

Gays in Education - NSO Forum

Of the National Summer Offensive Forums, Gays in Education was one of the most successful. A report by the Gay Teachers and Students Group, edited for space reasons.

At least 75 people turned up on a rainy, chilly night, 4 days into a total petrol shut-down.

A lesbian infants teacher spoke of the sex-role stereotyping of kids as young as 4½ and of her battles against sexism, and her fears of being victimised if her gayness became an issue.

Another teacher, Ian MacNeill described the experience of returning to school after his name had been printed as one of those arrested in the march in 1978, and his efforts to get the booklet Young, Gay and Proud into the school library. He was told by the Headmaster to report his arrest to Area Office. With his union backing him he refused, and this was the last he has heard about it from the Dept. of Education. And Y.G.&P. stays locked in the School Counsellor's desk.

A lesbian teacher in a country high school gave a chilling account of the prejudice she faced as she came out in a country town. Her experience was one that could only be endured, and was made especially difficult because at that time she was coming to terms with her own sexuality. When she had come out the prejudice that she faced - being put on boys sport etc. was quite horrific.

UNION ACTIONS

Vic. Baueris, for 3 years a Union welfare officer, urged more activism in the union to keep gay issues before Executive and the membership. He praised the work of John Lewis in Victoria whose work did so much to keep gay issues before teaching unions there.

Following a break there was a general discussion. A resolution was carried that the Anti-Discrimination Board be informed* that the Independent Teachers' Association magazine declined to carry an ad. for the forum.

Other points raised in discussion included the choice and training of school counsellors and the feeling of isolation & powerlessness that so many gay teachers feel in the system.

* As you are probably aware, the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board can only investigate such complaints. At the present the Board has recommended that the Act be extended to make anti-gay discrimination unlawful, and State parliament will decide on these recommendations later in 1980.



VIC. GTUG NEWS

Being Gay Isn't OK - But Fraser Is

The opening of a hospice in the Melbourne suburb of Fitzroy on Sunday March 30 by Prime Minister Fraser led to a large and angry demonstration. 700 demonstrators greeted the PM at the Melbourne City Mission.

Melbourne City Mission also featured prominently in the news last year when an allegation that the Mission discriminated against a prospective employee because of his homosexuality was substantiated by the State Government Anti-Discrimination Body. One of the reasons given by the Mission for refusing to employ social worker Tony Collins was 'community attitudes'.

The Mission must have a very selective regard for community attitudes. Local members of parliament and Fitzroy City Council objected strongly to Fraser's presence in Fitzroy. Fitzroy has one of the largest working class populations of any suburb in Melbourne. The residents have been hard hit by the dismantling of Medibank and other cuts to social services. It is worth noting that initial finance for the hospice came from the Whitlam Govt.

The Victorian Gay Trade Unionists' Group participated in the demonstration. A representative of the Group addressed the demonstration along with representatives from other groups. Large numbers of homosexual women and men participated in the demonstration.

The demonstration was one of the most violent seen in Victoria for many years. Many demonstrators, including VGTUG members, complained about police provocation and violence, especially when police rode horses into the crowd. Some police deliberately had their numbers obscured.

Rev. Bruce Addison, director of the Mission, criticised the demonstrators for being inconsiderate. Apparently if you're homosexual and/or working class you don't deserve consideration.

FMWU Vic. Branch Considers Discrimination

MELBOURNE: A representative of the Victorian Gay Trade Unionists' Group addressed the March State Council meeting of the Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union.

The representative spoke briefly on gay oppression generally, pointing out that discrimination at work was only part of the oppression suffered by homosexuals. The talk concentrated on gay oppression as an industrial issue (the denial of jobs, promotions, housing, bereavement leave, etc.) and the need for unions to support their gay members.

Questions asked by councillors at the end of the talk indicated that they took a serious and supportive approach. Secretary of the Victorian Branch, Ray Hogan, in a vote of thanks, spoke of the need for unions to become active in the fight for the rights of their homosexual members and of the need for an ACTU policy.

GAY BANNED FROM TEACHING COURSE IN U.K.

A gay university student has been banned from entering a teachers' training course unless he sees a psychiatrist!

Because his medical records at the university's health centre note that he is homosexual, Geoffrey Brighton must undergo a psychiatric test. This he refuses to do, and so he is effectively banned from the course.

"They were quite happy to pass me until they saw on my file that I was gay. It's nothing to do with mental instability or emotional unsuitability. I can only think that they think anyone who is gay is likely to be unsuitable to be a teacher - and that's clearly discrimination."

On the other hand, a university spokesperson says, "If an examining medical officer was concerned about mental instability he had a duty to refer applicants for further consultation."

Geoffrey says that a chance remark to a Student Health GP during treatment for a cold was noted on his medical records. When the Health Centre was called on to issue a certificate of fitness - they advised Geoffrey to see a psychiatrist in view of his 'medical'.

The Campaign for Homosexual Equality's Discrimination Commission is organising a campaign with gays and sympathetic allies in the medical profession around the general issues of the Brighton case.

NY Nurses Union Acts !

The New York State Nurses Association, at a recent conference, has called for the inclusion of sexual orientation in non-discrimination clauses in contracts. It also decided to establish a Human Rights Task Force.

COMMENT

With such a large percentage of gay nursing staff in NSW, and a Nurses Association so violently ambigious in its attitudes to its gay members, it strikes NSW GTUG as strange that no similar moves are underway here!! We look forward to rank and file gay nurses keen to work to guarantee 100% support from nursing unions here for gay rights.

Our 1980 AGM Highlights

Our postponed Annual General Meeting got the group off to a healthy start for 1980-1.

The group has decided to launch a number of projects to build the group's expertise. First priority will be an education project featuring video. We have contacts who have equipment and skills in this area, and the group will organise, write, script etc. a number of kits aimed at different sections of the community.

Other projects which will involve as many members as possible, include upgrading the content and distribution of this newsletter, organising special meetings with authorities (eg the NSW Privacy Committee) and a flying squad to activate on-the-job gay social groups.

FIGHTING DISCRIMINATION : A Series

6: Approaching the subject of gay rights

Gay rights for gay trade union members mean a fair deal at work. There are two absolutely essential conditions which are a prerequisite for any gay trade union member - job security and equality in entry and promotion opportunities. If either of these is threatened then action should at once be taken through the union, as we will explain later in the series.

But the recognition of these basic rights for all gay trade union members is only a first step. What we also demand is acceptance from our fellow workers - not thinly veiled hostility or open ridicule, but a recognition that our lifestyle, although different from theirs, should be treated with equal respect and consideration. This does not mean that we want - as we often accused of wanting - to "flaunt" our gayness. It means that in discussion at work of our private lives, we want an end to subterfuge, evasion and deceit. In effect, we want the right to be honest about ourselves!

Beyond protection from discrimination at work, many trade unions now see they have an important role to play lobbying for gay rights legislation and against anti-homosexual laws. The situation with the various anti-homosexual laws, the Summary Offences Act etc. is that lesbians and gay men convicted under them, may lose their jobs. Support for the extension of the NSW and Victorian Anti-Discrimination Acts to cover homosexuals in employment can easily be seen as a part of traditional trade union concerns.

Gay rights should be approached at union meetings in terms relevant to the membership. Most trade unionists are practical people, so it is the practicalities they will appreciate. Issues such as discrimination against gays in housing, education or social services touch on principles for which trade unionists have been fighting for generations - and in which they have years of solid experience.

Before putting forward any policy proposals, you may find it helpful to have a general discussion on the matter, if your sub-branch allows. A guest speaker on gay rights is also a good idea - but do make sure the speaker is a trade unionist. The Gay Trade Unionists' Group can provide a speaker on request.

Most trade unions publish a newsletter or newspaper which is sent to all members. You can seek to raise the issue of gay rights by writing a letter for publication - or better still ask the Editor if you can have some editorial space in the body of the journal for an article on the subject.

In some unions or occupations, gay groups have been formed to coordinate gay members and advance the cause of gay rights. If your union has one, it is well worth joining. Details are published in "Campaign", "Gay Community News" or available from the Gay Trade Unionists Group.

Influencing Policy

Policy matters are taken seriously in trade unions at all levels. Because they are democratic organisations, policies at the national level or the state level, can only be discussed when they flow from a decision of a properly convened sub-branch meeting. Thus, if you are to influence State or National policy, you must persuade other members of your sub-branch - ie. the people you work with - to support what you are putting forward. It is also advisable to seek the support of another member, otherwise you have a motion but no one to second the motion. The seconder has a right to speak and you should not waste the opportunity!

You first need to compose a resolution to put to the sub-branch meeting. It should be to the point, cover one subject only and clearly state what is required of whom. You may have to send the resolution to the sub-branch secretary some time in advance in order that it can be circulated to members.

Some notes on how debates are conducted will be shown towards the end of the series. One word of caution : some State Branches have a rule that if a motion is defeated, it cannot be debated again for a set period of time. So you need to be prepared. Try to gain support informally before hand : similarly, if your motion is defeated use the interval to talk to those who voted against it or abstained.

The same sort of rules apply for the State and National Conferences. If you persuade the sub-branch to put a motion to conference, you will have to find another branch to second it. Again, there are usually rules to prevent similar subjects being debated in consecutive years, so plan ahead!

If you want advice on resolutions etc. contact the G.T.U.G.

Want to be a Video Star?

Gaytug is looking for lesbians and gay men interested in helping with our video project, especially with contributing performances before camera with tales of their experiences at work.

The video film we hope will be like another 'Word is Out', orientated toward educating the public of the special problems facing gays at work.

Next Meeting: Wednesday 28th May 1980 8pm
CAMP Centre, 33A Glebe Point Road, GLEBE.

AGENDA: - Feedback and progress on organising gays on the job.
- The Privacy Committee.
- The Video Project.
- General Business.

RUSH this coupon to GTUG, PO. Box 71 NEWTOWN NSW 2042 for details on GTUG!

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