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TO THE EDITORS OF PL MAGAZINE:

I'd like to raise a question about PL's attitude to sexism. Not about the role of women-- although I feel PL is and has been weak on fighting male chauvinism, the situation is getting better-- even though there are still people writing for Challenge who say things like "the workers need more balls", and there are still too many people in and around the party who think that the whole question boils down to equal work rights, and that sex roles in the social and personal areas are not important.

I'd like to question PL's attitude toward homosexuals, or gay people. I really can't think of a reference to gay people, in PL Magazine or elsewhere, that hasn't been very bitter-- gays are ^{sick, monsters,} they have been "defeated by Capitalism". Is this a good line?

A friend of mine, now in the Party out in Minneapolis, was working in a hospital once, where his boss and a lot of the other workers were gay. My friend's wife was about to have a baby-- their first. My friend called in to work, and told his boss he wasn't coming in-- he was going to the hospital where his wife was in labor. His boss told him he'd better come in-- or else. My friend told him to stuff it, and hung up, absolutely convinced he'd lost his job. But a couple of days later, the boss was calling him back, asking sweetly when he was going to come to work. After my friend went back, he found out that when the other workers had found out what the boss had done, they got together-- gay and straight-- and

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told the boss he'd better bring my friend back-- or else.

The question I'm trying to raise by telling this story is-- what is it about gay people that makes it impossible for us to unite with them to fight the ruling class? As far as I can see, only ourselves. What ever you may think of homosexuality, the idea that gays have been defeated by the bosses just because they are gay is a bunch of baloney. Now I realize the party wants its members to be stable people-- and its pretty difficult to be gay and stable too

in this society. The problem, however, is that ~~few~~ ^{the kind of language} people

P.L. Magazine uses ~~gives people the idea that they shouldn't~~ ^{in PL, at this point, would be able to work with} gays even

in a united front. Articles in PL have referred to gays as if they were like heroin addicts, or something, and groups which did work with gays have been ridiculed for it.

Now admittedly there are a lot of workers that can't stomach the thought of homosexuality. (There are also a lot of workers that can't stomach the thought of Communism.) But should we be pandering to this reflex-- or should we be trying to unite all workers and all people who can possibly be united against the ruling class?

-- A Friend of the Party

(Gregory Scott)

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Dear Milt: (or whoever it is that reads ~~in~~ these things.) I drew this letter up some time ago, after the last PL magazine came out, but hesitated over sending it. I wasn't sure whether it was really important. But I was urged to send it in by some people in the Sexism workshop at the SDS anti-racism conference- and here it is.

The letter is based on the following passages:

"Prior to this Black Panther leader Huey Newton announced a united front with the Gay Liberation Front. He indicated that homosexuals are oppressed by the system and therefore are candidates for the anti-imperialist united front. Obviously Newton, and more important, many others, don't realize the stiff price workers and revolutionaries have had to pay for those in their ranks who became victims of drugs and homosexuality. More to the point, movements which unite with drug addicts and homosexuals close the door to workers. The leaders of these bogus antiimperialist united fronts know full well workers, no matter what their color, will never unite with these people. Naturally, we realize both problems of drugs and homosexuality are results of capitalism; but capitalism cannot be crushed by those who it has already defeated. It can only be defeated by those who have the strength to withstand its blows, grow stronger and fight back. After socialism drug addicts and homosexuals can be treated and rehabilitated into useful roles in society." page 8, PL mag., vol.8, #1

"The rulers today seek to establish that prison rebels are freaks, psychopaths, nuts, monsters, and homosexuals." page 92, PL magazine, vol. 9, #1

The first question is- why did the writer of the first passage assume that homosexuals are like junkies? Is every gay a potential Phillip Abbot Luce?

How many people in PL-- how many of the people who make these kinds of statements-- know any gays? To what extent are these statements based on practice? And remember- these are the only statements the party has made on homosexuals in at least the last five years.

I mayself make no pretense of having the final answer to the question of homosexuality-- or even much of an interim one. I do believe, however, that the Party- in light of its other strengths- has been remarkably medieval on this question.

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are further consideration:

I think, if you're still putting them out - this letter (perhaps including the cover comment) might be better included in the bulletins than in PL mag. Not that it would be bad to publish it there...

Of course this question has hit me, too, on the level of practice. Not to the extent it hit my friend (peer Nyborg - Terry, his wife, is head of party work in mpls) - with him, the question of homosexuality was the main obstacle which held him back from making an effort to organize his workplace. But I've had the experience of selling challenge to an interested person who identified himself as a homosexual - and not knowing how to proceed. By the PL article, one would think I should have said - "bug off, monster." But I think those articles are actually reactionary.

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As for myself, I'm not sure what to think. I don't think homosexuality is a disease - it's a learned behavior pattern. And someone that can't bring themselves to sleep with women has got problems.

But people who have a knee-jerk, hysterical reaction to gays, which is totally disproportionate to any relationship being gay may have to do with the class struggle we're involved with - for gays can be workers, middle class, or bosses, too - these people also have a problem.

And that's what the letter was written to combat.

By the way, I think the author of C.B. #7 article on "Our line on Vietnam" is pushing the most right-wing line since C.B. #2. To not call Ho a lizard sounds a lot like not calling Golda a Nazi, 'cause the Jews suffered so much under

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Hittler, etc. I thought the 2nd article on Viet Nam was one of the better things I've read - the distinction between reformists + revisionists is really key, I'd never thought of it in that way before.

Does that friend of the Party know that in 1945, Ho signed an agreement with the French which left Vietnam as a colony - not even with the "independence" that was being used, wrong, say, by Gandhi + Co in India? That the Vietminh moved to people's war only after the French then tried to outlaw them, + crush them?

"Hazard" is too good for this jerk!

Gregory Scott