been marred by extreme absence of workers' democracy, and the persistence of heterosexual ideology. Not only do we oppose the oppression of homosexuals there but also support the struggle for democratic rights and dismantling the bureaucracy.

Socialism does not exist anywhere in the world today. All the more need to fight for it.

Capitalism will split itself apart with its continual crises but it is up to socialists to give it the final shove. A condition for this is a proper, scientific understanding of society, which accepts that class struggle is the motor of history.

Efforts by the working class to take power by peaceful or parliamentary strategies have violently been fought by the capitalist class with tragic results, as in Chile. Socialism can only come through the revolutionary seizure of state power by the working class (and its allies), the only class with the potential to lead a revolution because of its size, organisation and base at the point of production.

Not only does this involve unity and revolutionary consciousness, organisation and leadership in the working class, but also the forging of alliances with other classes and strata. Since both the working class and homosexuals have a common interest in the abolition of capitalism, then there is ground for a principled alliance. Likewise with women and blacks. Here and now in the struggle against exploitation and oppression, *solidarity with each other's struggles today provides the basis for tomorrow's unity on the barricades.*

The Socialist Homosexuals oppose the attempts of the capitalist Liberal-National Country Party Government to lower the

Our Attitude to Other Socialists.

The early socialist movement generally adopted positions against the persecution of homosexuals and the myths that are popular about homosexuals. The German Social Democratic Party, then the largest and most influential Marxist party in the world, for example, published several articles in its press in the 1890s defending homosexual rights — the longest and most detailed being Eduard Bernstein's defense of Oscar Wilde. The German Social Democrats further led the parliamentary intervention against the anti-homosexual Paragraph 175 in the legal statute, actually campaigning among homosexuals to organize for its repeal.

The Bolsheviks, on coming to power in Russia, repealed all laws against homosexual acts and followed a general line of total non-interference by the state in people's sexual affairs. No attempt, however, was made to integrate homosexuality into Soviet society as a valid form of sexual expression, even while conscious attempts were made by the Bolsheviks to replace the family as a social institution and to emancipate women. The link between the family, the oppression of women and that of homosexuals was never made by the early revolutionaries.

The tolerant approach of the Bolsheviks and the relatively advanced attitude to homosexuality in the Soviet state were to be destroyed by the victorious Stalinist bureaucracy. Having appropriated the means of distribution in the Soviet Union the bureaucracy was the family as a vehicle of indoctrination, a means for the disciplining of youth. Thus, in order to strengthen the family, abortion was once more criminalized and attempts at women's emancipation generally ceased (to the extent that Medals for Motherhood were given out to mothers who bore a certain number of children). Since homosexuals could not fit into the family, they had to be once again actively persecuted; laws prohibiting homosexual acts were reintroduced in 1934 (with sentences of up to 8 years) and mass arrests of homosexuals were carried out in Moscow, Leningrad, Kharkov and Odessa. Homosexuality became the "fascist perversion" from which healthy proletarian youth had to be safeguarded.

Naturally, revolutions that took place under the influence of world Stalinism such as the Chinese and Cuban revolutions tended to reflect the Stalist position on the homosexual question. "There are no homosexuals in China" we are told by the Chinese bureaucrats, and in Cuba homosexuals are "re-educated" in concentration camps.

The left in Australia today reflects both the vestiges of Stalinism, where homosexuality is the product of decadent capitalism, and the general "backwardness" of the working class on the question. Thus we are either sick or petit-bourgeois with fascist potential, or we have to suppress our struggle until after the workers' revolution. It is only in few Left groups that

Each socialist tendency within the group is free to propagate its views both inside and outside the group.

We oppose the anti-homosexual prejudice and heterosexism of the Left, as a flaw in its socialism. Parties claiming to be socialist and yet revealing anti-homosexual prejudice can expect more opposition from us than from other homosexuals. Beyond that, we are non-party and non-sectarian, and all socialist homosexuals who accept this Manifesto are encouraged to join.

Our Attitude to Other Homosexuals.

It is through the "gay ghetto" that homosexuality is channelled in capitalist societies. Homosexuality is thus isolated from the mainstream of society and is further used for commercial purposes. Bars and nightclubs in the ghetto are notoriously overpriced, and there are a million and one other ways for entrepreneurs to sell to homosexuals by appealing to our loneliness, isolation and social conservatism. The ideology of the ghetto, it follows, is bourgeois and male supremacist.

The ghetto, however, does provide a certain protection to homosexuals who would otherwise be totally isolated in a heterosexual world. Meeting other homosexuals in a bar or on a beat is better than never meeting homosexuals at all. Also, by attracting attention to itself as the only place for homosexuals, the ghetto allows homosexuals in the suburbs — the dykes and poofers next door — to go undetected and escape persecution.

But while the ghetto offers some protection and some way to escape, at the same time it subverts the political and revolutionary potential of homosexuals. It is only protective so long as it is allowed to be by the state, and in times of repression ghettos are easily smashed. It is *political protection* that homosexuals need, through organization and struggle. It will be one of the main tasks of Socialist Homosexuals to convince other Homosexuals of the absolute necessity of this protection as against the short-term, false security of the ghetto.

In response to the radicalization of the 1960s and the growing influences of the women's liberation movement, radical homosexuals in Australia formed an organization which was "open, constituency based, spontaneous and militant". This was CAMP. Like similar organizations in other advanced capitalist countries, CAMP developed two wings, one oriented almost totally to civil rights issues, and another which was more New Left oriented and held some concept of revolution.

This, as well as personal differences among the activists, led to the creation of a Gay Liberation cell in Sydney, which eventually split from CAMP to form Sydney Gay Liberation. While CAMP receded further into a classic, civil rights

No homosexual liberation without No socialist revolution without

Socialism as we see it will involve democratic forms of industrial and political organisation: self-management at all levels and in all spheres, at the workplaces, political institutions, educational system, etc. It will involve an extension of the democratic rights (such as freedom of the press, the right to strike, right to form political parties, etc) which liberals claim exist in the "Free World" but which in fact are token and restricted.

With the basic causes of exploitation and oppression gone, oppressive ideologies

living standards of the working class through wage freezes and "social contracts", to integrate trade unions into the state and to crush industrial militancy. In the immediate economic crisis, we support sliding scales of wages and hours to combat inflation and unemployment and nationalisation of industry without compensation under workers' management. We support the fullest autonomy, unity and organization of the working class, especially at the rank-and-file level. We look forward to the development of workers' councils as the embryonic form of the future workers' state.

the homosexual struggle is taken seriously and homosexual oppression analysed.

The Socialist Homosexuals are not part of the Left in the same sense that we are part of the homosexual movement. The Left is composed of a number of different parties claiming to be socialist whereas the Socialist Homosexuals is not a political party. It is made up of member of various socialist parties and other socialists who do not belong to any. It represents the desire of socialist homosexuals to work together to better spread our common ideas.

organization, less radical than the Gay Activists' alliance in the USA, Sydney Gay Liberation became the radical homosexual organization advocating unity and militant action by all oppressed groups such as homosexuals, women and blacks. The political practice of Gay Liberation consisted of confronting society with blatant homosexuality, concentrating on themes like Gay Pride, Coming Out, etc.

Sydney Gay Liberation as first included both lesbian and male homosexual activists; this was a period of growth and progress for the movement, when it was

able to generate great solidarity and optimism as well as concrete action. The flexible structure of Gay Liberation allowed people to be involved in any number of issues or campaigns in apparent harmony.

However, after this period of growth and development, some contradictions became apparent in the theory and practise of Gay Liberation. In particular, lesbians questioned more and more their role in a male organization. While Gay Liberation had been a base from which lesbians who had not necessarily had much contact with the women's liberation movement to organize, the growth and acceptance of lesbian ideas within women's liberation meant that lesbians could now work against their primary oppression as women as well as their secondary one as homosexuals. A split developed between the women and men on the question of sexism within Gay Liberation, and the

women left to form their own organization. This is hardly surprising given the differences in the oppression of lesbian women and that of homosexual men.

The withdrawal of the women left the men in Gay Liberation disheartened and disorganized. The concept of "liberation" used became more and more the I'm more-liberated-than-you syndrome than the original idea of collective liberation.

By 1973, a current developed in Gay Liberation in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide known as effeminism, which essentially accepted radical feminism as its philosophy, with homosexual men as a fifth-column within the patriarchy. The effeminists criticized Gay Liberation for its lack of understanding of the importance of the struggle against sexism. While such criticism and the understanding of the importance of women's liberation to homosexual liberation were

positive attributes of the effeminists, their limitations lay in their incomplete analysis of society. Concepts like learning to cry and raise children were far too removed from the real problems of male homosexuals to allow the effeminists to build a movement.

By the end of 1973 after Gay Pride Week Gay Liberation as such almost ceased to exist, most of its activists either joining CAMP or dropping out of any organized homosexual movement.

Today, there are six major tendencies which comprise the homosexual movement in Australia.

1. *The lesbian feminists.* This was formed by lesbian women at the 1975 National Homosexu! Conference as a result of the absence of such an organization since the disintegration of the Radicalesbian collectives. The main dynamic behind the

building of this organization came from women in CAMP (NSW). The women felt it was impossible to combat sexism within the homosexual movement without a strong lesbian feminist group. The thrust of the organization is essentially radical feminist.

2. *Gay Liberation.* This is what remains of Gay Liberation. The group is mostly male, student based and has a membership of some socialists, independent activists and those interested only in civil rights. Gay Liberation is very much a services organization, organizing dances and serving as a contact point for male homosexuals. While the organization mobilized very successfully around some campaigns, like the AUS homosexual motions in 1975, its shortcoming is its failure to come to terms with old problems of theory and of organization.

3. *CAMP.* As the largest of the secular homosexual groups, CAMP (NSW) has progressed considerably from a purely civil rights, conservative organisation to a more populist one, far more aware than before of the importance of the struggle against sexism and the links between the oppressed minorities. The dynamic behind the changes has been mainly the lesbian collective within CAMP.

The organization, however, is still extremely lobbyist, being the homosexual organization which writes submissions to government bodies and takes part in Royal Commissions and Enquiries. The pitfalls of lobbying could easily drown an organization like CAMP under miles of red tape and reports.

Its organization is based on an executive elected at an annual general meeting. The majority of members of CAMP are not activists, preferring to leave the political work to the executive. CAMP's political orientation is to the Labor Party and other working class parties. While recognizing the radical advances made by the organization, it must be remembered that the bulk of its membership is interested mainly in the services provided (coffee shop, etc.) and that a significant number of its members would see liberation purely in terms of civil rights for homosexual men.

4. *The Metropolitan Community Church.* The new phenomenon of the homosexual church can be analysed along similar lines as the development of black churches in the Deep South of the USA. Just like the blacks in the South who were unable to take part in the goings-on of the established (racist) churches, homosexuals were forced to form their own churches because the established churches generally condemn homosexuality.

The Metropolitan Community Church plays a protective role for homosexuals in a hostile environment. It has shown a great deal of militancy on many homosexual questions; while the organization has a right-wing of traditionalist Christians it also has a left-wing of militants. The political practise of the Metropolitan

Community Church, however, is limited by its civil rights approach.

In addition, there is the role played by religion in advanced capitalist society; to confuse the toilers and oppressed as to the origins of their oppression and to mystify oppression by means of unscientific dogmas, rituals, etc. While defending the democratic right to belong to any church without threat of repression, Socialist Homosexuals condemn the reactionary and sexist role of religion and regard it as an obstacle to our liberation.



**without a socialist revolution !
out homosexual liberation !**

5. *Acceptance.* This is the homosexual organization working WITHIN the Catholic Church — in order to change its views on homosexuality. This must be seen as a step behind the Metropolitan Community Church, which has broken away from the hierarchies of the established church. Acceptance, too, has a right-wing and also a small left-wing.

6. *Socialist Homosexuals.* Emerging out of a number of critical strands inside Gay Liberation, including feminism and socialism, a definite tendency developed which sought to come to grips with the split between women and men through a general struggle against sexism and which sought to place the struggle for homosexual liberation in the context of total social change. This tendency has been slow to take organizational form.

The Socialist Homosexuals is not a group that will appeal to all homosexuals. The class position of some will lead them to bitterly oppose us. They are out class enemies. We will defend them if they are attacked for being homosexual, and we oppose the practise of queer-baiting conservative politicians for example. We expect most capitalist homosexuals to oppose socialism — and thus the liberation of homosexuality — when it comes to the crunch.

The Socialist Homosexuals will not even appeal to everyone in the homosexual movement. Many of those active for civil rights have no political interests beyond that; of those who do, many support capitalist parties. There are many who want to preserve male supremacy, religious mythology and gender roles.

But there are other who do not. And this is what explains the formation of the Socialist Homosexuals.

We are part of the homosexual movement.

Homosexuality is a valid form of sexual expression: we encourage it in hand with the subversion of sex roles and gender roles.

We support selective coming out as a tactic to give us pride and militancy.

We participate in the (secular) political activities of the homosexual movement, including the campaign for civil rights. We have no illusions that civil rights equal liberation, but the struggle for them widens our "free space" under capitalism and has a valuable educative and radicalizing potential.

Separatism refers to the strategy which decides that there is really only one struggle to be fought and that energies should not be diverted into other struggles going on around. So, one development in the homosexual movement has been to consider heterosexuals as the only enemy. Another example is that of effeminate men who see men as the main enemy and unite with women on this basis.

This leads to sectarian attitudes to other struggles and isolation from other groups. It is an undialectical view of history; the process of struggle is many-sided and does not proceed on a mechanical pattern. Rather, at different times, different aspects of oppression are more prominent, and socialists need always be aware of the changing situation.

This is not to deny that autonomous organization is necessary. At this time of heightened pressure on the family, the churches and male supremacy, it is clearly necessary to maintain autonomous organization and a clear perception

of one's position in the contradictions of capitalism. The autonomy of separate homosexual groups is a positive aspect, as are activities like consciousness-raising groups. However, these aspects have a context — the class struggle in imperialism — and to isolate them from the context is to retreat into a new ghetto, with only momentary relation to the dominant forms of social conflict.

Workers and their Unions.

The working class shares the common capitalist view of homosexuality in an unconscious aspect. Prejudice against lesbians and poofers is rampant. Poofers can be bashed and scapegoated because they are sick, evil, queer or feminine, etc., and lesbians need to be seduced and shown that a prick is what makes the difference.

However, in a conscious way, the organized working class has seen homosexuality as a decadent aspect of the capitalist class. In this view, workers are too busy and exhausted by the demands of the employers and their families to ever develop an interest in homosexuality themselves. But the capitalist class, who grow rich on the surplus labor of the working class, has so much idle time that it can develop these strange relationships. And the epitome of this is the twitty, rather fragile man, perhaps with a title, who is just obviously "queer".

At the present time, these conscious and unconscious aspects are being transformed, under the pressure of the visibility of the women's liberation movement and homosexuals based largely on the radical petit-bourgeoisie. So now it is beginning to be possible for workers to come out on the job, but it is still very difficult. The idea that anybody may be homosexual and that this is not related so much to an immediate class position (rather, to the

reality of sexism) is winning some limited acceptance however.

This is leading to efforts directed at unions to become active over members discriminated against because they are women or because of their sexual preference. The best example of solidarity has been the action of builders' laborers in support of a student at Macquarie University in Sydney, 1974; however, those involved admit that the action was only won by loyalty to the Union leadership, that it was a bit far to go for homosexual students. Nevertheless, that is one lead that must be fought for by socialist homosexuals conscious of the need to defeat male supremacy as part of the fight against capitalism.



Perspectives

We are concerned with five general areas.

1. Organized defense and extension of the democratic rights of lesbians and male homosexuals, and struggle against sex roles and gender roles.
2. Struggle against male supremacy and male chauvinism, which involves solidarity with the struggles of the women's liberation movement and against sexism in the homosexual movement and the left.
3. Development of theory of the oppression of homosexuality in the light of historical materialism, and study of Marxist-feminist theory.
4. Work in trade unions and other workers' organizations for them to support their homosexual members and

other homosexuals, especially through the formation of homosexual caucuses oriented to work among the rank-and-file members.

5. Solidarity with the working class and socially oppressed and anti-imperialist movements throughout the world.

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