



# Discussion Bulletin

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- Marty Jan 2014

*GAY LIBERATION AND THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION*  
by Jon Hillson, Denver Branch

Page 14, the last paragraph in the first column should end with:  
and are but *partially* embodied in the gay liberation movement.

Page 15, the last paragraph of the text, in the sentence that begins with "Many of us. . ." should read:  
Many of us have *not* wanted to discuss sexuality altogether, as something inessential or even "bourgeois."

SOME ADDITIONAL REMARKS ON THE  
GAY LIBERATION MOVEMENT

by Michael Maggi, Los Angeles Branch

Radicalizations unfold according to their own dynamic and not according to anyone's plan and usually not to anyone's expectations. George Breitman, in his first Oberlin talk, "The Current Radicalization Compared to Those of the Past," discussed the differences in the three radicalizations of this century and how each unfolded according to the objective and subjective conditions in the country at the time. I want to repeat a couple of the major points he made there.

The Debsian radicalization took place in a time of rapid urbanization, industrialization and immigration and was molded by these events and the level of development of the socialist movement at the time.

Naturally the forms of the radicalization were different in the radicalization of the 1930s because it was molded by the depression, the rise of industrial unionism and the hegemony of the Stalinist Communist Party in the working class movement and all other "progressive" circles.

The current radicalization developed and proceeded in a very different manner than either of the two previous radicalizations because the whole of the world situation had changed. The United States rose to international supremacy in the imperialist camp and became the world cop at the same time as the nationalist awakening was taking place in Africa, Asia and Latin America with the rise of the liberation movements there. The Stalinist CP was widely discredited in this country and to a more limited extent internationally. Prosperity did not abort the radicalization, but in part became an issue fueling people's discontent with the poor quality of their lives and the inadequacies of living conditions for most people in the world. What was the motive force of this radicalization? Breitman answers, "It is an over simplification, . . . but I don't know any other short statement for it than alienation. This capitalist system, which long ago outlived its historic mission, which is overripe and rotten to the core, has managed to hang on at a frightful price to humanity, but it has not managed to convince growing numbers of people that this is the way life should be. It

has alienated, repelled and angered increasing millions of Americans, who do not yet agree on what should be done but who feel that things cannot, should not, need not continue the way they are (Breitman's talk in *Towards an American Socialist Revolution*, p. 87)."

A good case might be made for the proposition that it would be better for the prospects of social revolution if there were a mass radicalization of the working class in which they were moving through the unions to challenge the foundations of capital. This situation may yet be portrayed in the movies; life, however, is moving in a different direction and at a different tempo. This is not to say that the working class will never radicalize or that the unions will never be a vehicle for anticapitalist activity. Both are already occurring with the radicalization of youth and the participation of trade unionists in the anti-war movement. More can be expected. But this motion is occurring to a limited extent at present and the party must look at the radicalization as it is and base its strategy and tactics on existing reality, whatever we might anticipate in the future.

*Are Democratic Demands Revolutionary?*

The mass independent movements—the gay liberation movement among them—are raising basic issues which are at the foundation of this class society. All of the movements are raising demands like the right of Chicano control over the Chicano community, the right of women to control their own bodies, the right of the Vietnamese to self-determination, and the right of gays to be treated as full human beings.

Almost all of the demands being raised by these movements are democratic demands that pertain to the simple rights of people that are in opposition to the power and privilege of those who own this society and a good chunk of the rest of the world.

A lot of confusion exists on the revolutionary importance of struggles around democratic demands. Some people have claimed that they have little importance for the rev-

olutionary party. On this subject, George Novack has stated, "The most extreme ultraleft error is the conception that, because this is the epoch of capitalist decay and proletarian revolution, democratic slogans have somehow become outmoded or superseded, and therefore revolutionists cannot advance or even support them. A less categorical version of this sectarianism is the position, sometimes found in our own ranks, that democratic demands are in and of themselves inferior to transitional demands, less revolutionizing, less important, purely peripheral, and episodic. The democratic slogans, it is considered, are petty-bourgeois, reformist in implication, and not really proletarian. . . . (page 12) This brings us to the misconception that democratic slogans are second-rate stuff that have to be flushed down the drain as quickly as possible, that a red-blooded red will have as little to do with them as possible, if not reject them from the outset. This underestimates their importance. The specific weight of a particular democratic demand, and such proposals in general, depends upon a whole complex of concrete circumstances. Black control of the Black community is an expression of the democratic right to self-determination. Who can tell in advance how explosive this or the comparable demand of the Chicanos can be? Once this type of slogan becomes a motive force among millions of militant Blacks and Chicanos in the major cities of the foremost imperialism or in the Southwest, it can be the propulsion for insurrectionary actions at a climactic point in the movement for Black or Chicano liberation (page 14, *The Role of the Transitional Program in the Revolutionary Process*)." In this passage, I am not trying to equate the current state of development of the Black, Chicano and gay liberation movements, but neither do I concede that a similar insurrectionary rage could not develop among gays around some democratic struggle.

Next we have to consider the method that revolutionists use in the struggle for these demands and how these struggles fit into our fundamental goal of socialist revolution.

We seek to organize around democratic slogans by extraparliamentary mass actions, by the direct intervention of the masses in the class struggle and not exclusively through the parliamentary channel. Of course, we don't totally oppose the use of parliamentary channels as an auxiliary vehicle that has its uses and value when subordinated to the mass struggle. "In any event," Novack states, "we don't take a sterile abstentionist attitude when issues of democracy are before the people or any section of them. We are interventionists, we are activists. We try to take hold of these questions and use them for revolutionary purposes, to win the sympathy and support of greater and greater numbers of people (*Ibid*, p. 13)."

Democratic slogans are used by revolutionists in basically the same manner as we use other types of slogans: as levers for the mass mobilization of the population with the aim of improving their situation at the expense of the capitalist state and bourgeois society. It is obvious that democratic demands have a less pronounced class character than "30 for 40" or "A sliding scale of wages and hours." So what? Taking struggles for democratic demands in context with all social struggles in society, they can promote the development of a revolutionary situation and the creation of a dual-power situation that can only be based on the working class, which by its logic must lead in the direction of the overthrow of the capitalist system.

The democratic rights being raised in the demands of the gay liberation movement fall into this general approach. These demands as they are now formulated may be modified, revised or entirely scrapped during certain periods or for certain actions, but they have arisen from the living struggle of gays demanding a better life and these demands stand in sharp opposition to the interests of the ruling class. The four central democratic demands are: (1) abolish the sodomy and solicitation laws; (2) amnesty for gays convicted of victimless crimes held in prisons and mental hospitals; (3) end police harassment; and (4) end job discrimination. These demands, and the uncompromising assertion of dignity they require are powerful fuels for the mass revolutionary gay liberation movement.

The key importance of these democratic demands isn't in their simple advocacy. They are not ends in themselves. It is the mass struggle that will be waged by gays for these demands that is important. Additionally, each victory and concession won from the ruling class brings more freedom to the oppressed and more ability for them to organize further battles. And as a result of the consciousness developed of the systematic oppression of people by this society, gay activists are won to the revolutionary party in its efforts to abolish all forms of oppression and discrimination.

#### *How A Gay Minority Can Change Society*

Recently I re-read George Breitman's pamphlet, "How A Minority Can Change Society." I recommend all comrades try to read or re-read it sometime soon. It points out a number of lessons on the potential of a mass independent—and in this case, nationalist—movement and has a lot of relevance for activists in the gay liberation movement and the SWP.

The first point Breitman makes is the fact a seriously organized mass independent movement can force serious concessions from the ruling class. Mass militant struggles demanding democratic rights and total liberation can force the revision of the legal codes, for example. This has already started to begin and it can set the stage for further, and even more fundamental demands by the gay liberation movement. In England and Canada, there was a legal reform before the gay liberation movement could become established with mass public activity demanding further reforms.

Each concession further legitimizes the movement. Full liberation for gays is in fundamental contradiction to the capitalist system which demands that at no time should any of the oppressed have control over their lives and destiny.

Another lesson Breitman draws from the Black liberation struggle is that a minority struggling for democratic rights helps expose this system for what it is and educates broad layers of radicalizing people to the injustices of this society. This helps advance and reinforce all aspects of the radicalization. This is also true of the gay liberation movement.

A minority can not only educate other sectors of society, but can also inspire them to take action. As any sector struggles and gains concessions, this encourages others to adopt more militant methods, organization and tactics. So far we have seen the power of example and inspiration upon the gay movement by other sectors. Additionally, we have seen gay women who have helped inspire other women to take feminist actions. We can expect further developments in this area.

### *Party Building and the Independent Gay Movement*

There are no shortcuts in building the revolutionary party. In Jack Barnes' report to the NC on the political document published during the last preconvention discussion, he stated, "We do not see these struggles—regardless of their current leadership or limitations—as something separate from or alien to the SWP." We organize to exert leadership in this radicalization because we have the only program for a complete social revolution and are the only party capable of leading this radicalization to victory over capitalism. Otherwise we might as well join the Socialist Labor Party.

Masses of people do not yet agree that it takes a socialist revolution to solve the problems they face in this society, still less do they see the SWP as the organization to lead that revolution. Part of the solution to this crisis of consciousness on the part of the oppressed is to involve them in mass actions against the government in the interests of the oppressed. In this vein Barnes said, in the same report, ". . . our job is to champion the movements of all sections of the oppressed that rise in struggle against the oppression of capitalism. . . ."

Supporting the key democratic demands of the gay liberation movement and advancing struggles around these demands is a key part of building the influence of and winning recruits to the party. For people to believe that socialism promises a society free of injustice and oppression, they have to see the representatives of socialism conducting themselves as principled revolutionists in the mass movements, and not counterposed to the limited goals that they are striving for at present.

These considerations apply equally as well to the gay liberation movement as they do to the other mass independent movements. The gay movement is helping to break the illusions of class collaboration and reformism, and breaking up the conservative, anti-political-action atmosphere that dominated this country for so many years. The gay movement is affecting the consciousness of broad layers of people with the idea that if gays are to improve their lives, they will have to struggle for their own demands with their own movement. The gay demonstrations have planted questions in millions of gays who are now questioning the validity of a system that daily grinds them into the ground. They begin to see more clearly the oppression of others and that their oppression stems from the needs and organization of capitalism itself. And if there is to be any fundamental change in their situation, they must bring this system down and replace it with something else. That something else, is socialism.

### *"Let's Not Go Overboard!"*

Malcolm always said that people who were afraid of it going overboard, were afraid when it did they would go with it. The SWP need not have similar fears and apprehensions that intervention into the gay liberation movement would be going overboard. Cadre that we might assign to gay work will hardly be swept away by

the swirling currents of an alien petty-bourgeois milieu. Political intervention into the gay movement will be judged as all interventions are: what is it that we set out to do, how well did we do it, and what were the results?

"Another important lesson is involved here, concerning how a revolutionary party's political position develops. Somebody or some group somewhere does not simply jot down a political line, which the convention votes on and that's it. No, the political position of the party develops with the rise of movements of struggle, from the participation of revolutionary cadres in those movements and from the absorption of experience in them. By the application and testing of our ideas in life, we reach an ever-closer approximation of a complete political understanding of these movements," said Jack Barnes (*Towards An American Socialist Revolution*, page 113). How can we refine our position further without intervention in the living gay liberation movement?

### *Are Opportunities Being Lost?*

"There are two main ways that a revolutionary party can founder when a radicalization begins, and radicalizations always begin with new and, to some degree unexpected forms of struggle: either it can panic under the impact of the new events and jettison the lessons, programmatic conquests and basic principles acquired by revolutionary continuity; or, secondly, it can stand aside from the radicalization in a sectarian way, avoiding it because it doesn't recognize it, because it's not the way it was pictured ten years before, and find itself bypassed by history," Barnes noted (*Ibid*, page 110).

The party is not about to be bypassed by history if it does not immediately intervene in the gay liberation movement. We are not "missing the boat." But we are missing valuable opportunities for recruitment to the SWP and advancing the mass-action perspectives of this radicalization. We will continue to lose these opportunities as long as the SWP stands outside the gay liberation movement. We should have confidence in ourselves as a party and as individual cadre working together, that any intervention we carry on will be done politically and rationally, if not always perfectly. We cannot see the end result of what our intervention might be—I certainly haven't offered the party a promissory note of 10,000 gay cadre and a sexual revolution in seven years if the party would adopt the guidelines for party gay work I proposed in my first contribution to this discussion. But those outlines are rationally based on our general program and approach to this radicalization and the demands raised by the gay movement and serve as the starting point for the further refinement of our position. The party still has the freedom it always has to evaluate its activities in the light of real experience and real tests of the orientation within the living movement.

August 3, 1972

## A CIVIL LIBERTIES APPROACH TO GAY LIBERATION IS INSUFFICIENT

by Harry Ring, Los Angeles Branch

This article is intended to state my point of view in relation to the gay liberation movement. It is not intended as a "contribution" to the discussion in the sense of offering any significant analysis of the basic issues involved. The impending August 31 discussion deadline and—much more decisive—a very limited knowledge of many of the questions being posed, preclude this.

\* \* \*

If the article by Comrade Barry Sheppard in Bulletin No. 1, June 1972, were to be regarded, so to speak, as introductory remarks initiating the discussion, it could perhaps be accepted as sufficient. If, however, it is intended as the outline of a position to be approved by a coming plenum or convention I think it must be characterized as insufficient.

The article might suffice as the outline of a position if the party should decide on a very limited perspective in relation to the gay liberation movement—i.e., support of civil liberties for homosexuals and participation in the gay liberation movement on a local level around such issues.

But I do not think we can or should limit our perspective in this way.

(In this regard, I think the response to Comrade Sheppard's article by Comrade David Keepnews in Bulletin No. 4, July 1972, makes a number of cogent points about the present scope of the gay movement, the political opportunities effective intervention affords, and why Comrade Sheppard's proposal is insufficient for this.)

I believe that the development of an effective intervention in the gay movement is contingent on an adequate party discussion of the question. Such a discussion is needed to clarify several key questions and to resolve the differences that exist with those in the party who oppose an orientation toward the gay liberation movement.

Comrade Sheppard is, in my opinion, unrealistic in contending that trying to understand the nature of gay oppression we can put aside "all discussion about why homosexual impulses exist, or why a section of the population prefers homosexuality."

It would be utopian and counterproductive to demand that the party acquire a full, rounded grasp of a profoundly complex subject about which there is only an extremely limited body of valid scientific information. I do not think we must answer all the basic questions involved as a precondition for a positive approach.

But there are certain essentials which I am convinced cannot be avoided if we are to intervene effectively in the gay movement.

I don't think that politically conscious gay activists will be particularly impressed by a political position which is limited to support of their civil liberties.

Rather, I believe, we must have a position of support for gay rights within the context of clearly rejecting the

nonmaterialist notion that homosexuality is an illness—an illness induced by class society which will be cured by socialism.

There are many individuals and groups that regard homosexuality as an illness but oppose oppression of gay people in much the same sense that they oppose the oppressive conditions that prevail in mental hospitals as well as the virulent prejudice against the mentally ill.

But the gay liberation movement is predicated on a concept far more basic than the demand for civil liberties. The very essence—and profound significance—of the development of the movement is precisely a rejection of the notion that homosexuality is an illness. Some contend that gay is better, but all are agreed that gay is good. They have emerged from the closet to fight for their liberation because they have finally come to recognize that the terrible oppression they suffer is as unjustified as it is unjust. They have taken a position that every political tendency will be compelled to relate to, one way or the other.

In their fight for civil rights, politically thoughtful gay people will accept the support of all those that offer it, without regard to motivation. But in terms of being politically influenced by those who may support their rights, it's unlikely that they will be seriously impressed by any but those who reject and oppose the notion that they are ill.

Nor do I think it requires major research to rebut the prejudice-laden view that homosexuality is an illness. It is difficult for me to conceive how a materialist can characterize as "unnatural" a phenomena that appears in human-kind and animals; in every known period of human history; in all forms of societies; and flourishes so readily in conditions of sexual segregation such as prisons, armies, schools, etc.

I would not venture to predict what the course or tempo of development of the gay movement will be. I think it is fairly apparent that it is in only a formative stage and that it will advance significantly. I think that already it has demonstrated a social and political import that can only be welcomed by revolutionaries.

Revolutionaries respond positively to any group in society that rebels against the particular oppression visited upon it. And when an absolutely unprecedented challenge is hurled against one of this society's deepest bodies of reactionary prejudice, the progressive connotations should be evident.

I have no prescription as to the extent or nature of our intervention in the gay movement, except perhaps to commit myself as an unqualified supporter of a balanced approach to all questions. Clearly we must utilize the yardstick indicated by Comrade Sheppard—weighing opportunities, available forces, other political priorities, etc. But I don't think this can happen in a meaningful way, even on a branch-by-branch basis, unless we have clarity on the essential political aspects of gay liberation and national direction for the work.

Nor do I think there can be effective intervention, even on a local basis, unless this is adequately reflected in our press and unless we assume the responsibility to begin developing a minimal body of literature on the question.

It would be politically inadequate for *The Militant* to restrict itself to reporting on, and supporting, specific actions around civil liberties issues. Yet, if I read it correctly, that would in fact be the limit if Comrade Sheppard's article were to be, so to speak, the party position.

On the other hand, it would be entirely valid to argue that a more rounded treatment of the question in the press should await resolution of differences within the party. But then we must address ourselves to such differences and not put them aside.

I think we must address ourselves to the viewpoint advanced within the national committee that intervention in the gay movement constitutes a diversion from our main political tasks and which characterizes that movement as a narrow sectarian cause without genuine revolutionary potential. (Let me emphasize that I do not consider Comrade Sheppard's article in any sense supportive of this view.)

Similarly, we need an educational discussion that would equip every comrade to rebut the kind of utterly false argumentation found in Comrade Nat Weinstein's contribution in Bulletin No. 4, July 1972. Frankly, I believe that when a serious comrade can simply dismiss the reality of gay oppression with the quibbling assertion that it is merely "psychological oppression," we have evidence of the fact that antihomosexual prejudice runs so very deep in this society that it even manifests itself within society's most conscious vanguard. (And I can't help but commenting that the New York city official who beat and stomped a gay demonstrator and went unpunished was no doubt waging "psychological warfare.")

About the only thing I could agree with in Comrade Weinstein's article was his concluding generality, albeit my agreement stems from an opposite point of view.

By drawing "all the correct lessons" from the developments relating to the gay liberation movement and our discussion of it, Comrade Weinstein advises, "we can give a new dimension to the understanding of the younger comrades in what a class approach to politics is all about."

Apropos of the arguments advanced by Comrade Weinstein and others that intervention in the gay movement would constitute a diversion from our working-class perspective, I would urge study of Lenin's *What Is To Be Done*, in which he squarely counterposed "Social Democratic politics" to "trade union politics."

In that work Lenin argued vehemently that those who did not relate to all struggles against oppression were not discharging their responsibilities as revolutionists.

Permit me a few quotations:

"Working class consciousness cannot be genuinely political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to all cases of tyranny, oppression, violence and abuse, no matter *what class* is affected."

"Those who concentrate the attention, observation and consciousness of the working class exclusively, or even mainly, upon itself alone, are not Social Democrats . . ."

"The Social Democrat's ideal should not be a trade union secretary but a *tribune of the people* able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it takes place, no matter what stratum or class of people it affects. . . ."

". . . for he who forgets that 'the Communists support every revolutionary movement' . . . is not a Social Democrat. He who forgets his obligation *to be in advance of everybody* in bringing up, sharpening and solving every general democratic question, is not a Social Democrat." (All emphasis in original.)

In political argumentation, it has been observed, there is often a "good" reason and a real one. I don't think the arguments advanced against a positive orientation toward the gay movement are even very "good" ones. And I don't feel I would be going too far afield in speculating that the real reason for such opposition is fear that identification with the gay movement and significant recruitment of gay would impair our image among workers—straight ones, that is.

The problem is not totally illusory even if the fear is exaggerated. But I think the only way we can hope to deal effectively with the problem of antigay prejudice among workers and others is by first divesting ourselves of that same prejudice.

August 30, 1972

## OUR INTERVENTION

by John Lauritsen, Upper West Side  
Branch, New York Local

### Quality Of The Present Discussion

I have been most impressed by the quality of contributions to the present discussion. The articles (chronological order) by Sudie and Geb, David Thorstad, Jon Hillson, David Keepnews, Kendall Green, Steve Beren, and Michael Maggi show what Marxism is all about—comprehension of the living class struggle with a passionate commitment to changing the world.

There are differences among the pro-intervention contributions; for that matter, formulations in my own articles with which I am not now satisfied. But on the whole, especially considering the difficulty of communication, carrying on as we are dialogue through the medium of sporadic and dilatory bulletins, the myriad aspects of gay liberation have been intelligently covered, from difficult areas of consciousness and philosophy to practical aspects of an inter-

vention. No other movement but ours could have produced such a discussion in the space of three short months. The intelligentsia of the world Stalinist movement are still bound to infantile and reactionary banalities on the subject of homosexuality. Our small movement has applied the philosophy of Marxism to an area for which, though there were some socialist precedents (Edward Carpenter, the Bolsheviks, Kurt Hiller), an extensive socialist analysis has never been attempted.

It is correct that this discussion has concentrated heavily on developing historical-materialist theory on sexuality, its repression, and its role in the class-domination scheme of things. Marxism is nothing if it is not the insistence that *theory is an absolutely necessary guide to action*.

Some comrades have expressed the feeling that most of this discussion has been wide of the mark in that it did not focus essentially or even entirely on down to earth, "party building" aspects of an intervention, presumably answering such questions as: "What do we do?" and "What does it have to offer us?" Yes, these questions ought to be answered, and I think that they have been. But to imagine that these "objective" issues should be the only focus of this discussion is the antithesis of Marxism.

If Karl Marx had felt that only what-do-we-do questions were worth addressing himself to, he would never have written *Capital*, *The German Ideology*, *The Paris Manuscripts*, or more than a few hundred words of *The Communist Manifesto*.

Correct theory is crucial to the success of the socialist movement and, as Lenin pointed out, it doesn't even hurt once in a while to dream.

#### *Grasping At Straws*

The arguments thus far presented against a vigorous intervention into gay liberation—that gays are not really oppressed, that no economic factor is involved, that gay liberation is not *per se* revolutionary, not in the center of the struggle for socialism, only a life-style issue, etc.—have in my opinion been amply refuted in this discussion. I recommend that comrades not only read but re-read all the contributions of this most exciting discussion.

So far as I can tell, the last refuge of the anti-interventionists seems to be the question of priorities, with a concern for the allocation of scarce resources. The "allocation of scarce resources" argument has been presented in one form or another by Barry Sheppard ("our own small forces"), Lee Smith ("... the allocation of our resources and energies vis-a-vis the gay liberation movement"), Fred Feldmen ("We must determine where our small forces should be concentrated") and Wesley Weinfeld ("... our allocation of limited resources").

At the same time that I recognize this as a necessary concern for our small movement, I find it highly ironic that the emphasis on the "allocation of scarce resources" is one of the most characteristically bourgeois features of bourgeois economics. Paul Sweezy in his *Theory Of Capitalist Development* presents Professor Lionel Robbins as a typical representative of bourgeois economics, and quotes Robbins' definition of economics: "Economics is the science which studies human behavior as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses." Now, what is bourgeois about Robbins' definition is that it effectively leads away from all interhuman relationships, political and historical, in favor of a reified and classless viewpoint.

In the same way, an undue concentration on the allocation of our own resources may lead us away from appreciating the depth and significance of gay liberation and our revolutionary obligations towards it.

Gay liberation work in our movement deserves sufficient priority that it will not be shunted aside for every leafletting, paste-up, sales or whatever expedition might lay claim to our limited resources.

#### *Intervention As Socialists*

We should intervene nationally in gay liberation—that is, with a national strategy with clear guidelines, national coordination, and appropriate use of our press.

National intervention should not, however, be construed as meaning anything like a WONAAC or SMC single-issue coalition. Helping to build such a coalition would not only be unrealistic but impossible for us at this time because we have not sufficient cadre, we have no roots in the gay liberation movement, and we have been subjected to an extensive slander campaign that we've made no effort to counteract. Helping to build such a coalition may be possible in the future, but not now.

The interventions we can realistically carry out now have been elaborated by a number of comrades. I won't repeat what they have said, but merely wish to emphasize that a part of our intervention should be as people with socialist ideas.

A prominent feature of the gay liberation movement has become numerous national and regional conferences. Typically such conferences hold workshops on a variety of topics, from political perspectives and organizing techniques to the mysticism of gay Christianity or consciousness raising. In addition to other forms of intervention at such conferences—sales, antiwar, campaign, etc.—there will be opportunities for us to present socialist ideas on gay liberation, either by holding our own workshops or intervening aggressively in other workshops. As people with a long view of history, with a philosophy and method of analysis, we have a lot to say on such topics: religion, the Stalinist counterrevolution and the persecution of gays, McGovern and the Democratic Party, the family, etc. Some people will want to hear our full socialist program. Of course many factors influence how we would handle a particular conference, including its format and the qualifications of our available cadre, but when opportunities permit we shouldn't hesitate to come on as Marxists.

Again, the importance of theory should be apparent. We must convince the most advanced people that gay liberation is part of the class struggle, that a working-class victory is necessary for a truly free and human society.

#### *Our Press*

Our press should not be limited to mere news coverage of gay liberation. The *ISR* should publish theoretical articles, and *The Militant* should analyze developments in the gay liberation movement as well as print critical reviews of such books as Arno Karlen's *Sexuality And Homosexuality*. David Thorstad's review was not the one I'd have written (to me the outstanding feature of Karlen's book was its lies and distortions on every topic covered), but I think his review was valid and ought to have been published (see "A Review and a Comment," Vol. 30 No. 5).



Most important, we must get out some pamphlets on gay liberation. Here, the argument of "scarce resources" applies not at all. In a short time we could have out many excellent pamphlets which would make money for Pathfinder and gain a reputation for us as the people with the best ideas.

The following are suggestions for pamphlets:

1) *Gay Is Good: An Anthropological Perspective*. This should present the scientific evidence that homosexual behavior is completely natural in the greater human perspective, drawing upon anthropological, historical, zoological, and statistical evidence. The Marxist viewpoint rejecting moral absolutes and mysticism should be clear.

2) *Religion: Its Role In The Persecution Of Gay People*. Judeo-Christianity as the source of anti-gay prejudice and persecution. The history of Christian atrocities. A general Marxist view of religion could be presented along the lines of Comrade Edwards' pamphlet, *Christianity And Marxism*. I know this pamphlet will sell, as I sold six copies of Edwards' pamphlet at the Rutgers gay liberation conference in about 5 minutes!

3) Kurt Hiller's *Appeal* to the 2nd International Congress For Sexual Reform, Copenhagen 1928, which I translated from German and which was published in the May 1971 *ISR*. This speech has considerable historic interest and is excellent in its own right. Though Hiller didn't know it, it is a polemic against Stalinism. We should provide an introduction for it summarizing generally *The Revolution Betrayed*, linking the crushing of the Left Opposition and the exile of Trotsky with the development of Stalinist anti-gay practices, and clearly distinguishing socialists from the betrayers of socialism.

4) *Homosexual Freedom—From Bolshevism To Stalinism*. This would expand on the section in my contribution (Vol. 30, No. 1). This is an important part of our history as well as that of the homosexual emancipation

movement. Gay liberationists must become aware of it. Most gay people, like most straights, think the Soviet Union represents socialism, which is therefore bad. We must correct this.

5) *Edward Carpenter—Grandfather Of Gay Liberation*. The 19th century socialist, Edward Carpenter, is considered by some to have been the first gay liberationist. His book, *Love's Coming Of Age*, dealt with women's emancipation, Engels' theories on the family, "the intermediate sex," and presented a vision of love in a free society. Just as it was due to be published in 1895, the Oscar Wilde trial caused extreme reaction to set in, and his publisher broke contract. Six publishers refused to touch the book. Carpenter then turned to his own group whose Labour Press published *Love's Coming Of Age*. The first gay liberation book was published by a socialist press. I have a copy of the book published in 1927 by the Vanguard Press in New York. On the inside covers are the slogans: "Solidarity of Labour" and "The Cause of Labour is the Hope of the World." By this time the book had achieved extensive popularity and been translated into many languages. A biographical pamphlet on Carpenter will again establish the link between socialism and gay liberation. His is an interesting life.

6) *The Politics Of Gay Oppression*. This could incorporate aspects of Reich's and Marcuse's work to show how gay oppression supports class rule. Contributions by Jon Hillson, David Thorstad, myself and others have suggested ideas for this pamphlet.

7) *The Gay Heritage*. Covering great men and women who were gay. Just as the Black and women's movements did, we must recover our own history, our own heroes, of which we have much to be proud.

September 1, 1972

## THE GAY LIBERATION MOVEMENT: A NEW AREA OF RADICALIZATION

by Art Gursch, Chicago Branch

### *Introduction*

The past few years have seen a tremendous broadening and deepening of the current radicalization, one unprecedented in American history, as has been shown by the rise of the antiwar movement, women's liberation movement, struggles of national minorities, GI struggles, prisoner rebellions, and other militant struggles.

In the past three years or so, gay people, also have been moving against their oppression, demanding an end to legal and extralegal harassment, demanding to be treated like human beings, and striking at the sex-role stereotypes that capitalist society maintains. In a sense, the gay liberation movement epitomizes the very depth of the current radicalization more than any other movement, in that it strikes against one of the most deeply ingrained prejudices of society, one which is fostered by its basic institutions.

### *Development of the Gay Liberation Movement*

I will go into only a brief general sketch of the movement's development, as more detailed information is available in previous internal reports.

Until the late 1960s, most gay organizations were small, underground, and often based only around social needs. Most were also shortlived, until the establishment of the Mattachine Society and ONE, Inc, in the 1950s.

The Stonewall rebellion of June 28, 1969, in Greenwich Village is generally accepted as having marked the beginning of the present gay liberation movement (even though militant groups on the West Coast predated it by a few months), since this event had the most marked effect on the rapid growth of the movement in the next few months. And grow it did. In the next few months, the movement had spread to communities and campuses throughout the nation.

For the rest of this section, I will focus most of the discussion on the development of the movement in Chicago, with which I'm most familiar and whose general development probably typifies those in many other places.

The Chicago movement got its start in December 1969 at the University of Chicago. In the first four months of 1970, groups had also formed at other campuses and other parts of the city. Actions during this time included several militant rallies and picket lines, including a healthily oriented Gay Pride action. A citywide organization, Chicago Gay Liberation, was formed.

The first few months of the movement marked a generally healthy attitude towards mass actions. The fact that many of the people later went into ultraleftism, counterculturalism, or blatant reformism, is indicative of the frustration that occurs among people who have no understanding of the dynamics of mass movement and who consequently get demoralized when immediate results don't occur.

After Gay Pride Week of 1970, in which only 200 people took part as a result of a split in the planning committee over whether the action should be politically or socially oriented (the politically oriented people winning out and the others dropping out), the movement, hurt by internal disputes, reached a low ebb. Many people, hit by demoralization, either dropped out altogether or spent their time in small group consciousness raising formations or began taking an ultraleftist outlook. During the summer, meetings consisted mainly of vague discussions around sexism and racism, and the group had no kind of structure or unity.

The ultraleft phase of the movement reached its high point in September, 1970, at the Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia at which there was a national gay liberation intervention. Most of the discussion at the gay workshop centered around gay countercultural institutions and the "Gay Ghetto" and ultra-left demands such as the destruction of the nuclear family, destruction of religion, etc., as demands that the gay movement should take up.

At a national gay convention in Minneapolis in October, the discussion was centered entirely around ultraleft rhetoric on "dealing with one's sexism and racism" and "revolutionary love."

In the meantime, many splits were taking place over this approach between the reformists and ultralefts within organizations. Such was the case in Chicago, where the reformist wing of Chicago Gay Liberation (CGL) left and formed the Chicago Gay Alliance (CGA), which, like New York's GAA, was to deal only with explicitly gay issues.

After the split, CGL degenerated into a small, ultraleft grouplet and finally fizzled out altogether. Some of these people found a haven in small collectives and consciousness-raising groups, attempting to substitute consciousness raising and changing individual attitudes for mass action.

This is not to refute the concept of consciousness raising as an important and necessary part of the movement when taken in the proper perspective. Consciousness raising can be valuable to the extent that it helps people with their individual problems in accepting themselves and in getting an insight on how society is responsible for their oppression. But, in fact, it has *counterposed* changing individual attitudes to changing society as the key to liberation. An intervention by the SWP could do much to win over many gay activists to the road of mass action.

Since early 1971 the main trend of the movement nationally has been blatantly reformist, as typified by Gay Alliance type groups. Its main thrust has been to work for reforms by seeking to reform capitalist politicians, the capitalist parties, and the church (as in setting up gay churches). There has been a general distrust of mass actions built independently as an effective way to gain victories.

Since last February there has been a national focus among gay groups towards the coming elections. At that time a national conference built in semi-secrecy and with about 100 people attending, was held to decide on strategy for the 1972 elections. An umbrella group called the National Coalition of Gay Organizations was formed to coordinate strategy for the conventions. This included getting delegates elected to the Democratic convention, lobbying various politicians, pressuring McGovern and others to take a favorable stand on gay rights, and initiating demonstrations at both conventions. Hopefully, the events at the Democratic convention disillusioned many of the participants toward the capitalist parties, but it is doubtful that the NCGO will continue as a national coalition around which national actions can be based after the elections.

In Chicago, the last two Gay Pride parades, drawing 1,200 in 1971 and 900 in 1972, were not built as mass actions around gay demands, but purely as celebrations with floats, balloons, etc.

Thus, in general, at the present time, the gay movement is reformist led, with the ultraleft and counterculturalist elements pretty well isolated and not very visible.

#### *Gay Nationalism*

This is a tendency which, about a year and a half ago, made considerable headway on the West Coast, but which has since decreased in importance. However, many gay activists have illusions about the desirability and correctness of this concept, and we will have to deal with it in our analysis of gay oppression.

Gay nationalism is an ultra-segregationist attitude which presupposes that homosexuals and heterosexuals fall into two completely distinct categories, with homosexuals being similar to the oppressed national minorities. Much of the rhetoric of the gay nationalists rests on the idea of the *gay community*, both as it exists now and as a future ideal.

Gay communities (in the same sense as Black or Latin ghettos) do not exist. The pretense that they do is based on a false analogy with Black ghettos, in which the great majority of Black people live and which exist in all large and medium-sized cities. So-called gay communities are simply areas, which exist only in the largest cities, where there is a larger proportion of gays than in other areas. Even in these areas, gays are not in a majority. In fact, the great majority of gays do not in any way relate to these "communities." And these "communities" as they exist apply only to gay men.

Gay nationalists also refer to the establishment of gay communities as a future ideal. This attitude bases as its ideal the life-style based on the *stereotype* of the oppressor. This stereotype, and the resulting oppression, causes people to be forced into exclusive homosexual and heterosexual categories, with stereotyped traits being assigned on these bases. The fact is, as Kinsey's studies indicate, that most people fall *in between* these two extremes on a sexual con-

tinuum. This ideal carries forward this oppression to extremes by making someone define his or her particular role entirely in terms of sexual behavior during one period of life. I'd rather see the time when these terms can be abolished and people in all degrees of gayness can relate as people.

In practice, gay nationalism has led to a number of schemes to set up gay "paradises," utopian communities where gays could find refuge from the alienation and oppression of capitalist society. The most notable of these attempts occurred in 1970 when people in the Los Angeles GLF initiated a plan to take over Alpine County, a remote area in eastern California with about 300 registered voters. The plan was to move enough gays in to constitute a majority and take over all elected offices. The plan fell apart as a result of the resulting hostility among the residents of Alpine County, as well as an increasing lessening of interest in the project. Similar schemes have existed on a smaller scale, but none has gotten anywhere.

#### *Attitude of the Stalinists Toward Homosexuality*

Gay liberation has not even begun to be achieved in any of the workers states, including Cuba; indeed, homosexuality is met with extreme hostility by the Stalinists. The basis of this hostility lies in the fact that the Stalinists do not hold a Leninist attitude towards the family. They even consider it progressive, or at any rate, reformable (See "Political Economy of Male Chauvinism" in *Progressive Labor* magazine, February 1971 issue). Thus, even though capitalism has been abolished in these states, there is no basis under Stalinist rule for ending the bourgeois norms of sex-role stereotyping. As most comrades know, after the Bolshevik revolution all laws regulating private sexual behavior were abolished. After the rise of Stalinism these laws were again instituted, and they exist to this day in the Soviet Union.

The "theory" advanced by the Stalinists is that homosexuality is a sickness of decadent bourgeois society and will disappear under socialism. This attitude was put forth on page 8 of the February 1971 issue of *Progressive Labor* magazine:

"... Black Panther leader Huey Newton announced a united front with the Gay Liberation Front. He indicated homosexuals are oppressed by the system and therefore 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 anti-imperialist 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 caused by capitalism; but capitalism cannot be crushed by those who [sic] 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."

#### *Cuba*

A number of comrades have discussed the Cuban policies regarding gay people handed down at the 1971 Congress on Education and Culture. Comrades should realize, how-

ever, that these policies are nothing that happened just recently, but rather have been typical of the policies of the Cuban leadership towards this question ever since it assumed power. The following information I received from an acquaintance who went to Cuba as a gay member of the Venceremos Brigade.

After the revolution occurred, the regime rounded up open homosexuals and put them into rehabilitation camps. The feeling was that homosexuality is associated with capitalism, and under socialism gays would be "cured." They made the mistake of rounding up too many well-known people, such as poets, and it didn't go unnoticed. Various humanist groups in Western Europe protested, and this became embarrassing to Castro, who had the more prominent people released. But this general policy is still maintained. The feeling is that homosexuality is a disease, a product of capitalist degeneracy, and the perspective is to wipe out this blight from Cuba.

If a boy even exhibits homosexual tendencies, he is considered anti-social, and is put in anti-social youth detachments for rehabilitation.

Gay people often can't get jobs, so the regime twists around the cause and effect and says that gay people are lazy and don't want to work. Gays are barred from many occupations, such as teaching (since they would be a bad influence on the children) and medicine (gay male doctors might seduce male patients), they are barred from the Communist Party and the Young Communist League (they would discredit the image of the party), and they are barred from the leadership of all youth organizations.

The excuse that the government has given for this perspective is that prior to 1959 there were many male hustlers in Cuba. Of course they don't mention female prostitutes.

I have been unable to obtain specific information about the status of lesbians, as if they do not exist in Cuba.

#### *Is Gay Liberation Revolutionary?*

The question of whether the SWP should undertake regular fraction work within the gay liberation movement hinges on the party's evaluation of the relation of the movement to the socialist revolution. A number of comrades seem to feel that the demands of the gay liberation movement, while desirable on humanitarian or democratic grounds, have no real significance for the socialist revolution. It is this view that I wish to criticize here.

It is already a fundamental principle of the party that the family system is an essential prop of a capitalist society and that social movements against the injustices that result from the family have an objectively anticapitalist character. The reasons for this include the role of the family in maintaining a competitive egoistic orientation, providing for the hereditary transmission of property, and insuring an authoritarian, patriarchal method of socialization. These considerations, which I do not feel need to be dwelt on at length here, have caused the party to view the women's liberation movement as objectively anticapitalist and as having transitional implications. The question of the significance of the gay movement for the transition to socialism thus turns entirely on the relation of the gay movement to the struggle against the oppression of women and to the family system. Empirically, it seems as if gay liberation, by challenging the traditional sex roles, serves to undermine the patriarchal family. Thus,

a definite alliance has emerged between the gay movement and the women's movement.

There may be those, however, who will argue that the liberation of gays will not in fact have any serious implications for the family. Such persons will point out that many male homosexuals are strong male chauvinists who even use this attitude to justify their homosexuality, that homosexuality was highly valued in ancient Greece, a slave society, and that homosexuals are a small minority of the population whose liberation could not possibly have much effect on the larger society.

To deal with the last point first; the best evidence seems to indicate that most people are either bisexual or have the potentiality of engaging in bisexual behavior. Masters and Johnson argue that sexual orientation is not inherited genetically. Furthermore, the August 15 *Advocate* revealed a reputable study, admittedly restricted to males, which reported that 52 percent of the sample had either engaged in homosexual acts or had homosexual fantasies. This does not show that homosexuality is common and therefore innocuous, since every effort is made by society either to suppress it altogether or to keep it underground. It does show, however, that an end to all discrimination against homosexuals would result in a considerable amount of open bisexual behavior. Such a development could only sharply increase the centrifugal forces operating on the family both by increasing the quantity and complexity of sexual roles available and by making it more difficult to narrow down one's sexual interest to a single individual who is to be "possessed."

Those who cite the case of ancient Greece and some present-day male homosexuals to show that gay liberation is not incompatible with the patriarchal family and its sex roles, ignore both the fact that modern society as a whole regards homosexuality as an inversion of sexual roles, assuming that the female homosexual is "masculine" and the male homosexual is "effeminate" in some way, and the enormous changes that have taken place in the family structure since the fall of the Roman Empire, changes which include the full development of the modern "romantic" ideal of romantic love.

This romantic ideal reflects a simple fact: the reconstruction of the relationship between husband and wife on the model of the master-serf rather than the master-slave relation. As long as women were regarded as having no rights, what they did sexually with each other mattered little, provided the proprietary claim of their male master was enforced against other males. By the same token, the woman had little proprietary claim over the man and male homosexuality was not inhibited. Indeed, for the male, *only* another male could be the object of true erotic love. The pattern of male homosexuality was generally that of a relationship between an older man and a boy who was expected to learn the secrets of "manhood" from the older partner.

Today, this situation has fundamentally changed. In spite of the double standard commonly practiced, women have *some* proprietary claim over their male partners. No proprietary claims can be equal, since of one party did not have a predominance of power, there would be no means of enforcement. Nevertheless, women have some socially recognized claim today on the fidelity of their husbands. Thus, husbands are expected to manifest love for their wives and to be at least somewhat loyal to them as part of the possessive bond of marriage, which is the basis of the male's dominant position. This rules out

male homosexuality. At the same time, to the extent that the woman is regarded as an object of affection, she is expected to return this affection in kind, or else the ideological supports for the marriage bond are exploded. Especially as the marriage relation became more consensual, it became more necessary for the husband to obtain the "love" of his wife in order to secure the bond which he found to his advantage. These facts worked against the acceptance of female as well as male homosexuality.

It is for these reasons that a part of the concept of masculinity and femininity in our society have come to include attraction to the opposite sex and who homosexuals, whether they desire the role or not, are socially defined as inverts and identified with the opposite sex. The male homosexual is a threat to the social structure and to the family because he is, whether knowingly or not, identifying himself with the subordinate sex and disrupting the values on which the system of male domination is based. The female homosexual is, whether she knows it or not, threatening to assert prerogatives which belong to the male in society. The suppression of homosexuality is thus based on a specific phase of the development of the family, one in which women have limited rights within a context of a male-dominated family structure.

No homosexual can expect to obtain liberation by a rollback in the status of women to the situation which existed in ancient civilizations. Not even the most barbaric movement of modern times, not least of all in the area of male-female relationships, modern Nazism, could entirely erase the gains women have made since ancient times, for the reason that those gains are rooted in the character of the modern capitalist system itself. In order to enforce their plans for the further subordination of women, the Nazis were forced to carry out a ruthless suppression of homosexuality and to reinforce the romantic ideal.

The only means by which gay people can achieve liberation is on the road of advance, of the full and complete liberation of the woman, culminating in the abolition of the family, which is the source today of all the oppression of the homosexual. Gay liberation, in order to accomplish these tasks, must move around demands that strike against the sex-role stereotypes that the ruling class instills on everyone, through its institutions, as a means to carry out its suppression of women and gays. Gays must move in an anticapitalist direction, move towards socialist ideas, and gravitate toward the revolutionary party.

If this be the case, then it is evident that it is the duty of the Socialist Workers Party not merely to support the democratic rights of gays, but also to intervene in the gay movement with a national orientation, to project our strategic line, to participate in organizing mass actions, to strive for hegemony within the movement, and to totally and thoroughly refute all notions that gayness is any sort of illness or unnatural behavior.

#### *Party Intervention Up To Now*

So far our intervention has been of an extremely limited and indirect sort and has consisted of basically four aspects: the probe; working with the Gay Task Forces in SMC, NPAC, and WONAAC; defense campaigns; and propagandizing for gay rights within the context of the campaign.

1. *The probe.* As comrades know, this was initiated as an information-gathering task and lasted until the 1971 convention. Comrades assigned to the probe took a limited part in gay organizations and coalitions including the 1971 gay pride committees.

2. *Gay Task Forces.* This has been of extreme importance in initiating our involvement with the gay movement, especially after the probe ended, so that we couldn't be accused of completely pulling back. It has been of great importance in building antiwar, and to a lesser extent, abortion actions, as well as helping build the gay liberation movement.

3. *Defense campaigns.* As part of our general defense work, we have taken part in building defense campaigns for victimized gays, such as that of Mike McConnell in Minneapolis, which is reported on in the November 26, 1971, issue of the *Young Socialist Organizer*.

4. *The campaign.* Many of our candidates have from time to time spoken to gay organizations, have brought up the question of gay rights in general campaign speeches, and have issued statements in support of gay rights. We have also intervened with our campaign and press in various gay actions.

#### *What Course Should the Party Take?*

In my opinion, the basis exists for a nationally oriented fractional intervention into the gay liberation movement. Comrades should, of course, not take the mechanical view that we have to have a fully developed Marxist analysis of sexual oppression in order to intervene, although theory in this area is something that should be developed. Rather, as with other movements, we will constantly be gaining more information as we intervene, and the development of our strategy and tactics will develop with our intervention.

There are three basic possibilities for intervention, in addition to our already existing work in the Gay Task Forces and campaign propaganda:

1. Participating in united front coalitions for the purpose of building specific actions. While there is, at present, no national coalition in which we could intervene, there have been plenty of opportunities on the local level around issues that have received much discussion among groups, such as victimization, job discrimination, etc. And we should keep a sharp lookout for moves towards nationally coordinated actions around specific demands and discuss these possibilities with leading gay activists. As I mentioned earlier, there is already a National Coalition of Gay Organizations, which was formed to coordinate election activities. While this coalition will probably fold up, there is a good chance, in my opinion, for motion directed towards nationally coordinated mass actions after the elections are over. Our orientation towards building such coalitions should, of course, be the same as for the coalitions we build in other movements—nonexclusionary, all gay, and single issue oriented, geared to attract the broadest possible participation. The precise demands, of course, will depend on the specific situation and what can mobilize the greatest number of people at a particular time.

2. Participating in and building existing gay groups which are centered around gay issues and which practice nonexclusion, and raising our mass action perspective. Until we have a chance to intervene in a national coalition, this should be the main initial focus of our inter-

vention. Many of these groups have healthy, activist-minded elements. And through such intervention, we could raise the need for a national, mass-action campaign.

3. Where possible, intervening in campus groups. While many of these groups are basically socially oriented, many could be led to build specific struggles. An important role for many of these groups is educational, holding rallies, forums, teach-ins, etc. We should be encouraging this, as well as getting these groups involved in broader coalition work and in the Gay Task Forces.

In our campaign and press, we should increase our propaganda and agitation on the issue of gay liberation. Articles should be run on the nature of gay oppression. A campaign brochure on gay liberation, similar to the ones put out on other movements, would be desirable.

I want to stress that I am in favor of a *national* orientation and intervention into the gay movement. By this, I mean one in which we will have adopted a resolution on a national scale, one which would include an initial assessment of the nature of gay oppression and the dynamics of the movement; and in which the intervention is coordinated nationally. It does *not* necessarily mean focusing on a national coalition, if none exists (just as none exists in the Black movement in which we can intervene; yet we certainly have a national orientation towards the Black movement). This is a point Barry Sheppard does not make clear. I fear, however, that to accept his orientation would mean doing little, if any, more than we are doing already.

#### *Barriers to Recruitment and Intervention*

One barrier that we will be facing is the sizable anti-mass-action current that exists, whether this takes the form of ultraleftism, counterculturalism, or reformism. We must launch a strong drive to explain the significance of mass action.

There is also an extreme distrust of socialism and so-called "straight movement groups" among many gay activists. This distrust of socialism is the natural reaction to the treatment that has been accorded to gays in the workers' states. As revolutionary socialists, we must explain that although socialism provides the only material basis for the liberation of gays, it is not going to be dragged in by its coattails, but rather that the struggle will continue *after* the revolution, just as it must be begun *before* the revolution. We must also explain that what exists in the workers states is Stalinism, not socialism. The distrust of "straight movement groups" stems from the fact that most radical groups in the past (and some in the present) have taken hostile attitudes toward gay people. Some gays are apt to feel that we only want to "use" them for opportunist reasons. Only the nature of our participation can cut across this view.

Needless to say, the party's past mistakes regarding gay people could be a barrier to our activities and recruitment in the gay movement. We still hear about our erstwhile policy of excluding gay people from our movement. While, in almost every case, this is brought up in order to provide a cover for basic political disagreements and to provide for veiled red-baiting, it is going to leave an adverse impression on many people who do not understand our movement. When this occurs, we should face it head on, explain that that reflected the backwardness that even revolutionaries are not immune to, that it was wrong, but that it is no longer a relevant issue.

As long as I'm on this issue, I would like to say a few words about the party's attitude toward the membership of transvestites. I am not aware that there is a formal policy banning the membership of transvestites, as Sudie and Geb indicated there was, but I cannot overemphasize the disastrous effects on the party that would result if there is such a policy and it becomes known in the gay movement, even if we only had a limited intervention. Essentially, it would be the same story over again. Hopefully, the party has learned something from its past mistake. Those who are image conscious should consider just *what* image would result. I won't dwell over the arguments, as Sudie and Geb have already done an excellent job in discussing this issue. Just that gay transvestites have taken important roles in the movement, and it would be ridiculous to intervene with such a policy. Transvestites, like anyone else, should be considered on an individual basis for membership.

An advantage that we have going for us is that few of our opponent tendencies have made any intervention in the gay movement. International Socialists has done a little intervening, but they are currently split on the issue. YAWF will occasionally intervene in an action, but their intervention has been very limited and, of course, sectarian. Our other opponents have not intervened and have no immediate perspective for doing so. Some, of course, are very hostile towards gay people. Thus, we would have virtually no competition by our opponent working-class tendencies.

In conclusion, the healthiest of the gay activists will come to realize that only through being a revolutionary socialist and joining the YSA and the SWP can they most effectively bring about their own liberation and the liberation of all oppressed people.

August 30, 1972

## WOMEN AND GAY LIBERATION

by Sudie and Geb, Boston Branch

(Male): *"Who's gonna shoe your pretty little foot?  
Who's gonna glove your hand?  
Who's gonna kiss your ruby red lips?  
Who's gonna be your man?"*  
(Female): *"Papa's gonna shoe my pretty little foot.  
Mama's gonna glove my hand,  
Sister's gonna kiss my ruby red lips,  
And I don't need no man!"*

— as popularized by Woody Guthrie

There is one special significance that the gay liberation movement has for women, which is relatively obvious. It can be stated very briefly: it is the sexism of bourgeois society which oppresses both women and gays. Sexism can be defined as the system which evaluates and stereotypes individuals according to their sex; humanism, on the other hand, treats people as human beings first and foremost.

Just as racism historically has been used to justify the rule of whites over Blacks, sexism has been used to justify the rule of men over women. The gay liberation movement is a struggle directly against sexist ideology and concrete institutions of sexism. As such, it is a direct ally of the women's liberation movement. Both movements have tended to be conscious of this interrelationship.

We must also remember that antigay prejudice and gay-baiting are an important device in the direct oppression of women, even those women who don't consider themselves gay. The women's liberation movement has been lesbian-baited since its very beginning—and this is just the current form of something that's been going on a long time.

Any woman who has ambitions which go beyond the role of housewife faces accusations of lesbianism; antigay

prejudice pressures her into accepting her supposedly "natural" role.

Any woman who complains about how men treat women, any woman who hates her oppressors is accused of being a man-hater. The implication (which is often stated explicitly) is that she's "queer," that she hates men and loves women, whereas society expects her to love men and hate women.

There is no way under the sun that the feminist movement can thrive, and that the inferior status of women can be challenged, unless antigay prejudice and the general oppression of gays are simultaneously challenged.

In this connection we might take a look at Comrade Weinstein's contribution in Discussion Bulletin No. 4 in the present series. Nat doesn't think that gay liberation has much to do with women's liberation. In his argument, he suggests the struggle for "sexual freedom" might be the missing link. He understands that sexual freedom must be stressed by the gay liberation movement, but he thinks the women's liberation movement should generally steer clear of it. He thinks sexual freedom is pretty irrelevant to working class women, who, he says, typically don't "have the time or energy to expend in the pursuit of a full and free sex life."

This is exactly, down to the very last detail, the same reasoning that we see among most of our opponents, and that we saw among critics of the party position at the last convention. Only they draw a more logical conclusion. They oppose the movement for legalized abortions which the party favors; instead, they prefer movements for free abortion on demand, equal pay for equal work, etc.

A couple of years ago, it wasn't very obvious which demand the women's liberation movement would center



around in the present period; would it be for child-care? The ERA? No, the demand which came to dominate the movement was the demand for legalizing abortion!

All the other demands (even free abortion on demand) were much more directly *economic*. In a certain, oversimplified sense, they were more working class. But they were less *feminist*. Nat doesn't understand what the demand for repeal of all anti-abortion laws is all about. We will spell it out for him. It's spelled S-E-X-U-A-L F-R-E-E-D-O-M.

Why do the reactionaries want to deny women access to legal abortions? Is it really because they think the soul enters the fetus when the sperm enters the egg? No, because these same reactionaries also oppose easy access to contraceptives (which prevent the soul from ever landing in the first place). Actually, they are quite open about their real motives, they state them frankly. They don't want women to be able to have sex without having children! That is, they don't want women to have *sexual freedom!*

We must also point out that lack of sexual freedom is *more* intolerable to working-class women; Nat has his classes mixed up. Even before New York legalized abortion, rich women could fly to Sweden, or pay five hundred or a thousand dollars for a high-quality illegal job in the U. S. Likewise, lots of other rights, no matter how emphatically they are denied to the masses, can be bought if you have enough money to pay for them.

Rich folks don't have to worry about losing their jobs or being evicted by their landlords. They can commonly bribe the judge. In the event that they are hit by "black-mail," it might hurt their feelings but they can afford to pay. Like every other form of oppression, sexual oppression hits poor folks with extra severe force; they can't buy their way out, even a little.

This applies to gay oppression just as it does to any other type of sexual oppression.

Because of their sexual oppression, most women also suffer additional economic oppression (beyond what their brothers suffer). Likewise, because of their sexual oppression, most gay people also suffer additional economic oppression (beyond what their "straight" cousins suffer); Kendall gives us a nice little presentation on this subject, titled "Gay Economic Exploitation"—it can be found right next to Nat's article, where it belongs.

There are many sides to sexism, sexual oppression, and sexual freedom. Some of them are especially associated with women, some with gays and gayness, some with young folks, etc. Every type of struggle against sexism and sexual oppression, in favor of sexual freedom, is very directly linked to every other type; each one reinforces the power of the other in a very direct way.

#### *Is Gayness Mainly a Male Thing?*

When Queen Victoria was asked to explain why she outlawed gay male love but not gay female love, her answer was that there is no such thing as female homosexuality.

Few people are that far out of contact with reality nowadays. But that myth is still far from being eliminated. It is still generally believed, consciously or unconsciously, that males have stronger erotic drives than females. As a result, it is still generally believed that gayness is more widespread among males than females. The belief that females have weaker erotic drives is ultimately based in

the belief that females *should* have weaker erotic drives.

The myth of weaker female erotic drives has been reinforced by even the most objective of scientists, such as Kinsey and Churchill; the same holds true for the myth that homosexual tendencies in the U. S. today are greater in males than in females, and even that this inequality is rooted in our biology.

The Kinsey study (which, as a whole, stands as one of the outstanding scientific works of our times) established that 50 percent of white U. S. males have a conscious history of at least some homosexual tendencies; but Kinsey found that the same applied to only 28 percent of white U. S. females. We will also note that three-fourths of those males had acted upon their impulses to the point of having an orgasm; by comparison, fewer than half of those females had acted on their homosexual impulses to the point of orgasm.

Anthropologists have presented us with a similar picture about other cultures. This, however, is something we can immediately be suspicious of. In every society we know of, there are things which women will say to other women which they generally won't say to men. Since anthropologists are usually male, they usually have a much harder time getting information from or about females; even the males who freely give them information may simply just not know what's happening. Further, anthropologists are notorious for finding whatever they expect to find, and being blind to whatever they can't understand.

Zoologists who have reported large-scale homosexual activity among humanity's near relatives and among mammals in general have also generally reported much more homosexual activity among males than among females. But this seems to be the result of an arbitrary definition of what constitutes "sexuality." Generally, only "mounting" along the lines of the reproductive act is counted as being truly "sexual." But what matters is not what a human scientist counts as erotic activity among monkeys; what matters is what the monkeys themselves count as erotic activity. And this is just not quite so obvious.

Well, even if we can't trust the anthropologists or the zoologists, we can at least trust Kinsey, right? Wrong!

It must be remembered that the double standard in our society puts women under incomparably greater pressure to deny having erotic impulses, especially when they are not directed toward their legal husband in the traditional way. In addition to causing women to conceal what they are thinking (even during an anonymous survey), it also causes them to find reasons to consider their taboo erotic impulses as being "not really sexual."

First, on concealing what they are thinking: let's consider a finding of L. M. Terman in *Psychological Factors in Marital Happiness* (McGraw-Hill 1938), as cited by Beach and Ford in *Patterns of Sexual Behavior*.

Terman asked 760 U. S. husbands and 777 U. S. wives whether they had had intercourse prior to marriage, with the person they eventually married. Now for every husband that made love with his wife before they were married, there must be a wife who made love with her husband before they were married, right? So the percentages have to be about equal, right? Well, it turns out that about 50 percent of the husbands made love with their wives before their wedding, while only about 13 percent of the wives made love with their husbands before their wedding!

How do we explain this? Possibly some of the women were asleep at the time and their future husbands never told them what they had done. It would be a little more plausible to suggest that women and men in such situations tend to have different definitions of "intercourse," women using a definition which preserves their "virtue" and men using a definition which boosts their egos. Possibly many of the men invented the story of their premarital liaison, out of embarrassment that it hadn't actually happened.

But the most obvious explanation is that, even in the context of an anonymous survey, the pressures of the double standard forced women to forget or pretend to forget their violations of bourgeois taboo. We might mention that the percent of women who admitted to premarital intercourse with their husbands is exactly the same as the percent of women who admitted to Kinsey that they had had a homosexual experience which included an orgasm!

Let's consider some other ways in which women are not given the credit they deserve as being creatures with erotic drives and potentials. It is nearly universally accepted without question in our society that rape is something only men are capable of; this myth is thought to be a *biological* fact. But the conservative anthropologist Malinowski tells us of a preclass society in which rape is a very real danger. Only it is the women who rape the men! And Malinowski did not notice any biological differences that might have been involved.

It is also nearly universally accepted among scientists in our society that exhibitionism is an exclusively male phenomenon. But this claim depends entirely on the most arbitrary of definitions. If exhibitionism is defined as taking erotic pleasure in being visually provocative and revealing, then it is very clear that in the U.S. today exhibitionism is much more widespread among females than among males. It is mainly females that wear the hot-pants and the miniskirts, the very tight slacks, the low-cut tops, etc., not to mention the more artificial visual stimuli. It is mainly females that become professional exhibitionists—the topless waitresses, the exotic dancers, the nude models for "artists" as well as for "pornographers." And they typically report that their activity gives them erotic stimulation, even erotic pleasure. While this difference between the sexes is obviously social and *not* biological, still it is clear that exhibitionism is hardly a male thing. But the only exhibitionism that matters to the "scientists" is the type that is considered "abnormal," for which there are presently no socially accepted outlets. And so the "scientists" conclude that exhibitionism is an exclusively male phenomenon!

We can see in many different ways that "science" concludes that females have weaker erotic drives, on the basis just of arbitrary definitions of erotic activity where typically female erotic activity just isn't counted!

Perhaps the most remarkable example is the refusal of "science" to admit that the breast is an erotic organ. How much evidence could we have? All studies have agreed that most married couples take part in various forms of breast-play, as part of their erotic activity. Most erotic photos of women in our society concentrate much attention on their breasts. Most provocative female cloth-calls attention to the breasts. Most women can get strong erotic stimulation from breast-play, and many can come to orgasm just from stimulation of the nipples, whether

from adult partners or from nursing infants! (See the works of Masters and Johnson.)

It must be recognized that the welfare of the infant is only one of the motives encouraging female mammals to nurse their young; erotic pleasure is also a basic factor. It stands to reason that the erotic factor would be relatively even more important among the nonhuman mammals. Female monkeys probably get as much erotic pleasure from nursing their young (including the female young) as human females do, and they probably as infants got as much erotic pleasure out of nursing at their mothers' breasts as human infants presumably get. And yet the zoologists have the nerve to tell us that female homosexual impulses appear to be extremely rare among nonhuman species, and the sociologists have the nerve to tell us that female homosexual impulses are pretty uncommon even among humans! If you twist your definitions far enough, you can prove almost anything.

The evidence is overwhelming that female mammals, including female humans, are biologically bisexual, and that only the most intense of brainwashing can conceal this—unless someone can show that there is a qualitative difference between female and male mouths and fingers, as applied to the breast.

But what about conscious erotic impulses between females in our society, not counting female infants nursing at the breast?

Let's consider a finding of Landis, Landis, Boles, and company, in *Sex and Development* (Hoeber, 1940), also cited by Beach and Ford. They were studying "homoeeroticism"—"the tendency for persons of one sex to have strong libidinal attachment to members of their own sex." The most common form they found was in the twelve-to-fifteen-year-old age group, where females had "crushes" on other females, "crushes" which were quite distinct from plain friendships in that a strong sensual factor was clearly present. Out of 295 women studied, 273 (93 percent) remembered having such experiences!

How is it that the Landis team found such a high percentage of history of homosexual impulses among females, while the Kinsey team found a much lower percentage? It seems safe to conclude that this is because the Landis team did not require that the women explicitly acknowledge that these impulses were "homosexual"; women have been forced to find terminology which camouflages the taboo violation, to describe their homosexual impulses and activity.

When "scientists" go to great lengths to ignore erotic impulses in females, they are consciously or unconsciously trying to do females what they consider a favor. What a disgrace it would seem to them to have it shown that females are so easily erotically stimulated, and that even holy motherhood is "tainted" with "animal" urges! But they are actually doing women a terrible disservice, by concealing the truth, by reinforcing the notion that female erotic desires are unusual and bad. Women have every reason to be proud of the power and flexibility of their erotic potentials; they don't need anyone to cover up anything for them.

#### *Lesbianism, Heterosexuality and Poor Substitutes*

One insult that gay women frequently run into when their sexual orientation is revealed to "straight" people is the comment: "But you're so attractive, you could get any man you want, you don't need women!" The notion that



is being revealed is the idea that lesbianism is something which women turn to if their looks (or possibly their personalities) are too unattractive for them to be able to get a man.

The notion that lesbianism is a substitute for men can be seen in the nearly universal myth in our society that lesbians make love by using a "dildo," an artificial penis-substitute which is attached to one woman who then imitates the role of the male in the reproductive act. The idea is that woman don't have anything which fits into the vagina as well as the penis does.

Let's consider a finding of G. W. Henry in *Sex Variants* (Hoeber, 1941), again as cited in Beach and Ford. Henry interviewed 34 actively gay women. Hugging and kissing were nearly universal among them. Stimulation of the clitoris by the lips or tongue of the partner was practiced by 91 percent of the couples. Mutual masturbation of the clitoris by the hand was practiced by 41 percent. Breast-play occurred in 24 percent. Self-masturbation was common in 15 percent. Only 3 percent (one out of 34) of the couples used either the finger or any other penis-substitute inside the vagina! This reality is something we are sure all gay female comrades will verify.

This myth is part of the overall myth of female dependencies on the male. From the biological point of view, the evidence is that females can do everything just as well with females as they can with males, except make babies. But in the context of a sexist society, the evidence is that females can do *much better* with other females.

Among 40 gay women studied by Henry, most of them were bisexual, finding pleasure in love-making with either sex. But again, a majority *preferred* relations with women. Of 34 who gave information on the subject, 31 (90 percent) considered their erotic reactions with other women "satisfactory." Ninety-five percent of the 40 regularly reached orgasm during love-making with other women. The figures of 90 percent and 95 percent are incomparably greater than the comparable figures for women in general in relations with men.

There are many possible explanations for this. But we should be very conscious of the lessons of the studies by Masters and Johnson. In our society, most heterosexual couples are ignorant of the physical construction and needs of the human female. The vagina itself is relatively inert and internal stimulation of it at best gives a woman indirect stimulation of the clitoris, which is the center of female erotic response. Most "straight" men are ignorant and apathetic about the construction and needs of the female; gay women, on the other hand, are far more aware of each others wants and needs. As a result, relations with men are inadequate for the great majority of women in our society, and a very large minority of women get no satisfaction at all from men. The inadequacy is in the male, but the females are taught to find the inadequacy in themselves.

Of course, purely erotic stimulation is only one aspect of love. All authors seem to agree that females in our society have a much more complete conception of love than males. As a result, gay female couples tend to have much fuller love-affairs than gay male couples, or "straight" couples, for that matter. This is a result of the strong tendency among U. S. males to be insensitive to anything but their own individual erotic stimulation.

The percentage of modern U. S. heterosexual love-affairs and marriages, which are founded on a healthy,

developed and lasting love, is pretty small. For most women in our society, relations with men are a source of very little satisfaction and lots of frustration and demoralization. The homosexuality taboo, with the various concrete measures of enforcement, plays a vital role in forcing women into the family, into a situation which utterly oppresses them.

Lesbians in our society are not liberated women; no one who is forced to live in our society can be liberated in any full sense. But the oppression of women in the bourgeois family and in bourgeois society as a whole is so severe that very few women can afford to pass up a chance to strengthen themselves with the love of another woman, and instead to exhaust themselves tending to the petty needs of the average man of bourgeois society.

Martha Shelley has said that "I have met many, many feminists who were not lesbians—but I have never met a lesbian who was not a feminist." And there is much truth to this, regardless of who said it.

We should take very seriously the strong tendency of gay women to be feminists, and also the large-scale phenomenon of "straight" women becoming involved in the women's liberation movement and then later coming out as gays. Gayness is not an incidental matter of taste, but something with such basic implications in our society that it can change a person's whole life.

Our society teaches women that they need men; but in reality they need men like they need a hole in the head, as the saying goes. Women need men as political allies, though they need other women even more. Women can benefit from nonpolitical relations with men, but they can benefit much more with other women. In our society it is not lesbianism that is a poor substitute for relations with men, but rather the other way around.

#### *Summary:*

It would be a mistake for us to make any one attitude toward lesbianism a precondition for becoming involved in the feminist movement or in the Trotskyist movement. Likewise, it would be a mistake for anyone to pressure women into trying gay love; women have been under too much pressure for too long. Also, something which might be a good idea in the abstract might not necessarily relate to any particular individual at any given time.

It is not the task of the party to help individuals to find better love-lives, just as it is not the task of the party to help individuals find healthier diets. Both of those tasks require a socialist government and its resources, and can hardly be dealt with by a party such as ours. But the party should be conscious of the general inadequacies of the food that capitalism provides the masses, and the party should likewise be conscious of the general faults of bourgeois sexual ideology and practice.

The party should understand the general reasons why many women do choose gay love, the ways in which they can benefit from it, and the social reasons for such benefits.

Comrade Weinstein knows that we cannot abolish the family until after the revolution; he concludes from this that no significant progress towards weakening the family can be made before the revolution. If this attitude were correct, the gay liberation movement might be unimportant, but so would the women's liberation movement be. Fortunately, Nat is wrong.

Sexual oppression—sexism—is a single, unified, reac-

tionary force. The oppression of women and the oppression of gays are two sides of it. And the different sides of sexual oppression are not even separate. The general oppression of women also *directly* oppresses gay people, and the general oppression of gays also *directly* oppresses women.

The struggle against sexual oppression cannot operate at full strength if restricted to one side, whatever it might be. Women cannot afford to ignore any possible allies in their struggle.

We don't dare play Nat's game of Who's-More-Oppressed-Than-Who? We don't dare waste our strength arguing amongst ourselves about who's oppression is severest—

which is a potentially meaningless, academic argument anyway. We need all our strength for uniting in struggle against our common oppression. Every potential ally must be welcomed among us and encouraged to develop their own side of the struggle to the maximum—encouraged, and assisted, with whatever help can be given (and the intervention of the Trotskyist vanguard is the most valuable contribution any liberation movement can receive).

If we may allow Che to inspire our conclusion, let us say: CREATE TWO, THREE, MANY LIBERATION MOVEMENTS!

August 31, 1972

## CLASS STRUGGLE AND GAY LIBERATION

by Derrel Myers, San Francisco Branch

In the course of the discussion on the SWP orientation to gay liberation some serious errors have been made. These errors flow from an attempt to show that the repression of homosexual activity is essential for the maintenance of class society; that this repression is essentially the same as the oppression of women, with common origin and purpose; that repressed homosexuality or "sexual misery" afflicts the vast majority of humans, and is consequently a powerful revolutionary force; and that gay liberation offers an avenue of mass anticapitalist action and education meriting intervention by the SWP.

Support for the democratic rights of victims of capitalist repression is a long-standing tradition of the SWP. We view it as an important part of our struggle against capitalism and we take it very seriously, as our record shows. But never in our history, prior to this discussion, have we assumed that defense requires either adaptation to the victims' views or intervention into their organizations. At least one, if not both, of these assumptions are made by all the proponents of intervention who have so far participated in this discussion.

Because I have neither the time nor the desire to take up all the arguments of all the proponents of intervention, I have limited my comments mainly to the most serious mistakes in the contributions of Comrades David Thorstad and Barry Sheppard. Thorstad because his arguments reflect the most serious errors that are often repeated in this discussion. Sheppard because, although he avoids these errors, he comes to the same conclusion; that the SWP should intervene in gay liberation. Thorstad offers faulty arguments to motivate intervention; Sheppard offers no motivation at all.

### *A Sexual or Materialist View of History?*

"The materialist conception of history starts from the proposition that the production of the means to support human life and, next to production, the exchange of things produced, is the basis of all social structure; that in every society that has appeared in history, the manner in which wealth is distributed and society divided into classes or orders is dependent upon what is produced, how it is

produced, and how the products are exchanged. From this point of view the final causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, not in men's brains, not in men's better insight into eternal truth and justice, but in changes in the modes of production and exchange. They are to be sought not in the *philosophy*, but in the *economics* of each particular epoch." Frederick Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (emphasis in original)

Comrade Thorstad, in his contribution (Vol. 30, No. 2, SWP Discussion Bulletin), in trying to show the relationship between class oppression and sexual repression gets himself into a contradiction. On the one hand he asserts that the repression of homosexual activity was an essential part of the development of class society. On the other hand he informs us of the widespread acceptance and practice of homosexual activity in the slave societies of antiquity. Failing to find the roots of the *repression* of homosexuality in these first class societies, he can only find the roots of anti-homosexual *prejudice* in the religious laws of an exceptional historical development: Jewish society.

When he does try to show the relationship between class oppression and the repression of homosexual activity he completely turns the relationship upside down. He lumps together the repression of homosexual activity, all other sexual restraints, and the oppression of women as if they were one and the same historical phenomenon. He knows that the oppression of women was essential to the rise of class society. He has no evidence that this was true in the case of the repression of homosexual activity. To prove his case, he simply asserts that they both played the same historical role.

There is, of course, a link between class oppression and the repression of homosexual activity, but not as Comrade Thorstad would have it. Nor is the link between class oppression and the oppression of women as he would have it. In the science of Marxism it is not enough to show a relationship. One must understand the particulars and the dynamic of the relationship. If not, one can easily confuse cause and effect; a deadly confusion

in political science. This is exactly what Comrade Thorstad does in the following statements found on page 8 of his article. ("Gay Liberation and Class Struggle," Vol. 30, No. 2)

"The origins of homosexual oppression can be traced to the rise of the patriarchal family and the repressive sexual restrictions, the subjugation of women, the (heterosexual) male supremacy, and the inequalities of the reign of private property that go along with it. Homosexual behavior was not always suppressed. During the matriarchal period of human prehistory—prior to the introduction of sexual restraints, the confiscation of sexual freedom and sexual equality by the new, male rulers of patriarchal society—there was no more need to impose restrictions on homosexual behavior than there was to regulate heterosexual behavior in accord with an incest taboo, to forcibly impose the authority of the husband and the (male) chief upon women, or to practice painful genital mutilations like clitorectomies and circumcision during puberty as an aid to enforcing premarital chastity."

With the aid of Wilhelm Reich he goes on to explain how these changes came about.

"The transition from matriarchy to patriarchy, says Reich in *The Invasion of Compulsory Sex Morality*, consists of the following:

'1. The transition of power from woman to man. Thereby the power displacement grows vertically, according to rank. The chief, in contrast to the citizen, has the most power; his wives the least.

'2. The transition from natural genital love life to the compulsory marriage bond.

'3. The transition from sex-affirmation to sex-negation, from the affirmation of premarital genital activity to a demand for premarital asceticism. And finally the most important thing:

'4. The growing division of society into oppressing upper groups and oppressed lower groups.'

"This transition is one which not only requires the enforced constriction of sexual expression in general but it is one with which homosexual behavior stands in particular conflict. This can most clearly be seen by looking at the requirements of the institution that developed as the end-product of this process—the patriarchal family."

From this description one can only conclude that sexual repression was the cause, class oppression an effect, and the end-product being not capitalist class society, but, according to Thorstad, the patriarchal family. It is revealing that Thorstad chooses to ignore what has been considered by the socialist movement the most authoritative work on the transition from savagery to class society, Engels' *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, and instead used Wilhelm Reich to describe this process. From the following summary it will be clear why he made this choice.

According to Engels and Lewis Morgan, upon whose research Engels bases much of his book, the original condition of sexual relations was unrestricted promiscuity. But material conditions required organization and the limitation of the size of human groups. This in turn required regulation of the mating practices of group members. The first sexual restraints were on sexual relations between members of different generations. From this condition evolves restrictions on sexual relations between any adult members of the same gentile community. In the highest stage of savagery sexual relations took the form

of more or less permanent pairing marriages between members of different gens.

Since there had to be some way of determining who belonged to what generation and to which tribe, phratry, gens, and family, and since in the earlier stages of this process only the female parent could be determined for certain, kinship was based on matrilineal ancestry. Sexual restrictions and matrilineal social organization were essential and complimentary methods of advancing from the animal horde to human society. Their employment had, of course, nothing to do with moral considerations, but was motivated by the material conditions of the times and evolved through thousands of years of experimentation. We see then, contrary to Thorstad's assertion, the existence of extensive sexual restrictions *prior* to the existence of private property, classes and the patriarchal family.

Now let us compare the materialist view of the transition from matriarchy to patriarchy (or the transition from barbarism to class society) with the explanation presented by Comrade Thorstad. To advance from the horde to the highly organized gentile society required not only sexual restrictions and matrilineal organization. Most essential to the evolution of human society was the development of group labor activities. The struggle for survival required a maximum efficiency in these activities. And the first division of labor evolved out of considerations of the most efficient way to accomplish the tasks at hand. We have no reason to assume that this division arose out of attitudes of superiority or inferiority on the part of the participants or that they had the faintest idea that this division would facilitate the development of class society and the oppression of women. According to Engels this "division of labor was a pure and simple outgrowth of nature; it existed only between the two sexes. The men went to war, hunted, fished, provided the raw material for food and the tools necessary for these pursuits. The women cared for the house, and prepared food and clothing; they cooked, weaved and sewed. Each was master in his or her own field of activity; the men in the forest, the women in the house." Today, there is, of course, no material basis for such a division. But in primitive times, pregnancy and the nursing of infants, for which only women are equipped, was a decisive factor in determining the social labor of individuals.

With the domestication of animals society advanced from savagery to barbarism. And with it came the need to change the matrilineal system of social organization. Until now private property took the form of tools only. There was neither the need nor the ability to acquire more of this property than could be of immediate use. But as the science of animal husbandry developed so did herds in the form of accumulated wealth, and herding gradually replaced hunting and food gathering as the primary means of support of some of the barbarian tribes.

As this wealth increases a conflict arises in which we find the material basis for the change from matrilineal kinship to patrilineal kinship. This was not a "transition of power from woman to man," as Reich says, for women did not have power as a sex prior to the change, nor did men acquire power as a sex as a result of this change. The conflict was not between men and women but between property relations and social organization.

Prior to the change from matrilineage to patrilineage, when a man married he joined the gens (a tribal subdivision of several families that share a common female

ancestor) of his wife and brought with him the tools he used. But upon his death these tools were given to his brothers or nephews in his mother's gens, because they were considered closer relatives than his own sons, who belonged not to his gens, but to the gens of their mother. As long as this property was limited to a few tools there was no material reason to change this practice. But one can visualize the conflicts that arise when this property (which is the responsibility of male members of the gens) takes the form of herds and becomes the primary means of production. This practice dispersed the wealth and livelihood of a gens as each male member marries and takes with him a part of the herd. It was therefore in the interest of all the members of the more successful gentes to change the old system of matrilineal kinship and inheritance. As Engels said, "The simple decision sufficed that in the future the descendants of the male members should remain in the gens, but that those of the female were to be excluded from the gens and transferred to that of their father."

But even now we do not yet see the oppression of women or the overthrow of communal democracy. Engels shows that in all the Aryan and Semetic societies the "patriarchal household community" was a universal transitional stage of social organization. In these households existed several families. The herds and the land were held as the common property of the household. Decisions affecting the household were made in council by all male and female adults. The male household heads were elected by all adult members, and could be removed by them. This system lasted until changes in the means of production brought about the need to again change social relations.

The first great *social* (as opposed to intratribal) division of labor, according to Engels, was that between the pastoral (herding) tribes and the less developed savages. Pastoral and agricultural activities (the one closely following the other) bring about a great increase in the productivity of labor. For the first time in human history a person can produce more than he or she needs to consume. As a result there is a revolutionary change in handicrafts, bringing, in the upper stage of barbarism, technical and cultural inventions such as the development of iron; so useful in the giant step to civilized society. The combined dynamic of these changes makes slavery and warfare for plunder profitable enterprises for the first time in history.

Slavery and plunder now become the primary enterprise of some of the tribes, first as a means of survival but very quickly as a means of satisfying greed. Unprecedented wealth and power is concentrated into a few enterprising tribes. These tribes are further divided into patrician and plebeian families, with the former evolving into military dictatorships, oligarchies, or monarchies. In this revolutionary upheaval the old system of patriarchal household communities conflicts with the material and political interests of the military chiefs who assume dictatorial power. Only now do individual men, and only those of the ruling-class families, have power. They have power not simply over their wives who become their privileged servants and upon whom they impose strict monogamy to insure the paternity of their male offspring. They have the so much more socially important power to exploit the labor of the men and women slaves and to make wars of plunder on other people.

We see then, from a materialist point of view, how the oppression of women is a result of class oppression and how the downfall of women from equal members of democratic communities to slaves and servants was an essential part of the rise of class society.

We understand now the historical function of sexual restrictions in the rise of human society during savagery, and the historical function of the oppression of women in the transition from barbarism to class society. But nowhere do we find the repression of homosexual activity playing such a role. Comrade Thorstad's attempt to historically link this repression with other sexual restrictions and the oppression of women does not stand the test of materialist analysis.

And the end-product of this historical process is not the patriarchal family haunted by the specter of gay liberation, but rather capitalism threatened by the exploited masses of the world. Therein lie fundamentally different conclusions flowing from fundamentally different views of history.

After trying to show the material origins of the repression of homosexuality by linking it with other sexual restrictions, the oppression of women, the rise of class society and the patriarchal family, Comrade Thorstad runs right into a contradiction. He informs us that the Greek and Roman states did not repress homosexual activity. Yet these are states presiding over class society in which women are oppressed, there exists among the ruling classes the patriarchal family, and there are sexual restraints against incest. Comrade John Lauritsen informs us that "Homosexuality flourished among many ancient peoples: the Celts, Greeks, Scandinavians, Egyptians, Etruscans, Cretans, Carthaginians, and Sumerians, and throughout the 'Cradle of Civilization,' the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, the Nile Valley, and the Mediterranean Basin." (Vol. 30, No. 1, SWP Discussion Bulletin, page 8) According to all the histories we have been offered in this discussion there is no evidence of the repression of homosexuality in any of the ancient civilizations, with the lone exception of the Hebrews. Thorstad says:

"For reasons that are not entirely clear, the development of a hostile attitude toward homosexuality among the Hebrews occurred around 700 B. C., following the Babylonian Captivity. The break with practices such as homosexuality that occurred at that time distinguished the Hebrews from neighbors like the Canaanites and the Chaldeans with whom they previously shared such practices." (Vol. 30, No. 2, SWP Discussion Bulletin, page 14.)

But the Hebrews, according to Karl Kautsky in *Foundations of Christianity*, were not representative of class society in this period. He says, "It is not only after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, but already at the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar [This occurred in 597 B. C. and was followed by the Babylonian Captivity, not prior to 700 B. C. as Thorstad says. — D. M.] that the abnormal situation of the Jews begins, a situation which makes them a phenomenon unique in history." He is referring here to the Diaspora, or dispersion of the Jews. During this captivity, which lasted until 538 B. C., the Babylonians exiled thousands of Jewish priests, nobles, merchants, and even artisans in order to behead Jewish society and thus minimize resistance to domination.

Under these circumstances religion played a uniquely important role, and according to Kautsky, the priesthood

emerged as the most powerful class in Jewish society. Prior to this, warrior chiefs and then merchants were the most powerful classes, primarily because Palestine was a major trade route between the Mediterranean civilizations. But in the sixth century B. C., sea trade greatly diminished the importance of Palestine to commerce. Following the Babylonian Captivity the merchant classes voluntarily dispersed to the foreign commercial centers of the Mediterranean. The persecution suffered in foreign countries and the near continuous foreign domination of Palestine heightened the national consciousness of the Hebrews. But the material interests of the commercial classes and the priesthood did not call for a nationalism demanding liberation of a nation. It rather took a religious form since Judaism represented the heritage, the philosophy, the customs, the law and the literature—that is, the cultural identity of the Hebrews. It was an internationalist "nationalism" of a growing and historically progressive merchant class—a role which kept it alive and often in opposition to the slave-owning classes. But this opposition remained in this peculiar form, not only because of the dispersion but primarily because slavery had not yet run its historical course, nor its material usefulness to the merchant class. It remained a cultural-religious opposition to the slave-owning class rather than evolve into a revolutionary political opposition to slavery based on diametrically opposed economic needs.

It is in this period that the current version of Mosaic law, which among other things prohibits homosexual acts, was written. The hierarchy of Judaism ascribes these laws to Moses, which would date them back to the 13th century B. C. But as Kautsky explains, they were not written with an eye toward accuracy, but toward the political and material interests of the religious hierarchy. Unless Comrade Thorstad has evidence to the contrary, we cannot be sure that this was when anti-homosexual prejudice was introduced into these laws. If it was, however, introduced at this time, it tells us some important things about the repression of homosexuality that contradict Thorstad's thesis.

It could not have accompanied the transition from matriarchy to patriarchy, which occurred in Jewish society at least as far back as 2000 B. C., 1500 years earlier. Nor could it have accompanied the division of Jewish society into classes which culminated in 1020 B. C. with the establishment of the state of Israel, 500 years earlier. The repression of homosexuality, if Thorstad is correct as to when it first occurred, could not have therefore played any role in the establishment of either the patriarchal family or class society. Nor could it have been considered a threat to the heads of these institutions for at least fifteen and five centuries respectively.

Therefore it is necessary to look to the changes in Jewish society that occurred during and following the Babylonian exile, if this is when changes in its attitude toward homosexuality occurred, in order to even begin to understand the materialist origins of anti-homosexual prejudice. The changes I have outlined created a unique situation in which the most powerful classes of Jewish society were dispersed throughout foreign slave societies. Under these conditions these classes did not preside over their own nation-state, nor did they base their economic power on the exploitation of the labor of subjects of such a state. They were subject to conflicting pressures; one to assimilate into the foreign societies, the other to maintain economic and

cultural unity within their own class. The solution was economic assimilation into the slave economies as merchants and to maintain class unity in the form of cultural identity: Judaism.

Laws written at this time did not have the power of a state to enforce them; therefore, the authors of these laws could not have written them in order to legalize the exploitation and oppression of subject people. It is probable that they were designed to morally justify the activities of the most powerful classes, the priesthood and the merchants, and to facilitate resistance to assimilation into foreign societies.

In the case of laws against homosexuality, it is probable that they were the by-product of an overall attempt to further distinguish Jews and Jewish culture from the people and customs of alien societies; to resist assimilation. We must remember that they were not written by a ruling class, but by priests in whose material interest it was to keep Jewish culture and religion alive *and distinct* from the culture and religion of alien ruling classes. But this attempt at distinction in no way was a drive toward isolation. It was, in fact, the opposite. The epoch we are discussing marked the decline of the ancient civilizations, the Roman Empire being its last dying gasp. And yet, according to Kautsky, Judaism was enjoying an "incredible" growth resulting from the success of Jewish tradespeople, and consequently the success of Jewish communities. It was also the result of propaganda efforts of the Jews, who were interested in growing.

What appears to be a contradiction in the attempts of the Jews to, on the one hand, distinguish themselves from other people and on the other hand to recruit to their religion, can only be understood in the context of a declining class society. They were attempting to distinguish themselves not from the masses, but from the philosophy, customs and ruling classes of that declining society.

It does not appear then that anti-homosexual prejudice was either part of, or essential to, the development of ancient class society, the ruling classes of which, according to Comrades Thorstad and Lauritsen, were enjoying all forms of sexual liberty. What Comrade Thorstad has shown is that it was introduced into class society by the religious leaders of a people and a class *in opposition* to the customs of the ruling classes. Although this contradicts his thesis, we must still give him credit. This hostility to homosexuality was inherited by the early Christian barbarians, slaves and proletarians, who based their sect on Judaism. It seems to have been reinforced by the puritanism of the Protestant bourgeoisie, peasants and proletarians during their struggle against feudalism and the Catholic church. I know that the prudishness of the Cubans is a reaction to the sexual liberty of their former oppressors who turned Havana into a brothel for the pleasure of North American tourists. If this is true, then anti-homosexual prejudice was not introduced into society the same way male chauvinism or racism was introduced; that is, to justify the oppression of women and colonial people by the ruling classes. It appears to have been a by-product of a reaction against all forms of sexual promiscuity, prostitution, and abuse that was the custom and privilege of the ruling classes. These reactions are not, of course, completely rational or fair. But that's because class struggle isn't completely rational or fair.

To be sure, the patriarchs of Israel when it became a state based on class oppression, the Christian emperors of Rome, the new Protestant bourgeois ruling class, and the Soviet bureaucracy demagogically used the sexual conservatism of the masses for their own reactionary aims. And we must give no quarter to this abuse. But just as Engels in *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State* distinguishes between the social-economic and historical roles of the bourgeois and proletarian families, we must distinguish between the reactionary and false prudery of the Pope and Richard Nixon and the sexual morality of the masses. Nowhere in this discussion have the advocates of intervention made such distinctions. Instead they proclaim war on "heterosexual society" and the family in general. In doing so they place their struggle above classes, which is the subject of the next section of this article.

In summary, we have found, contrary to Comrade Thorstad's "history," distinct historical roles played by sexual restrictions, the oppression of women, and the introduction of anti-homosexual prejudices. This understanding of the different historical roles of the oppression of women and the repression of homosexual activities explains why the double oppression of women workers is a universal phenomenon in class society (and is essential to its development and maintenance) and why on the other hand, we find in class society, ancient and contemporary, a wide degree of attitudes toward homosexuality ranging from indulgent to tolerant to repressive.

#### *The Motor Force of History: Sex or Class Struggle?*

Sensing the weakness of his "history," Comrade Thorstad tries to show the importance of the so-called "sexual revolution" in a more immediate sense. But again he abandons Marxism and uses Wilhelm Reich to show the relative importance of sex as compared with class questions.

On page 12 of the above-mentioned article, Comrade Thorstad says:

"The fact that this struggle [gay liberation-D.M.] does not necessarily take place around issues traditionally associated with the trade union movement in no way reduces its significance for the revolutionary movement. For the issue of sexual oppression that it raises is one that is not merely of interest but of vital concern to everyone. With perhaps a slight exaggeration, Reich put his finger on this when he noted that 'Whereas economic misery affects only a small segment of society, sexual misery encompasses all social strata.'"

Here Comrade Thorstad reduces class struggle to "issues traditionally associated with the trade union movement," to bread-and-butter issues. This is not a Marxist view of economics or class struggle. In *What Is To Be Done*, Lenin polemicizes against this reduction of class struggle to economic reforms and describes it as bourgeois politics. The SWP has always adhered to this view that class struggle is much broader than the fight for economic reforms and that economic struggles must lead to political struggles against the capitalist class as a whole and its executive committee, the capitalist state. We have never reduced the oppression of the working class to a simple case of "economic misery." It is a question of *economic exploitation*; the private expropriation of socially produced surplus value, and the political power of the capitalist class over the institutions of capitalist society. Therein lie the contradictions that lead to the world crisis of capitalism

and *forces* the majority of the world's population, the working class, to wage economic and political struggles against capital. That is the essence of class struggle politics.

But Comrade Thorstad reduces class oppression to "economic misery" which affects "only a small segment of society" (a slight exaggeration indeed!) in order to make sexual misery appear all the more important.

Is it true that economic misery affects only a small segment of society as the defenders of capitalism would have us believe? Was Marx's prediction, based on an analysis of the dynamics of capitalist development, that capitalism would bring a concentration of wealth and a pauperization of the masses incorrect? Even if we accepted Thorstad's view of class oppression we will find on a world scale the overwhelming majority of humanity suffering economic misery. But we know that class oppression is much more than this. We know that the threat of nuclear annihilation is a manifestation of class oppression, as is the war in Vietnam, imperialism in general, racism, the oppression of women, fascism, prisons, police and armies. In reality, aren't these problems all part of the economic misery created by capitalism? Don't these problems affect nearly every person in the world?

But it is not merely the size of the segment of society affected by this economic misery that has made these problems the motor force of social change, of the history of civilized society. What distinguishes these problems from the repression of homosexual activity is that they are essential to the development and maintenance of class society. This tells us something about the revolutionary potential of the efforts to end "economic misery." They threaten the very institutions of capitalist society; private ownership of the means of production, class rule over society, and the economic and political power of the *bourgeois* families.

What is going to propel the working class into anti-capitalist action is the fact that its oppression and the *worsening* of that oppression is essential to the maintenance of capitalism. Neither the capitalist class nor the working class have a choice in this matter. Reforms will not end the conflict. Revolution alone will end the economic misery. That is why Marxists look to the working class as the only segment of society which has the need and ability to make revolutionary change; because it is in the material interest and needs of the working class to do so. We also understand that the double oppression of women, Black, and Chicano workers is essential to capitalism. It is essential that capitalism divide the working class and assign to segments of it the role of absorbing the brunt of economic setbacks in the form of unemployment. One of the ways the capitalist class keeps overall wages down is by teaching us that some workers don't deserve more than they're getting because they're lazy, unreliable, or not as strong or capable as others. In this way, through male chauvinism and racism, the ruling class justifies the low wages it pays to all workers. We see from this the revolutionary potential of women's liberation and struggles of oppressed national minorities. They are the first and worst victims of the assaults on the working class by capital. They are the first sections of the working class to radicalize and their struggles provide leadership and education for other sectors of the working class.

Comrade Kendall Green, in Vol. 30, No. 4, SWP Discussion Bulletin, shows how anti-gay prejudice leads to



discrimination against gay workers. While it is true that gays are discriminated against, it is wrong to conclude that "Gays, women, and national minorities do suffer from different forms of oppression, but it is important to realize that the result of these unique forms of oppression is a similar economic exploitation." Economic exploitation is the material basis for the discrimination against women and oppressed national minorities. This prejudice is a creation of the ruling class to justify the special economic exploitation of women and oppressed nationalities. As a sector of the working class, gays do not play this role, as explained by Comrades Sheppard and Weinstein. And this does not appear to be the reason why anti-homosexual prejudice came about. One form of prejudice is materially essential to the capitalist class, the other is a by-product of the "cultural legacy" of Judeo-Christian society that is used by the capitalists, in their sinister attempt to appear as the "moral" leadership of society, but certainly not essential to their material interests.

### *Socialism: Utopian or Scientific?*

"Since the development of class antagonism keeps even pace with the development of industry, the economic situation, as they [the utopian socialists—D.M.] find it, does not yet offer to them the material conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat. They therefore search after a new social science, after new social laws, that are to create these conditions.

"Historical action is to yield to their personal inventive action, historically created conditions of emancipation to fantastic ones, and the gradual, spontaneous class-organization of the proletariat to an organization of society specially contrived by these inventors. Future history resolves itself, in their eyes, into the propaganda and the practical carrying out of their social plans.

"In the formation of their plans they are conscious of caring chiefly for the interests of the working class, as being the most suffering class. Only from the point of view of being the most suffering class does the proletariat exist for them.

"The undeveloped state of the class struggle, as well as their own surroundings, cause Socialists of this kind to consider themselves far superior to all class antagonisms. They want to improve the conditions of every member of society, even that of the most favored. Hence, they habitually appeal to society at large, without distinction of class; nay, by preference, to the ruling class. For how can people, when once they understand their system, fail to see in it the best possible plan for the best possible state of society?" Marx and Engels, *Communist Manifesto*.

Because of the absence of a generalized workers radicalization in this country which would offer immediate proof of the validity of class-struggle politics, and because of the existence of a radical movement outside the ranks of the working class, tremendous anti-Marxist pressure is brought to bear on our party. This pressure has been reflected in the views presented by the proponents of intervention into gay liberation. Thorstad's search for a new social science, for new social laws, reflects this pressure. He sees in sex a new motor force of history, more powerful than "economic misery." He reduces class struggle to trade-union reformist demands, and claims that gay liberation threatens the very foundations of modern society. It is reflected in his hostility toward the hetero-

sexuality of the working class which he does not distinguish from the repression of the capitalist state. It is reflected in his attack on any and all families, in which he makes no distinction between the economic and social roles of the bourgeois family and the proletarian family. He assumes for himself the utopian task of creating a new sexual morality which he calls gay liberation and demands of the masses and the SWP not mere "liberal tolerance" of homosexuality and support to the democratic rights of gays, but acceptance of his new social history and theories of sexual revolution. These views, like all utopian outlooks, have nothing in common with Marxism and can only lead the SWP away from class struggle politics and into an isolated, sectarian, counterculture.

Our party has always been tolerant of all religious, cultural and sexual views. But if they are wrapped in political cloaks and offered as a new social science to replace historical materialism and when they become a new strategy to replace class-struggle politics the SWP is duty-bound to fight against them.

Our isolation from the working class in the last twenty-five years necessarily has its adverse effects. It is a tribute to our politics and the members of our party that time and again we have resisted alien class pressures and remained firm in our revolutionary optimism. Our enemies threw at us their greatest social "scientists," their slickest politicians, opportunists and provocateurs. And we didn't budge. We remained loyal partisans of the world proletariat even when it appeared that the entire working class capitulated to either capitalism or Stalinism. We held firm because we held firm to our revolutionary ideas. We know that in spite of superficial appearances to the contrary, this is the epoch of the death agony of capitalism. It is only a matter of time before the American working class will move into revolutionary action. We are the only party armed with the ideas capable of guiding that action to victory. Now is certainly not the time to lose hope or to turn away from those ideas.

Support to democratic rights of gays? Yes. Rewrite history and revise Marxism to prove the revolutionary potential of gay liberation? Reorient the SWP from Marxian class-struggle politics toward utopian sexual theories of social change? Absolutely not.

### *What is Wrong With Comrade Barry Sheppard's Orientation?*

Comrade Barry Sheppard avoids the mistakes made by the other proponents in their motivation for intervening into gay liberation by offering no motivation at all. It is usual in presenting a proposal for intervening into, or "relating to" as Sheppard puts it, political developments that the party is offered some motivation. I guess Comrade Sheppard assumes we all agree that the party should intervene and that we all have the same motivation and understanding. This discussion should show that such an assumption is not in order.

Comrade Sheppard, in his contribution (Vol. 30, No. 1, SWP discussion Bulletin), correctly states that "Gays are not a class, with a special relation to the means of production, nor an oppressed nationality, nor do they play a special role in the family or any other social structure." What begins to distinguish Comrade Sheppard's view of gay liberation from that of the other proponents of intervention is unfortunately lost in the remainder of his article. From showing a fundamental difference between

the repression of homosexual activity and the oppression of workers, Comrade Sheppard steps back to say only that "There is not a precise analogy. . . ." He takes another step back in the last section of his article in which he draws no conclusions from these differences, and, as though there are no differences at all, proposes intervention.

While it is true that he puts forward a more limited orientation toward gay liberation than the party has toward some other movements, his reasons do not seem to come from an analysis of the relative importance of gay liberation, but rather on the basis of "the present state of the organized gay liberation movement on a national scale." I assume then, that if gay liberation gets better organized, we will intervene on a national scale, no differently than we intervene in the antiwar movement, women's movement, or have intervened in the trade-union movement.

There is more wrong with Comrade Sheppard's proposal than its lack of motivation. The method in which it is presented, and the method in which he proposes we carry it out are equally wrong. It is unusual that an orientation for intervention into any political movement is presented by an individual member of the Political Committee. The National Committee and the Political Committee are elected to provide leadership on questions such as this. The normal procedure is that one of these bodies offers to the membership a draft resolution at the beginning of the discussion for consideration by the membership. One might argue that since we're not taking a formal vote, formal procedure is not in order. All our discussions are for the purpose of making

decisions that guide our action, and our method of discussion and decision making is always important. Any departure from this procedure should be explained to the membership.

It is clear that there are divisions in our party over this question. Sheppard's method of dealing with those differences does not lead the party closer to a Marxist understanding of gay liberation. It can only exacerbate differences, especially when it is proposed that the tactical questions be left to each branch. That can only be done after there is political clarity. Between now and the next plenum or convention, each branch is encouraged to intervene into the gay movement. This is a very strange way of developing an orientation, since we are not a federation of branches, but a national and international democratic-centralist combat party.

We have much work to do. Any addition to or detraction from our work, no matter how modest, must be motivated, and motivated correctly. The views presented by Comrade Thorstad, to the degree that they reflect both confusion in our party and the views of gay liberation are reasons *not* to intervene, but to consider it a detraction from class struggle politics. What the party needs at this time, so clearly revealed by the arguments of the proponents of intervention and the absence of correct political motivation, is not more branch intervention experimentation, but a clear political understanding of the relative importance of gay liberation to the class struggle.

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