

# GAY TRADE UNION GROUP NEWSLETTER

No 1. October 1978.

## ACTION TAKEN BY ACOA GAYS.

The Public Service Union, ACOA, has considered a motion on equal rights for homosexuals in 4 states.

The motion is:

That this Branch of ACOA campaign for the following policy on discrimination against homosexuals to become official ACOA policy.

Officers of the Australian Government Public Service or of Australian Government Commissions or Statutory Authorities should not be discriminated against on the grounds of their sexual preference.

There should be complete equality for all officers, regardless of sexuality, in:

- i) Employment
- ii) Promotion
- iii) Transfers
- iv) Leave
- v) Superannuation
- vi) Housing

Furthermore, management should not take disciplinary action, as a result of a criminal conviction for a homosexual act, where a corresponding heterosexual act would have no such consequence.

ACOA is also committed to opposing action taken outside the Discipline Sections of the Act to remove homosexuals by management transfer, etc from jobs in which they come into contact with the public, or any other sorts of work from which management may wish to remove them as a result of the sexual preference of homosexual staff members.

The Association pledges financial and industrial support to any member victimized on the grounds of her or his sexual orientation."

This motion has been considered in the ACT, Queensland, NSW and is coming up in Victoria.

In the ACT it was passed by Branch Council ( the policy making body in each state) by a good majority of 27 to 8. In Queensland the motion was trounced at Branch Council - a not altogether unpredictable result. In Victoria it is now the official policy of the influential ACOA Reform Group. They will put their weight behind behind a campaign which will be strongly opposed by the NCC inspired State leadership of the union.

In NSW a group of homosexuals together with members of the rank and file Government Employees Action Group put the motion to the Annual General Meeting in August. The motion wasn't in early enough to go on notice of motion, which would have made it automatically union policy. It passed quite handsomely by 40 votes to 7 in General Business. This was despite a strong anti-homosexual stand taken by ACOA Federal Secretary Wattie Peck. This was not binding on the union and the motion had to be ratified by Branch Council, then by the Federal Executive.

The Branch Council meeting was on October 17th. A group of about 20 homosexuals and supporters went along to lobby for the motion. The motion was not carried, however the Branch Council voted to amend the union's existing policy on discrimination to include the grounds of sexual preference. Although this was not what we originally had wanted, it was still seen as a success as it will serve to exert pressure on ACOA's Federal Executive to take positive action on the issue of discrimination against homosexuals in the Public Service.

### ABOUT US

The Gay Trade Union Group was formed from the 4th National Homosexual Conference. The first meeting of the group was held on Sunday, September 24th. It is proposed that the group will meet once each month. The group is open to any lesbian or male homosexual who is a member of their trade union (including the Unemployed Peoples Union).

The next meeting of the Gay Trade Union Group will be held on Sunday, October 29th, at CAMP, 33A Glebe Point Road, Glebe at 2:30 p.m. Please attend and contribute your ideas or experience within your own union as this will strengthen the group and perhaps encourage other gay trade unionists to initiate action to end discrimination within their union.





SOME BACKGROUND TO THE BRIGGS INITIATIVE

The Briggs story begins with the case of James M. Gaylord. In 1972 Gaylord was sacked from his job as Social Studies Instructor at Wilson High School in California of 13 years standing, because he acknowledged being homosexual.

He was discharged on the grounds of immorality, although he was never asked, nor did he suggest that he engaged in illegal conduct. However, he was told that "knowledge by school authorities and students of a teachers homosexuality adversely affects her/his performance."

The case was taken to court, and finally in 1978 the U.S. Supreme Court in a 6 to 2 decision, declined to review the case.

Briggs held a press conference after the Supreme Court decision, and claimed that the decision supported his Initiative to have homosexual teachers banned from schools.

Senator John Briggs began to distribute his petition in January 1978. The Briggs Initiative calls for:

"The filing of charges against school teachers, teachers aids, school administrators, or counsellors for advocating, soliciting, imposing, encouraging or promoting private or public sexual acts between persons of the same sex..." and the initiative prohibits the hiring of, and requires the dismissal of such a person if school boards determine them unfit for service.

Thus the initiative threatens not only gay teachers, but sympathetic straights as well. The response from Gay Rights Groups has been to attack the initiative on the grounds that it is unconstitutional - because it "carries with it the very real threat that anyone - homosexual or not - who campaigns against its adoption will be identified and blacklisted."

The "Californian Defend Our Children" information sheet however, argues that the initiative would not deny homosexuals their rights because there is NO inherent rights for an individual to hold a teaching job.

Opposition to the initiative has come from various quarters. In August 1978, the Annual Convention of the National Education Association (N.E.A.), passed a resolution stating:

"The NEA reaffirms its opposition to situations such as the Briggs Initiative in California and the recently passed law in Oklahoma which discriminate in the hiring and retention of teachers on the basis of sexual orientation."

The NEA was to use:

"any and all legal and legislative means to defeat anti-gay discrimination."

In September 1978, the State (Californian) Democratic Party came out in opposition to the Briggs Initiative, on the grounds that the proposal would mean the loss of civil and human rights for school staff, and it would be a clear violation of the Constitutional Rights of Privacy, Free Association and the Freedom of Speech.

One of the aims of the march and rally organised by the Gay Solidarity Group is to show Australian lesbian and male homosexuals objection to the Briggs Initiative and to show support for our Californian sisters and brothers.

The march has been organised for the 4th November and will rally at Circular Quay Park at 10:30 a.m. Show your support for gay rights by attending.

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UNEMPLOYED PEOPLES UNION TAKES STAND ON GAY RIGHTS.

The Parramatta based Unemployed Peoples Union recently took a policy decision to endorse the aims of the July 15th Gay Solidarity march. This policy decision was ratified recently when the U.P.U. endorsed the aims of the coming November 4th Gay Solidarity march. A number of individual members of the U.P.U. have also undertaken to help build the march by doing a paste-up in the Parramatta area.

The Gay Trade Union Group urges all unemployed workers who are not registered with any other union or association to consider joining the U.P.U. which can be contacted by phone on 635 4444 ext 20 or by writing to P.O. Box 69, Parramatta, 2150

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THE NEXT MEETING OF THE GAY TRADE UNION GROUP IS TO BE HELD AT 2:30, SUNDAY OCTOBER 29TH, 1978 AT CAMP, 33A GLEBE POINT RD, GLEBE.

Issued by the Gay Trade Union Group, c/- Camp NSW, GPO Box 5074, SYDNEY 2001.