

GAY TRADE UNIONIST GROUP NEWSLETTER

No 2. November 1978.

C.A.G.E.O. RECOGNISES THE PLIGHT OF GAYS.

A significant step towards trade union recognition of the plight of the lesbian and male homosexual worker, was the motion at the 1977 Federal Conference of the Council of Australian Government Employees Organisations. It supported the proposition that Federal and State Governments should enact anti-discrimination legislation, specifically:

- 1) To include discrimination based on sex, marital status, sexual preference, physical appearance and age.
- 2) To cover indirect, as well as direct discrimination.
- 3) To apply to systematic as well as individual discrimination and allow for class actions.
- 4) To apply to the fields of employment, education, goods, facilities and services, insurance, superannuation, social security, sport, advertising, the press, clubs and associations and unionism.
- 5) To encourage conciliation and negotiation but to be backed up by judicial processes, including the power to award damages.

When questioned on the status of the homosexual union member, Ken Turbet, the council's Federal President, gave an assurance that "any affiliated union which took action to protect the rights of a gay member sacked or otherwise unfairly treated for no other reason than their homosexuality" would receive the Council's full backing.

However, in the context of political reality, and overseas developments, was the decision anything to get excited about?

Recognising that the function of a union is firstly to fight for workers' rights on the job, the Trade Unions Congress in the U.K. proposed a Model Equal Opportunities Clause which would be included in award negotiations with management.

Instead of "anti-discrimination" it used instead the phrase "development of positive policies" and included both the union and management in this. It covered a comprehensive range of conditions of work, and included a number of oppressed groups, but excluded "sexual orientation". A campaign to include "sexual orientation" has been initiated by the 1976 Annual Conference of the National and Local Government Officers, the 1977 Annual Conference of the National Union of Public Employees and the General Secretary of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staff.

Subsequently, NALGO is at present including the amended version of the Clause which includes "sexual orientation" in award negotiations with employer bodies.

In the context of political reality, recourse to the State for anti-discrimination justice is a costly process in both money and time, and a daunting task for the migrant worker, and for those unskilled in the processes of law.

The C.A.G.E.O. move is fobbing off its responsibility to the workers on the job. The rights that an "equal opportunities clause" may have assured for members of unions affiliated to C.A.G.E.O. has been lost. And in its stead a "recommendation" is passed to the political arena where it has no chance whatsoever.

As for Ken Turbet's assurance, this is nothing outstanding, and some people have been given such an assurance from the NSW Branch of the Australian Railways Union. They tell you that you are being sacked for wearing badges, for having a criminal record, for taking a pro-gay stance at work, or being of "unsuitable character" - everything BUT being homosexual.

What is needed are awards guaranteeing positive policies pushed by management and union alike. Its well and good for a union council to make recommendations to the State, but that is not its prime responsibility - nor is it a course of action that will have any positive result for the working class.

GAY TRADE UNIONIST GROUP MEETING DATES.

Sunday 12th November 1978 at 2:30 at CAMP 33A Glebe Point Road, Glebe.

Sunday 26th November 1978 at 2:30 at CAMP 33A Glebe Point Road, Glebe.

Sunday 10th December 1978 at 2:30 at CAMP 33A Glebe Point Road, Glebe.

Sunday 21st January 1979 at 2:30 at CAMP 33A Glebe Point Road, Glebe.

One of the first tasks of the Gay Trade Unionist Group must be to consolidate our knowledge of the responses both within the gay movement and the Trade Union movement to the questions of the rights of the homosexual person at work. The Group is therefore encouraging people to come forward with information and ideas on measures to best ensure homosexual rights at work. If you have any information or ideas feel free to send them in or come to meetings.

THE AUSTRALIAN THEATRICAL AND AMUSEMENT EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION COMES OUT AGAINST DISCRIMINATION AGAINST HOMOSEXUALS.

At its half yearly general meeting last September the Australian Theatrical and Amusement Employees' Association (ATAEA) adopted a motion which stated that "The ATAEA is opposed to discrimination against homosexuals and calls upon the government to remove all laws from the statute books which discriminate on the basis of sex or sexual orientation."

How did this come about? A few weeks earlier at the National Homosexual Conference, NSW Secretary of the ATAEA, Damien Stapleton spoke of the need for initiatives by homosexuals from the grass-roots level of the union movement.

The following day, Sunday August 27th, at least one member of the same union was among those arrested in the course of the march at Taylor Square. He decided to seek support from his union.

First he spoke to individuals and a union meeting at his place of work, seeking support from his colleagues - both straight and gay. Then with this moral support behind him, he related the matter at the half yearly general meeting of the union.

He moved a series of motions, deploring the police action of intimidation by arbitrary mass arrest carried out on Sunday August 27th; calling upon the government to drop the charges against those arrested; and thirdly, the broad motion opposing discrimination against homosexuals referred to above.

Some doubts were raised as to whether the union should become involved in such issues, which weren't seen as necessarily work related. However others pointed out that the union also took positions on such matters as uranium mining.

In the event the motions were all carried, with only one amendment limiting the call to drop the charges so that it only applied to those arrested at Taylor Square.

The success of these motions was probably partly due to their being raised in the context of the civil liberties issue, and with the support of the union secretary. However, contrary to the popular stereotype there are probably no more poofers and lesbians in the ATAEA than there are in any other walk of life.

It's not easy to raise the issue of homosexuality at a union meeting. But it is up to us. Nobody else is going to do it for us. What this shows is that it is possible to make some small gains if we are prepared to give it a go.

NSW COUNCIL FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES MOVES TO HELP GAY WORKERS

The NSW Council for Civil Liberties at its Annual General Meeting on the 28th October, voted unanimously to begin a survey of employers and unions attitudes towards homosexual workers. This step is a significant move by an organisation which has already this year figured prominently in the field of gay rights, providing observers for marches, and defence for those arrested at the 'Conference March'.

The motion referred to another body taking part in the survey which will be the Gay Trade Unionist Group, which will provide time and expertise for the survey.

The first meeting of C.C.L. and the Gay Trade Unionist Group will be held at C.C.L., 149 St Johns Road, Glebe: 6pm, Tuesday 5th December 1978. Anyone interested and not a member of either group who would like to attend, contact: Di on 313241 or Bruce on 660 0414.

REPORT ON THE MEETING OF THE FEDERATION FOR LESBIAN AND MALE HOMOSEXUAL RIGHTS (NSW)

Last month the Federation for Lesbian and Male Homosexual Rights (NSW) was formed. Delegates from a whole spectrum of homosexual organisations participated. These organisations ranged from the Polynesians Social Club and the Gay Bar Owners Guild to the Lesbian-Feminists and the Gay Trade Unionist Group.

The meeting to initiate the Federation was called by CHUGS (Concerned Homosexual Uniting Group). This group is composed mainly of right wingers and homosexual owned commercial interests.

After prolonged discussion a set of aims for the Federation was adopted. Briefly these are:

- 1) To liberate Lesbians and male homosexuals by promoting a social and educational environment free from oppressive laws, discrimination, and societal activities causing fear, guilt, shame & loneliness, through sexism and sex stereotyping.
- 2) To work for the interests and wellbeing of lesbians and male homosexuals
- 3) The Federation aims to promote a variety of means to further its aims and does not restrict individual groups from taking different action in the same situation.

A majority of delegates to the Federation also endorsed the aims of the Gay Solidarity March on Saturday November 4th. This endorsement was initiated by the Gay Trade Unionist Group delegate and was bitterly opposed by some commercial interests represented on the Federation.

The next meeting of the Federation is on Saturday November 11th, at Stage 3 Building, at the University of NSW. Groups who wish to participate should send a delegate and are allowed one advisor to the delegate.

THE NEXT MEETING OF THE GAY TRADE UNIONIST GROUP IS TO BE HELD ON NOVEMBER 12TH AT 2:30 PM AT CAMP 33A GLEBE POINT ROAD, GLEBE.

issued by the Gay Trade Unionist Group c/- CAMP NSW GPO BOX 5074 SYDNEY 2001



"a common misconception is that homosexuals are middle or upper class"

MEMBERSHIP FORM FOR THE GAY TRADE UNIONIST GROUP

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

CONTACT PHONE NUMBERS.....

UNION.....

POSITION HELD(IF ANY).....

SUBSCRIPTION ENCLOSED

\$10 WORKING MEMBERS.....

\$2 NON WORKING MEMBERS.....

MAKE CHEQUES PAYABLE TO THE GAY TRADE UNIONIST GROUP
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