

NOTES FROM SEXUALITY WORKSHOP AT WOMEN'S WEEKEND.

We didn't know quite where to start the discussion on sexuality in my workshop. Partly the usual problem of being unused to talking about sexuality in big groups, but also most of us weren't sure what it meant or what everyone else thought it meant. So we went round saying what we thought it meant. Someone raised the point that usually a discussion on sexuality is assumed to be or comes to be about lesbianism; being gay or heterosexual; does it affect what kind of feminism you have etc. People assume its to do with sexual preference rather than something wider. When we went round women said various things about what they thought it meant. "all things relevant to your biological sex as a woman"; "the way we are conditioned to prove our sexuality"; "what is repressive about sexuality is what we are conditioned to see it as eg genital heterosexuality - the mythology around it - why its totally linked to reproduction. Sexuality as we think of it is a cultural reconstruction. We have in our minds that it could be smething quite different to that - linked to pleasure rather than reproduction"

Someone asked "can we think about sexuality as a people thing or specifically as women. At the moment its completely linked to masculinity and femininity Has always been to do with male sexuality, male drive and women thinking of themselves as sexual objects. We decided it couldn't be thought of in any other way than as women - but we needed to keep our sense of alternatives in relation to sexuality - male and female,

Then we talked about being gay and how defining oneself as gay is a political statement not a personal one and it involves a commitment to that struggle for more and more women. Also that the gay movement and gays 'coming out' has liberated everyone's sexuality and affirmed the validity of being gay. Someone said if there weren't any pressures everyone would be bisexual and I suddenly thought "I wonder who is?" and that we were all being very general and abstract in a way and no-one was talking about themselves very much or saying if they saw themselves as lesbians, heterosexuals, bisexuals, celibates or what? Partly it could be a need to develop more openness, get to know each other better - but theres more than that. Are we afraid of labelling or being labelled: "...she's bound to say that because..."

Perhaps we want to say it doesn't matter - that in Big Flame, because of our politics there are no divisions between lesbian and heterosexual women But as someone said its a common assumption that most BF women are heterosexual - because nobody says otherwise. Its like when you're describing someone and unless you say black everyone assumes they're white and you sometimes resent the fact that you have to point it out. If you're black, like if you're a lesbian then that assumption in itself is oppressive. Theres a tendency amongst BF women to be very supportive on an individual level about our personal lives, relationships etc. but its not generalised in a political way.. I don't mean that we should feel obliged to open up personally in any group/workshop in a BF conference dayschool etc to women we don't know and trust yet. That would be awful that pressure. I think I mean that the personal choices we make have to be discussed as political issues and we have to be able to see how our sexuality fits into all that.. It not a question of spending every meeting discussing every detail of our personal lives. But we do want to develop a feminist politics which is based on an understanding of the ways that capitalism and patriarchy attempt to control our sexuality as much as every other area of our lives. I think I'm beginning to ramble. I'd like to talk more about it all before and during the conference.