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HISTORY, DOCUMENTS AND ANALYSIS OF THE GAY LIBERATION MOVEMENT AND PROPOSED OUTLINES FOR PARTY GAY WORK

by Michael Maggi, Los Angeles Branch

The rise of the gay liberation movement has been one of the more sudden, dramatic and unexpected of all the movements in the United States and around the world. Only a few years ago, almost everyone in the country, including many gay persons, believed gays were "sick," deformed by overbearing mothers, mindless exhibitionists and probably prone to criminal acts. Now hundreds of gay liberation groups exist in the cities, colleges and high school campuses of every state. Gays are organizing within all sectors of the population—as gay women in lesbian feminist organizations; as Blacks, Chicanos and Puerto Ricans in nationalist gay organizations; in professional groups, churches and unions. (This process is also beginning in other parts of the world, although at a slower pace than in the United States.)

Gay Liberationist Consciousness

The gay liberation movement is a product of the broader radicalization that is taking place today, but at the same time it is at the heart of this radicalization. The women's liberation movement, while also drawing strength from the motion of gay women, has had the greatest impact with its concepts of sisterhood, all-female organization, consciousness-raising activities and militant mass actions. All this helped to create a climate where gays who saw their heretofore secret "personal" problems transformed into political and social problems. These problems and the situation gays found themselves in was to be moved against by a movement of gays demanding an abolition to all forms of oppression and discrimination, rather than individual actions by each person to find a comfortable niche in the world through an accommodation within society's standards.

Gays are standing up proudly to demand an end to all the laws, customs and social institutions that oppress and exploit us. Toleration is a crumb dropped from the plate of the oppressor in the hopes of satisfying our hunger for liberation and derailing our movement. But liberation is our goal—from all forms of oppression and discrimination. There is nothing inherent in homosexuality that is sick, psychotic, decadent, unnatural, immoral, depraved, deformed, incomplete or funny. Homosexuality is the capacity to love a person of the same sex.

"Gay is Good" is a slogan reflecting the same pride, insolence, self-identity and group consciousness that "Sisterhood is Powerful" represents for the women's liberation movement or "Black is Beautiful" for the Black movement. This slogan and the gay movement are giant steps forward for the gay men and women who have been the most persecuted, divided and brainwashed oppressed group in history.

Gays have had their sexuality deformed, distorted and oppressed to the extent that many millions of gays never had fulfilling lives—wither in terms of their relationships with people in general or their sexual lives. Cowed into submission by society's demands and standards, many of us find ourselves trapped into families and relationships

that attempt to transform us into different persons. In our own individual closets we were alienated from each other and ourselves. Growing up in heterosexual families and groomed for mother/wife and father/husband roles, we never had the opportunity to understand that there are millions and millions of us. We internalized our "personal failure" to live up to the standards of femininity and masculinity. We felt ashamed and fearful because we were not the "real" women and "real" men "made by God" and put here to form a "great nation."

Our isolation, fear and sense of shame forced us into closets as our sexuality was taking shape and even before we fully realized our sexual identity. Being in a closet means trying to think and act as our oppressor—the ideals of men and women. Forced secrecy is fundamental to the closet, but a gay person's oppression doesn't end there. The closet forces gays to accept personal conformity in clothing, politics, and morality. *A closet is our total forced social conformity.* Rejection of this and "coming out" is a first step of gays moving massively against all the institutions that oppress us.

For a gay person to "come out" it is not necessary to fulfill a checklist of activities such as informing one's parents, employer and every straight friend of one's sexual orientation. Coming out is a much more important fundamental overhaul of a gay's life. Rejecting the absolute secrecy of a gay's sexual orientation is important. But coming out is really the rejection of all the social norms forced upon us and our rejection of society's right to sit in judgment of what is "sick," "immoral" or "criminal" in the sexual lives of people who only wish to love each other. Coming out is asserting a person's humanity and dignity as a gay person. Coming out is taking to the streets to demand an end to our unjust oppression and the oppression of tens of millions of others like us.

Many gays may never come out (under capitalism), but the development of the gay liberation movement, and its further development into a massive movement, encourages gays to act in their own defense and for their own demands in other areas of life—as women, as students, as workers and as members of oppressed nationalities, etc.

The Roots of the Gay Liberation Movement

David Thorstad explains the modern origins of anti-gay laws in France and England in his contribution, "Antigay Laws in the United States and Some Other Countries." The revolutionary upheavals in France in the eighteenth century abolished the laws against gays through the omission of the "unnatural vice" laws from the legal codes. This action taken by the French Constituent Assembly in 1791 was a major step forward for the rights of gays. In 1861, England abolished the death penalty for gays only to enact further laws against homosexuality, "outrageous behaviour," "gross indecency" and "lewd conduct," etc.

It was apparently not until the 1890's that a movement developed of homosexuals and humanitarian straights

who rejected the prevailing official morality.

In England, Edward Carpenter organized a committee to educate people on issues regarding gay sexuality and to propagandize against the antigay laws. One major case in the public limelight at the time was the conviction and imprisonment of Oscar Wilde under one of the newly enacted laws. Carpenter held to the existing view among gays and straights, that homosexuals were an entirely separate category of human being—a third sex. Having no scientific studies of sexual behavior to base their theories on, this is understandable. (This view of gay sexuality is explained by Kurt Hiller, a proponent of this theory, in a speech to the Second International Congress for Sexual Reform in Copenhagen in 1928. His speech, entitled "A 1928 Appeal for Homosexual Rights," is reprinted in the May, 1971, *International Socialist Review*.)

Carpenter's activities were generally of a secretive nature in an attempt to educate and solicit compassion from humanitarian members of Parliament.

In 1898, the noted sex scholar, Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld, established the Scientific Humanitarian Committee in Germany to educate the public and organize for legal reform. Hirschfeld and this committee became internationally known. (The Bolsheviks were later to base their position on homosexuality partially on Hirschfeld's work and utilized his writings in the Soviet Encyclopedia. The Encyclopedia was rewritten as the Stalinist bureaucracy moved to reenact laws against homosexuality and ended the Soviet government's tolerant and scientific approach to homosexuality.)

This tendency toward the formation of small semi-secret educational and legal reform societies continued into the twentieth century. The International Committee on Sex Equality brought gay and gay-rights groups into contact with each other and spread what little educational material there was to all parts of the world.

In 1936, a number of homosexuals from various countries formed a gay colony on Nawa Sangga island in the Gulf of Siam. This group went through various periods with different names including the Han Temple Organization (1940), the Movement for the Study of Homosexual Problems (1948, at which time the group moved to an Indonesian island), and finally the Homosexual World Organization (circa 1950). Around this time the group established a magazine with international circulation in an attempt to exchange scientific information on homosexuality and the status of efforts to reform the law. Several internationally famous persons were connected with this group, including Andre Gide. The Homosexual World Organization contacted Asian homosexual groups to publicize their existence and to demonstrate the naturalness of gay sexuality. Some of the Asian groups were hundreds of years old, including the Buddha-Shakti Sect of Siam, the High Rooms of Macao, the Moon Flower Rooms of China and the Sons of Mauna Loa of Hawaii. Around 1952 this organization vanished (there doesn't seem to be any information available as to the cause).

The Development of the Gay Movement in the United States (1920-1950)

I have little detailed information on the organizations of this period. However, they can be characterized as believing that homosexuals were a third sex, being secret

or semisecret organizations, and almost exclusively male. Some of these groups claimed memberships of several hundred, but all of them were short-lived. They were never able to develop stable leaderships and organizations. Some of these groups included the Society for Human Rights (Chicago, 1925), Sons of Hamidy (midwest and western states, 1934), Legion of the Damned (New York and Chicago, 1940s), Veterans Benevolent Association (1940s) and the Bachelors for Henry Wallace (national, 1948).

The crippling sectarian third-sex approach was always to pit a small section of gays against the much larger number of gays that were simply labeled "straight" by the unqualified nature of the either-or categories. (This is another verification of the necessity for correct theory.)

The Development of the Gay Movement in the United States (1950-1969)

The organizations that emerged in the early 1950s gave the gay movement its first national scope with permanent groups.

The Mattachine Society (first known as the Mattachine Foundation) was formed on July 7, 1950, in Los Angeles. Its first organizers came from the Bachelors for Wallace organization a couple of years before. The Mattachine Society had members of both sexes, but was predominantly male. In the mid-1960s, this group claimed a dues-paying membership of around 1500 nationally.

The Daughters of Bilitis (DOB) was formed in San Francisco in 1953. Of course, this group was entirely female. DOB claimed a membership of over 1000 nationally and may still be around the same size.

Both groups were organized after the publication of the Kinsey studies. These gave these new groups important scientific weapons with which to combat prejudice. The social upheavals around and after the war opened up the atmosphere slightly to the new things Kinsey, and more importantly, these new groups were saying.

The initial activities of these groups were to educate gays with the Kinsey findings, encourage self-confidence, fight limited battles for civil rights and to function as a social organization.

Both groups gave birth to national publications that advanced the dissemination of Kinsey's ideas and built the Mattachine Society and DOB.

One, Incorporated, was established by a split from Mattachine in 1952. One, Inc. in Los Angeles held weekly classes on sexuality and the legal situation and soon opened offices in Chicago, Detroit, New York City and Phoenix. This magazine carried on an extensive publishing schedule. Previous to *One Magazine*, no homosexual publication could be sent through the mails. It was only in 1958 that a federal court ruled that gay publications were protected by the first amendment.

In 1956, the DOB began publishing *The Ladder*. This is still the most widely read lesbian publication. Since the rise of the feminist movement, *The Ladder* has adopted a pro-women's liberation position which has related the DOB to both the gay and feminist movements.

The first demonstrations during the current radicalization demanding civil liberties for gays occurred in Philadelphia on July 4, 1964. This was a picket line around the Federal building of some 30-60 persons demanding an end to job discrimination, an end to the victimization of gays in the military and draft system, and the repeal

of all antigay sex laws such as the sodomy and solicitation laws. In later years, these demonstrations occurred in Washington, D. C., San Francisco, Chicago and other cities.

The North American Conference of Homophile Organizations (NACHO) is a national gay coalition formed in 1966. The Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis were the initial organizers of NACHO and remain its main pillars of support. This group holds yearly national conferences and occasionally regional gatherings. Its main purpose is to lobby in state legislatures for penal code reform of a liberal nature. This group has never called a demonstration.

NACHO has affiliated organizations in almost all major cities. These groups are usually Mattachine Societies or DOB chapters, although in some cities they may have other names such as the Society for Individual Rights in San Francisco or the Circle of Friends in Dallas.

NACHO's influence had never been great in the state capitols, but with the emergence of the gay liberation movement, their lobbying efforts have had minimum successes.

Episodic and semi-spontaneous demonstrations and law suits generally revolving around job discrimination and police harassment steadily increased over the years.

For example, in the spring of 1969 the California Committee for Homosexual Freedom was formed and conducted a public campaign to force the States Steamship Lines and Tower Records, both in San Francisco, to re-hire employees fired for being gay. For several weeks picketing was conducted in both places with extensive coverage in the gay and straight press. The struggle failed in the States Steamship Lines case but was victorious in the Tower Records case.

These actions, along with all the other events in the United States and the world, advanced the consciousness of the gay community and set the stage for the explosion at Stonewall. More and more gay people were becoming inspired by the struggles of a few gays and the mass social struggles of the other oppressed.

The Gay Movement from Stonewall to the Present
(June 27, 1969—)

The police attack upon gays in the Stonewall Inn on Christopher Street in New York City on June 27, 1969, sparked the appearance of the gay liberation movement with its own particular attitudes toward actions, organization and demands that went well beyond the best efforts of the first gay organizations that developed in the early '50s and before.

In August, 1969, the NACHO conference met in Kansas City and was confronted by the NACHO Youth Committee which proposed a document entitled, "A Radical Manifesto—The Homophile Movement Must Be Radicalized!" Although this 12-point resolution lost on all votes to the conservatives, it marked the new mood among younger gays and the development of gay liberation. The document read:

"1) We see the persecution of homosexuality as part of the general attempt to oppress all minorities and keep them powerless. Our fate is linked with these minorities; if the detention camps are filled tomorrow with blacks, hippies, and other radicals, we will not escape that fate, all our attempts to dissociate ourselves from them not-

withstanding. A common struggle, however, will bring common triumph.

"2) Therefore we declare our support as homosexuals or bisexuals for the struggles of the black, the feminist, the Spanish-American, the Indian, the Hippie, the Young, the Student and the other victims of oppression and prejudice [sic].

"3) We call upon these groups to lend us their support and encourage their presence with NACHO and the homophile movement at large.

"4) Our enemies, an implacable, repressive governmental system, much of organized religion, business and medicine, will not be moved by appeasement or appeals to reason and justice, but only by power and force.

"5) We regard established heterosexual standards of morality as immoral and refuse to condone them by demanding an equality which is merely the common yoke of sexual repression.

"6) We declare that homosexuals, as individuals and members of the greater community, must develop homosexual ethics and esthetics independent of, and without reference to, the mores imposed upon heterosexuality [sic].

"7) We demand the removal of all restriction on sex between consenting persons of any sex, of any orientation, of any age, anywhere, whether for money or not, and for the removal of all censorship.

"8) We call upon the churches to sanction homosexual liaisons when called upon to do so by the parties concerned.

"9) We call upon the homophile movement to be more honestly concerned with youth rather than trying to promote a mythical, non-existent 'good public image.' [sic]

"10) The homophile movement must totally reject the insane war in Viet Nam and refuse to encourage complicity in the war and support of the war machine, which may well be turned against us. We oppose any attempts by the movement to obtain security clearances for homosexuals, since these contribute to the war machine.

"11) The homophile movement must engage in continuous political struggle on all fronts.

"12) We must open the eyes of homosexuals on this continent to the increasingly repressive nature of our society and to the realizations that Chicago may await us tomorrow [sic]."

In the East Coast, especially New York City, Gay Liberation Fronts (GLFs) were beginning to organize on a new basis than the old-line homophile groups. At first GLFs took an interventionist attitude toward NACHO and its affiliate regional conferences. GLFs introduced resolutions to support antiwar activities, support women's liberation activities, and support campaigns in defense of Black Panthers victimized by the state. In the main, these resolutions were too general and radical-sounding to be endorsed by the more conservative organizations and coalitions. However, the following is the kind of resolution that was submitted to conferences and adopted, even though it was only the GLFs that became actively involved in actions called by other movement organizations.

The following is a resolution adopted by the Eastern Regional Conference of Homophile Organizations (ERCHO) meeting in Philadelphia on November 1-2, 1969:

"Resolved, that the Eastern Regional Conference of Homophile Organizations considers these inalienable human rights above and beyond legislation:

- "1. Dominion over one's own body
 - a. through sexual freedom without regard to orientation
 - b. through freedom to use birth control and abortion
 - c. through freedom to ingest the drugs of one's own choice.
- "2. Freedom from society's attempts to define and limit human sexuality, which are inherently manifested in the economic, educational, religious, social, personal and legal discrimination.
- "3. Freedom from social and political persecution of all minority groups:
 - a. freedom from the institutionalized inequalities of the tax structure and the judicial system
 - b. freedom and the right of self-determination of all oppressed minority groups in our society
 - c. we specifically condemn the systematic and widespread persecution of certain elements of these minorities, including all political prisoners and those accused of crimes without victims (e.g., homosexuals)."

The militancy and independence shown in the NACHO Youth Committee resolution and the ERCHO resolution was developed to a much greater degree in the emerging Gay Liberation Fronts. Many of these groups split and became ultraleft, but it is important to consider their contributions to the gay liberation movement, as well as to dwell on their shortcomings.

(Comrades should read Carl Whittman's "Refugees from Amerika: A Gay Manifesto." This is one of the first documents of the gay liberation movement. It will give comrades more of a feel for the new mood of the gay movement and a sense of its history.)

The most important contribution of the GLFs was to advance, in no uncertain terms, the necessity for direct actions by gays in our own self-interest to combat our oppression. The GLFs engaged in marches, sit-ins, picket lines, and interventions into meetings called by professional, religious and political organizations. No one was too important or liberal to "embarrass" at public meetings by questions from the floor or pickets outside. No body of people was too sacrosanct to challenge their bigoted attitudes or complicity in the oppression of gays.

The GLFs had an aggressive attitude in spreading and helping to develop other GLFs in other cities and states. These groups, mainly campus-based, eventually sprung up on every major campus in every part of the country.

Besides actions, the GLFs' concentration on consciousness-raising groups drew thousands of people to GLFs over a period of time. This enabled the organizers of the gay movement to talk to their "independents" about gay pride and strategies for the gay movement. This was a major focus for all the GLF organizations.

The drawbacks in GLFs also sprung from the fact that it was a product of this radicalization. There were strong tendencies towards counterculturalism and anti-leadership that were to be the fatal errors in the GLF structure.

The "unstructured" nature of the organization led, as it only could, to an inability to maintain stable organizations and democratic leaderships. The real leadership therefore fell to various people who could not develop any real program for action by the gay movement or discuss

out perspectives for building a mass gay liberation movement. This was true no matter how sincere and capable these activists were in their own right. In this way, it was to be expected that the groups would develop multi-issue approaches to the radicalization as a whole and fall into the trap of ultraleftism.

First, on their incorrect approach to other movement organizations. The gay activists in the GLFs were never able to realize they could not build the GLFs into revolutionary socialist gay organizations—no matter how much they talked about the need for revolution and attempted to build a movement. GLFs began giving uncritical support to all the movement organizations, especially the Black Panthers. GLF began demonstrating with other women's organizations, student and Black organizations, to protest the war, women's oppression, racism, etc. In exchange for their support, they demanded and expected support in return. They had no concept of building broad civil liberties defense committees or broad action coalitions on a single or a few related demands. They approached other organizations and expected to work out complete programmatic agreements.

The GLFs developed the tactic of the "zap" to publicize their demands. These zaps tended to be semi-disruptive interventions by a few or a few score gays into the meetings of professional, religious and political groups. These zaps into meetings were a very positive initial development in demanding that gays be recognized as persons with something to say and grievances to be redressed. However, this perspective of zaps had a strong tendency to substitute a small number of gays as an activist "vanguard" while most gays would learn of the action from the media and be "inspired" to take some unspecified action themselves.

The program of the Gay Liberation Fronts—insofar as there was one—was a 20- or 25-point series of proposals, slogans and demands essentially demanding the total abolition of everything this country stands for (see appended statements by Houston GLF). This isn't a bad position to have in the abstract, but the demands included on an equal basis slogans such as "abolish the family" and "abolish the sodomy and solicitation laws." The first could only be gained by a complete transformation of society under socialism while the second is a revolutionary democratic demand capable of mobilizing masses of gays under capitalism against the government.

An added problem was its inability to involve lesbians in a meaningful way in the decision making of the organization and in all its activities. The problems of males and females in GLFs continually worsened until splits occurred in almost every organization with independent lesbian organizations developing. Most of these splits occurred in 1969-70.

In some cases these splits proved to be a big advance in organization as females came to lesbian feminist consciousness. However, often in this period, the women's groups simply adopted an all-female GLF approach, which could hardly solve any of the other fundamental problems.

All the centrifugal tendencies and conflicts developed to a head in the New York GLF in the fall of 1969. The New York Gay Activists Alliance (GAA) was formed when a dozen gays "shared their concern—even anger that the potentials for social and political change regarding the oppression of the homosexual community were not being

used most effectively. From common experiences in other organizations they all agreed that a structured, single issue approach would best accomplish their initial goal of law reform, to give the homosexual citizen the rights and freedoms granted to every citizen." ("What is GAA?" N. Y. GAA, June 27, 1971) By January 1970, GAA had a constitution, officers and a determination to reach out and involve masses of gay people.

While GAA used many of the tactics, including "zaps," that the GLFs had used, they were subordinated in GAA to a perspective of *involving gays in actions*.

The major mass actions of GAA have been the Intro 475 fight in New York City, the Albany demonstrations and the support given to the broader action coalition, the Christopher Street Liberation Day Committee.

The campaign around Intro 475 extended for about a year—from early 1971 to its latest defeat in January, 1972. This campaign by GAA involved mass leafletting of the gay community interventions in public hearings involving supporters from almost all sectors of society on a civil liberties basis, and reach out to the gay community with an agitational appeal for active support in numerous zaps and demonstrations called.

Intro 475 was defeated, but it will be introduced again.

In 1971 and again a couple of months ago, GAA supported marches in the state capitol of New York—Albany. These marches were initially called by the Tri-Cities Gay Liberation Front. These demonstrations drew about 1500 persons in 1971 and around 900 in 1972. These marches demanded the repeal of the sodomy laws, repeal of the loitering laws, repeal of the solicitation laws, repeal of the impersonation laws, enactment of fair employment legislation and non-discrimination in housing legislation.

In 1971 and 1972 the Christopher Street Liberation Day Committee (CSLDC) was a delegated body representing organizations which functioned as a steering committee in planning the marches, gay-ins and some of the other projects during the week of activities around Gay Pride Day. The CSLDC meetings in New York were of 30-50 persons from almost all the gay groups in New York and some from surrounding cities. Although GAA was the most active participant in the CSLDC, the lesbian groups played a more important role in this coalition than most joint activities in the past.

The initial demonstrations called in June 1969 in response to the police riot on Christopher Street were of around 500 to 1000 persons. By the next year the news of Christopher Street had spread to the entire country and around 6000 persons participated in the New York march. By 1971, Christopher Street marches, conferences, forums, and other activities were held in dozens of cities and campuses with more than 25,000 gays participating. From reports in *The Militant* and the gay press, the actions this year were smaller—totaling somewhere above 11,000. This is still significant considering the pressures of the election year and the effort to get gays off the streets and into the Democratic closet.

There are two important developments this year that deserve mention. First, actions occurred this year in areas where there were no public demonstrations before, e.g., Dallas and Atlanta.

Second, the Los Angeles demonstration was organized around four demands that are becoming an important political rallying point for gay activists in southern Cali-

fornia who want to continue mass street demonstrations. These four demands as originally stated are: (1) End legislation of sexuality between consenting persons; (2) End police harassment; (3) Release all persons held in prisons or mental hospitals convicted of victimless crimes; (4) End job discrimination. These demands could be formulated better. For example, the first demand could be formulated, "Abolish the Sodomy and Solicitation Laws." The important point is not their formulation—as important as this is—but rather that the development that the nationally coordinated demonstrations are moving in the direction of taking on a political focus. More on this later.

The Lesbian Feminist Organizations

The Daughters of Bilitis are continuing to be the major national organization of lesbians. In 1965 a convention of DOB passed a "decentralization" resolution abolishing the national officers and making each chapter completely autonomous. In some areas DOB remains the central organized lesbian group—as in New York City and San Francisco.

DOB is one of the most heterogeneous of the gay organizations at this point with most women relating to it on one of several levels. First and foremost, as a social center for women who are in the closet. Second, some women participate in reformist efforts toward legal reform in areas such as child custody. Third, the younger women who have a "livingroom feminist," counterculture perspective.

The important development in the growth of the lesbian movement is the emergence of the lesbian feminist groups. These groups are very small and still developing. In Los Angeles, however, the Lesbian-Feminists lead all the lesbian groups politically through the Lesbian Coalition. These groups have the clearest perspective of building a mass gay liberation movement and are taking the lead in building the gay antiwar participation and are by far the healthiest in terms of orientation in the election period.

It was the Lesbian-Feminists that led the fight in the Los Angeles Christopher Street demonstration meetings for the advancement of the four demands as the political basis for the march.

Another example of the significance in this development can be seen from the clarity of the Yellow Springs Radicalesbians-GLF document inserted in the Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 30, No. 1, by Lee Smith.

The Gay Movement in the Election Period

There are three main sectors of the gay movement at this point grouping around different issues and tactics.

First is the reformist and generally conservative wing which is led by organizations such as the Society for Individual Rights in San Francisco, the Mattachine Society, the Metropolitan Community Church, the Daughters of Bilitis and the organizations of the gay gay-bar owners.

These groups support abolition of the sodomy laws as they now exist but propose legalization only between "consenting adults"; they do not challenge the laws abridging the right of adolescents to a sexually free life. On the other hand gay liberation organizations raise the demand for abolition of the laws between "consenting persons."

These groups have only engaged in lobbying efforts (usually under the NACHO banner) to obtain civil rights and have opposed any perspective for mass action. Only

occasionally, when pressured by younger gay liberation organizations, have these groups supported actions such as the Albany demonstrations, zaps of various politicians, or the Christopher Street actions.

The leaderships of these organizations have become active in supporting liberal Democrats on the local level and nationally for McGovern.

The gay liberation organizations such as GAAs and some other organizations have also been drawn into the Democratic Party through the "minority representation."

Last February, in Chicago, a national gay conference was held as a "National Gay Political Strategy Conference" which formed the National Coalition of Gay Organizations (NCGO). This conference was briefly reported in *The Militant*. NCGO was initially conceived of as becoming the national gay political caucus, but its actual development has been very uneven throughout the country. This conference passed an extensive "Bill of Gay Rights" which is formulated quite well. (A copy is appended.) The main work of NCGO has been carried out in a number of regional conferences held throughout the country. In some places, NCGO is essentially a "Gays for McGovern," but in most places its nature is much less defined.

The major project oriented toward the Democratic Party convention in Miami was to get gays to the convention to demonstrate. They had only minimum success in the opinion of the organizers.

Now that McGovern is retreating on the gay rights issue, these activities will have to search for some other perspective if they are to continue NCGO. With the shameful sexist attacks by McGovern people against the gay rights plank, large numbers of NCGO affiliated people are left at a crossroads. They are exploding in fury now, but later there will no doubt be "private assurances" that McGovern "privately" supports gay rights.

Some healthy mass-action tendencies have emerged from the southern California conferences of NCGO. The organizers of the Christopher Street actions in Los Angeles, especially the Lesbian-Feminists, went to the recent conference held in Bakersfield on July 1-2 and have called for additional demonstrations around the four demands in Los Angeles on October 7. Initial planning meetings have already taken place.

The Democratic "Hopefuls"

An example of the drawing of gay activists into the Democratic Party is an article run in the July 5 *Advocate* with the banner headline, "Minnesota Dems Adopt Gay Planks." The article said, "Rochester, Minn.—The Minnesota Democratic-Farmer-Labor convention adopted a sweeping gay-rights platform June 11 and elected a young gay activist as an alternate to the Democratic National Convention in Miami. . . . The platform which calls for consenting-adults sex legislation and legal same-sex marriages, was adopted exactly as drafted by the DFL Gay Rights Caucus. . . ."

Obviously, only the smallest concessions were made—and these only on paper. But these same actions have occurred in the state caucuses of California, New York, Oregon and other states.

In Miami, the gay rights plank was defeated 54-34 in the platform committee. But this has told gays that if they would work a little harder in the Democratic Party they might win next time.

The major candidates, such as Humphrey, Lindsey and McGovern all had "no comment" positions on the gay rights question at the start of their campaigns. McGovern said that it was a state's responsibility and totally within their domain. But as the gay activists organized and confronted these candidates throughout the country, the candidates were forced to adapt to the pressures from the gay movement.

On June 1, 1972, Hubert Humphrey was interviewed on the CBS-owned television station KNXT in Los Angeles on the 3 PM "Newsmakers" program. The interviewer asked, "How do you stand on liberalization of the laws regarding homosexuality?" HHH's reply was, "Well, I must confess that I believe they (gays) have a case. That civil liberties and equal protection of the laws applies equally to all walks of life, to all social habits [sic]. So I would be sympathetic to a degree of liberalization. . . ."

The interviewer continued, "Would you eliminate homosexuals from federal employment?"

HHH replied, "Well, it would be depending upon whether or not . . . the degree of sensitivity of the job [sic]. . . . Because regrettably in this world of ours there are a number of people that feel that homosexuality can be used as a way of blackmail upon certain individuals. But homosexuality as a roadblock to just normal civil service and normal employment within the government, I think isn't beyond what I would call protection of civil liberties."

"Is it a crime?" asked the interviewer.

"Well, it's a crime if the state law says so. You can change the law. What's a crime is what the law says (*Advocate*, July 5)."

Remember, this is a capitalist politician still running for the nomination of the Democratic Party being interviewed over TV. What is remarkable is the manner in which he was attempting to straddle the fence to appeal to gay voters yet not completely outrage the bigots. HHH's position says a lot about what he considers the mood of the country to be and, more importantly, the social weight of gays.

But McGovern was to outdo HHH in this area. A "Gay Citizens for McGovern" committee has been formed and a big ad campaign begun in West Coast gay publications. A printed folded leaflet position paper from McGovern's national campaign office has been distributed by the thousands at gay bars and at meetings of gay organizations.

McGovern issued a six-point program for gay rights that is printed under the title, "Has Anybody Else Spoken Up For You Lately?" The program covers items such as elimination of discrimination within Federal employment, an end to dishonorable military discharges, and end to tax discrimination against single persons living together and an end to the ban against homosexuals from immigrating into the United States. McGovern fails to mention the sodomy or solicitation laws. But even this modest position is being thrown overboard as McGovern moves to the right.

The Gay Rights Plank was defeated in the Platform Committee by a vote of 54 to 34, with the McGovern delegates voting *against* and the Wallace delegates voting *in favor*. (A copy of the Gay Rights plank is appended.)

The news of this is spreading throughout the gay liberation organizations and is disillusioning many young activists in the McGovern campaign. At the National Peace Action Coalition conference held in Los Angeles on July 21-23, a motion was introduced in the gay men's work-

shop to condemn the McGovern campaign and to call on all gays not to support him. All but one person in the 32 man workshop supported this motion. Only after it was remarked that the antiwar movement should remain nonpartisan and concentrate on antiwar activities did the discussion return to the fall action proposals.

Proposed Guidelines for Party Gay Work

The key aspect of the party's orientation at this point should be to chip away at the gay support for McGovern and other liberal candidates and win the best of the gay activists to our campaign. There are two parts to this orientation. First, direct intervention with our national campaign, state races and local candidates in addition to our literary work in *The Militant*, *International Socialist Review* and literature. Second, build the mass actions of the gay movement that are objectively counterposed to the elections.

The party should aggressively intervene in all the gay conferences and organizations with our campaign around the idea that gays should "Vote SWP in '72—the Gay Liberation Campaign!" None of the capitalist candidates can match the party's record of supporting the Christopher Street demonstrations, the Albany actions, Intro 475, the Mike McConnell defense committee, and the gay contingents of NPAC and WONAAC. Besides this political support to these actions and contingents, we have helped to build many of these demonstrations.

The party's position on gay oppression and the gay movement passed at the last convention is unequivocal: *we are opposed to all forms of oppression and discrimination in this society.*

An example of the interventions possible is the NCGO national convention scheduled for Minneapolis on Labor Day weekend, and all of the regional conferences. The campaign should be there denouncing McGovern and fighting against any continued support to his campaign because of his "private" support for gay rights, his stand on the war, etc. Our intervention in these kinds of conferences should also include support for the antiwar and women's liberation activities and support to gay mass demonstrations around the key democratic demands emerging from the gay movement. These key demands are:

- 1) Repeal the sodomy and solicitation laws;
- 2) Amnesty for gays in prison or hospitals convicted of victimless crimes;
- 3) End police harassment;
- 4) End job discrimination.

The call for demonstrations on October 7 should not only be supported by the party, but we should help initiate meetings and coalitions to build these massive non-exclusionary actions in every city possible. These actions, coming before the elections, are objectively counterposed to the elections and help break away activists from the perspective that the only thing they can do in the next period is to work on the SWP election campaign or McGovern's campaign. As I pointed out there is already a great deal of hostility to McGovern developing and the forces are available among the younger gay liberation organizations to assemble coalitions around these mass actions.

Where we have the comrades available, it would be particularly helpful and advantageous to run up-front gay comrades for Congress or for local office. This helps

explain there is no contradiction in supporting our campaign and building a mass movement. Our campaign is an important weapon, as in all the mass movements, in keeping as many activists as possible independent and in the streets during the election period.

Educational work is still of critical importance to the gay movement. This is important in winning gays to the perspective of coming out and joining the gay liberation movement and being politically active in the other mass movements, perhaps for the first time. Also, educational work plays an important part in winning allies to the gay movement from the straight sector of society. Campus groups and coalitions should be encouraged to hold educational classes and conferences that discuss the origins of gay oppression, the situation of gays in relation to the current radicalization and the history of the gay movement. We should be there to draw the conclusions that only a socialist revolution opens up the possibility of a just, free human society without the oppression of gays.

Struggles around democratic rights will continue to be a key area for the gay movement. There will be attempts to keep the gay organizations off campus as in the past and to throw the already campus registered organizations off campus. Cases of police harassment and victimization will arise. Gays will be discriminated against on the job or denied jobs. Illegal vigilante terrorism will continue to be directed against gays. Only our movement has the concepts of a broad single-issue civil liberties defense committee. Our movement can play a critical role in educating the gay activists on this perspective and strategy in defense work and we can help launch defense committees in response to some specific situation. The work done by the comrades in Minneapolis around the Mike McConnell defense committee is a good example of the work that can be done in this area.

It will be necessary that comrades, particularly those on campus, work within the gay liberation organizations and carry out these perspectives. We want to be known as a part of the leadership of the gay movement and be known as the best builders of the mass action coalitions and the gay contingents.

There may be the forces available for a national campaign to repeal the sodomy and solicitation laws or to extend the civil rights acts to forbid discrimination based on sexual orientation. However, we cannot judge that until we are members of the gay organizations and have a better feel for the movement. We should have this perspective and allow the Political Committee to launch this campaign at any appropriate time. However, this can be done only after the party has settled the basic questions of orientation and intervention.

In Summary

The object of the history of the gay movement is to give comrades a feel for the actual development of the gay movement as a real movement which is part of the current radicalization. This is also the reason why the extensive appendix is attached with so many documents of the gay movement.

The objective of these guidelines is to lay out a perspective for party intervention in the gay liberation movement that would bring the party closer to its goal—that of becoming the mass revolutionary party with the political hegemony needed to lead the masses of radicalizing Americans to a successful transformation of society. To

gain hegemony we must intervene in all the mass movements of this radicalization. Naturally, intervention in all the mass movements is a dialectical strategy of balanced work in the independent movements and work in the party's own name such as our election campaigns. Comrades must answer the question: What strategy and orienta-

tion vis-a-vis the gay liberation movement brings the party closer to our fundamental goal? I think that only intervention in the radicalization as it develops, and not as some comrades fantasize that it should be, will assure the eventual victory we are working for.

APPENDIX

[Five documents are reprinted here for the information of comrades that supplement the main body of my contribution. Where necessary I have added some additional comments of my own which appear in this bulletin in italics. — M. M.]

STATEMENTS BY HOUSTON GLF AND HOUSTON GL

[The following are three documents from Houston gay liberation organizations. The first, "Houston Gay Liberation Front: Statement of Purpose and Demands," was originally formulated by gay activists at the Black Panther Peoples Revolutionary Constitutional Convention held in Philadelphia in 1969. All the GLFs tended to be based on a similar statement of purpose and demands. — M. M.]

HOUSTON GAY LIBERATION FRONT: STATEMENT OF PURPOSE & DEMANDS (Fall, 1970)

We, the brothers and sisters of the Houston Gay Liberation Front, declare ourselves a political group. We are liberating ourselves from oppression and suppression, both that which comes from within ourselves and that which comes from oppressive social forces. We are gay. Getting our heads together. Loving one another. We will be free.

In order to achieve this we require:

1. The right to be gay anytime, anyplace.
2. The right to free physiological change and modification of sex upon demand.
3. The right to free dress and adornment.
4. That all modes of human sexual self-expression between consenting individuals deserve protection of the law and social sanction.
5. The right of every child to develop in a non-sexist, non-possessive atmosphere, which is the responsibility of all people to create.
6. That a free educational system present the entire range of human sexuality, without advocacy of any one form or style; that no sexist rules and sex-determined skills be fostered by the schools.
7. That the language be modified so that no gender take priority.
8. That the judicial system be run by the people through people's courts. That all persons being tried be tried by a representation of their peer group.
9. That gays be represented in all governmental and community institutions.
10. That organized religions be condemned for aiding in the genocide of gay people and enjoined from teaching hatred and superstition.

11. That psychiatry and psychology be enjoined from advocating a preference for any form of sexuality, and the enforcement of that preference by shock treatment, brainwashing, imprisonment, etc.
12. The abolition of the nuclear family because it perpetuates the false categories of homosexuality and heterosexuality.
13. The immediate release of and reparations for gay and other political prisoners from prisons and mental institutions. The support by gay political prisoners of all other political prisoners.
14. That gays determine the destiny of their own communities.
15. That all people, regardless of sex or sexual orientation, share the labor and products of society.
16. That technology be used to liberate all people of the world from drudgery.
17. An immediate end to military oppression both at home and abroad.
18. An immediate end to all police harassment and brutality.
19. The full participation and support of gays in the people's revolution.
20. Finally, an end to domination of one person by another.

[After a number of months a transformation occurred in Houston GLF that paralleled the splits in New York and other cities that produced New York GAA and similar groups. In August 1971 the following two documents were prepared by part of the original leadership of GLF and submitted to Houston GL as it was now called. The group dropped the "Front" as part of an attempt to avoid the ultraleftism that went along with the GLF activities and structure. The following two statements are patterned after statements by NY GAA. — M. M.]

HOUSTON GAY LIBERATION: STATEMENT OF PURPOSE (August, 1971)

WE AS LIBERATED GAY ACTIVISTS demand freedom for the expression of our dignity and value as human beings through confrontation with and disarmament of all mechanisms which unjustly inhibit us; social, economic and political. Before the public conscience, we de-

mand an immediate end to all oppression of homosexuals and the immediate recognition of these basic rights:

THE RIGHT TO OUR OWN FEELINGS. This is the right to feel attracted to the beauty of members of our own sex and to embrace these feelings as truly our own, free from any question or challenge whatsoever by any other person, institution or "moral authority."

THE RIGHT TO LOVE. This is the right to express our feelings in action, the right to make love with anyone, any way, any time, provided only that the action be freely chosen by all the persons concerned.

THE RIGHT TO OUR OWN BODIES. This is the right to treat and express our bodies as we will, to nurture them, to display them, to embellish them, solely in the manner we ourselves determine, independent of any external control whatsoever.

THE RIGHT TO BE PERSONS. This is the right to freely express our own individuality under the government of laws justly made and executed, and to be the bearers of social and political rights which are guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights, enjoined from all legislative bodies and courts, and grounded in the fact of our common humanity.

To secure these rights, we hereby institute Houston Gay Liberation, which shall be completely and solely dedicated to their implementation and maintenance; repudiating at the same time violence (except for the right of self-defense) as unworthy of social protest; disdaining all ideologies, whether political or social; and forbearing alliance with any other organization except for those whose concrete actions are likewise so specifically dedicated.

It is finally to the imagination of oppressed homosexuals themselves that we commend the consideration of these rights, upon whose actions alone depends all the hope for the prospect of their lasting procurement.

WHAT IS GAY LIBERATION (August, 1971)

Gay Liberation is an activist homosexual civil rights organization. Membership is open to all persons who agree with the purpose of the organization and are prepared to work and devote time to their implementation. Gay Liberation is open to all varieties of homosexual culture. No member may be discriminated against because of personal appearance, style of behavior or sexual taste. Gay Liberation has adopted this policy recognizing that prejudice against sub-minorities within the Gay community is inconsistent with the struggle for fundamental human rights.

Gay Liberation avoids involvements in any program of action not obviously relevant to homosexual liberation. Although individual members of Gay Liberation are involved in many social causes, Gay Liberation has adopted the policy of being a one-issue organization which includes a wide range of people having diverse social perspectives.

Gay Liberation is a loosely structured organization with officers and committees. Committee membership is open to any member interested in the particular goal of a specific committee. All policy decisions are made by the general membership.

Gay Liberation is a political organization employing the tactics of orderly confrontation politics. Politicians and individuals in society who contribute to the oppres-

sion of homosexuals are publicly exposed through public confrontation, mass demonstrations and sit-ins. Gay Liberation has adopted this policy recognizing that an essential aspect of the Gay Liberation is the development of an open sense of public identity in the Gay Community and a corresponding sense of responsibility on the part of the government. However, Gay Liberation does not endorse any candidate for public office or any political party. The response of politicians to Gay Liberation confrontations is given the widest possible circulation in the straight and gay press, but the organization itself does not make any commitments to any one politician. Gay Liberation has adopted this policy to avoid compromising entanglements within the political system.

Gay Liberation is a cultural organization and recognizes that homosexuals are socially, educationally and culturally oppressed. Gay Liberation sponsors a variety of activities such as dances, consciousness-raising sessions, and small discussion groups to promote the unity and morale of the Gay community and to increase the members' awareness of their common oppression. Gay Liberation espouses the philosophy that known homosexuals have a right to live in and participate fully in the life of the community.

* * *

RESOLUTION OF THE NATIONAL COALITION OF GAY ORGANIZATIONS

[The following resolution was passed at the National Conference on Gay Political Strategy held in Chicago, February 11-13, 1972. The conference was attended by approximately 200 persons from 86 organizations from throughout the country. The conference was broadly recognized as a major conference of the entire gay liberation movement. Not only were all major tendencies of the gay movement represented, but Dr. Benjamin Spock attended and spoke as the People's Party presidential candidate. Also, Mayor Lindsey sent a telegram to the conference presumably pledging active support for the "goals of this nation's gay community, both in New York City and in my campaign for the presidency (sic) (Advocate, March 15, 1972, page 1)."]

[The following has been referred to as the "Bill of Gay Rights" and as the "Gay Rights Platform," and established the National Coalition of Gay Organizations. — M. M.]

Millions of gay women and men in this country are subject to severe social, economic, legal and psychological oppression because of their sexual orientation.

We affirm the right of all persons to define and express their own sensibility, emotionality and sexuality and to choose their own life-style, so long as they don't infringe upon the rights of others. We pledge an end to all social, economic and legal oppression of gay women and men.

We demand the repeal of all laws forbidding voluntary sex acts involving consenting persons in private.

Laws forbidding loitering for the purpose of soliciting for a homosexual liaison are vague and unconstitutional. Nevertheless, they are frequently used as the legal cover for police entrapment of gay women and men.

We demand the repeal of all laws prohibiting solicitation for a voluntary private liaison.

Prejudice and myth have led to widespread discrimination against gay women and men.

We demand the enactment of civil rights legislation which will prohibit discrimination because of sexual orientation, in employment, housing, public accommodations and public services.

DEMANDS:

Federal:

1. Amend all Federal Civil Rights Acts, other legislation and governmental controls to prohibit discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations and public services because of one's sexual orientation.

2. Issuance by the President of an executive order prohibiting the military from excluding persons who of their own volition desire entrance to the Armed Forces for reasons of their sexual orientation and from issuing less-than-fully honorable discharges for homosexuality and the upgrading to full honorable of all such discharges for homosexuality previously issued with retroactive benefits.

3. Issuance by the President of an executive order prohibiting discrimination in the Federal Civil Service because of sexual orientation in hiring and promoting; and prohibiting discrimination against gay women and men in security clearances.

4. Elimination of tax inequities victimizing single persons and same-sex couples.

5. Elimination of bars to the entry, immigration and naturalization of homosexual aliens.

6. Federal encouragement and support for sex education courses prepared and taught by qualified gay women and men, presenting homosexuality as a valid, healthy preference and life-style and as a viable alternative to heterosexuality.

7. Appropriate executive orders, regulations, and legislation banning the compiling, maintenance, and dissemination of the information on individual sexual preferences, behavior and social and political activities for dossiers and data banks and ordering the immediate destruction of all such existing data.

8. Federal funding of aid projects by gay women's and men's organizations designed to alleviate the problems encountered by gay women and men which are engendered by an oppressive sexist society.

9. Immediate release of all gay women and men now incarcerated in detention centers, prisons and mental institutions, because of sexual offenses relating to victimless crimes or their sexual orientation and that adequate compensation be made for the mental and physical duress encountered and that all existing records relating to the incarceration be immediately expunged.

State:

1. All federal legislation and programs enumerated in Demands 1, 6, 7, 8, and 9 above should be implemented at the state level where applicable.

2. Repeal of all state laws prohibiting private sexual acts involving consenting persons' equalization for homosexuals and heterosexuals of the enforcement of all laws.

3. Repeal all state laws prohibiting solicitation for pri-

vate voluntary sexual liaisons and those laws prohibiting prostitution, both male and female.

4. Enactment of legislation prohibiting insurance companies and any other state-regulated companies and any other state-regulated enterprises from discriminating because of sexual orientation in insurance and in bonding or any other control of one's personal demeanor.

5. Enactment of legislation so that child custody, adoption, visitation rights, foster parenting and the like shall not be denied because of sexual orientation or marital status.

6. Repeal of all laws oppressing transvestism and cross-dressing.

7. Repeal of all laws governing the age of sexual consent.

8. Repeal of all legislative provisions that restrict the sex or number of persons that enter into a unit of marriage, and the extension of all legal benefits to all persons who cohabit regardless of sex or number.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC PARTY GAY RIGHTS PLANK

[The following is the text of the Gay Rights Plank as submitted to and rejected by the Platform Committee of the Democratic Party at its 1972 Miami convention. It was then submitted to the convention as a whole as a minority report. — M. M.]

Millions of gay women and men in this country are subject to severe social, economic, and legal oppression because of their sexual orientation.

We affirm the right of all persons to define and express their own sensibility, emotionally, and sexuality, and to choose their own life-style, so long as they do not infringe on the rights of others.

The new Democratic Administration will:

1. Urge the repeal of all laws, federal and state, regarding voluntary sex acts involving consenting persons in private, laws requiring attire, and laws used as a shield for police harassment.

2. Enact civil rights legislation which will prohibit discrimination because of sexual orientation in employment, housing, public accommodations, and public services.

3. Eliminate sexual orientation or preference as a criterion for employment by all public and governmental agencies, in work under Federal contract, for service in the United States Armed Services, and for licensing in government-regulated occupations and professions.

4. Eliminate sexual orientation as a criterion for obtaining or retaining loans, insurance and bonding.

5. Eliminate sexual orientation as a criterion for immigration to the United States.

6. Upgrade to honorable all less-than-honorable military discharges previously given solely because of sexual relations between consenting persons or because of allegations relating to sexual orientation.

7. Seek the release of all persons incarcerated in prisons and mental institutions for victimless sex acts.

July 31, 1972

CRITICAL REMARKS ON BARRY SHEPPARD'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE CURRENT DISCUSSION

by Michael Maggi, Los Angeles Branch

Barry Sheppard submitted a contribution to the discussion of gay liberation entitled, "Concerning the Gay Liberation Movement and the Party's Orientation To It," (Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 30, No. 1). His modest contribution takes up three areas of discussion: the nature of gay oppression, the history of the gay movement and its current state of development, and some remarks on what he feels should be the party's orientation toward the gay movement at this time. I think Barry Sheppard's contribution is in all areas incomplete, sometimes inaccurate and very often misleading.

Sheppard "leaves aside all discussion about why homosexual impulses exist, or why a section of the population prefers homosexuality. . . ." After doing this he gropes around looking for a fully accurate analogy in another sector of the population in order to understand gay oppression, and concludes—quite correctly—that gay oppression is not identical to the oppression of workers, oppressed nationalities or women. However, this misses the point—another form of oppression exists: the oppression of homosexual "impulses" within all of humanity of patriarchal class societies and the social oppression and discrimination against gay people in this society. The class nature of gay oppression is developed in David Thorstad's contribution, "Gay Liberation and Class Struggle" (Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 30, No. 2); so I won't attempt to repeat what he has said but will simply refer to his work.

But Sheppard is in an immediately difficult situation in trying to explain why the oppression of gays exists. In a somewhat casual and partially misleading couple of paragraphs, Sheppard twists and turns attempting to explain, or almost explain away, gay oppression by pointing out some things that we might all agree are *not* true.

In trying to first explain the "prejudice" against gays, Sheppard makes the simple observation that gays are neither a class, caste, nationality or a third oppressed sex analogous to women. Sheppard points out that, "The prejudice against gay people, however, is not (as in the case of women or Blacks) a direct result of a subordinate social role played by gay people—gay people play no special social role." Correct, *but so what?* What is the social role of the total oppression of gays and the refusal by this society to allow for any socially acceptable role for gay relationships? This question is more germane to the current discussion, and one which Sheppard never fully discusses.

However, in this area, Sheppard does state that, "The prejudice against homosexual acts and gay people is a by-product of the traditional morality, which is the emotional and ideological glue helping to hold the nuclear family together. . . . The discrimination against gay people, in turn, is a result of this prejudice, prejudice that is ultimately derived from that social structure known as the family—itself a product of class society." This is one place where Sheppard is exactly wrong. The prejudice of straight people is a result of the discrimination

and oppression of gays and gay sexuality in this society, not the other way around. It is simply not the case that gays are oppressed in this society because of the intolerance of straights, as a simple "by-product" of morality, without the capitalist state and class society having a deep interest in maintaining that oppression, discrimination and prejudice.

Antihomosexuality is not a "by-product" of morality, but is part of the purpose of morality. The oppression of gays needs an ideological justification, and morality provides it—in the form of "God's Law" and "Scientific Opinion."

This confusion and indecision on Sheppard's part on why there is oppression of gays in the first place leads to the impression that the changing attitudes of society and the relative weakening of the antihomosexual climate in society is the result of people "losing" their "prejudices."

After a few words on the fact that a couple of gay organizations developed in the early 1950s, Sheppard goes into a more lengthy discussion of the fact that compulsory sex-morality is losing part of its hold over everyone—straights as well as gays.

The two major factors, in Sheppard's opinion, for the rise of the gay liberation movement is the somewhat sudden and unexplained change in the "prevailing attitudes on homosexuality in society as a whole, together with the changes in prevailing views on sexuality in general," and a sort of spillover from the radicalization, especially from the student and women's movement.

I am not sure I am reading Sheppard's section correctly here. If I am mistaken on his position and am understating his estimate of the rise of the gay liberation movement, I would appreciate Barry correcting me. However, it seems to me that this entire section is written from the point of view that it is the increased tolerance of gays by straights that has opened the door to the gay liberation movement and that the gay movement's dynamic is not based on the radicalization of gays, but on the alienation of youth and the recognition of the dangers of lesbian-baiting to the women's movement.

Another example is Sheppard's remark, "While these developments (increased toleration and the reaction in the women's movement against lesbian-baiting) lay the ground for the rise of the gay liberation movement, this movement itself has in turn brought a higher level of understanding and consciousness of the oppression of gay people among radicalizing youth, and wider layers." What about the importance of the radicalization of gays in the rise of the gay liberation movement? What role did the experiences from the 1890s to the 1950s play? What about the "higher level of understanding and consciousness" among gay youth and in the larger gay community, and not just in youth-in-general or other people-as-a-whole?

The discussion of the current state of the gay liberation movement is particularly weak. Sheppard mentions the past Christopher Street demonstrations without comment on the united-front committees that organized the actions, their significance, development or current activities. The

activities have involved tens of thousands of gays in demonstrations in every part of the country, but of the current state of these nationally coordinated actions Sheppard only states, "This year, again, it looks as though there will be Christopher Street actions in some cities." *Yep, looks like it!* In fact, although these actions this year occurred in fewer cities than last year and involved less persons, these actions, in an election year, involved more than 11,000 gays and occurred in a couple of cities that had never had public gay demonstrations of any variety.

Sheppard points out that there has been some developments in the gay liberation movement in the past two years. But he goes no further to explain in depth what these developments were: the initial Gay Liberation Fronts have mostly split or been transformed. Two distinct currents have developed with different organizational forms than previously. These groups either became ultraleft, countercultural organizations which have disappeared in most places or they developed into activist organizations concentrating on civil liberties, electoral activity and mass demonstrations such as the Albany demonstrations and the Christopher Street actions. Sheppard never mentions the Gay Liberation Fronts by name and simply notes the existence of the New York Gay Activists Alliance.

On the current state of the campus gay liberation organizations, Sheppard simply notes that, "On many campuses, some viable gay groups have continued to function. Many of these, however, seem to be, at present, concerned primarily with providing various social services and outlets for gays, although we could expect that they could be mobilized around specific struggles, should they develop." This is partially inaccurate and partially misleading. The major focus of these groups in the past period has been the Christopher Street actions and electoral activity. They have mobilized around specific struggles such as the Mike McConnell defense committee, the Albany demonstrations, the fight around Intro 475 in New York City, antiwar demonstrations called by NPAC and activities called by WONAAC. These groups don't have a mass-action perspective completely thought out, therefore there are constant oscillations between these various actions and others such as gay dances and conferences; and social-work activities. However, it is usually the more conservative groups that open or operate "gay community services centers" which the campus gay groups relate to.

Sheppard recognizes that the state of the gay movement is a very "uneven picture" nationally. Sheppard, however, doesn't describe the unevenness, only the regressions.

I think that it is incontestable that in the last year the gay movement has deepened its roots in the gay community, that it continues to mobilize gays in mass actions and has continued to spread geographically. In addition to this, in my first contribution, "History, Documents and Analysis of the Gay Liberation Movement and Proposed Outlines for Party Gay Work," I described some of the political developments with the emergence of the four central democratic demands being raised as the basis of the October 7 gay demonstrations in Los Angeles. I won't repeat myself here.

Sheppard is in error when he states, "There is no national organizational framework of gay liberation organizations." The National Conference on Gay Political Strat-

egy that was held in Chicago last February and that formed the National Coalition of Gay Organizations (NCGO) was reported in *The Militant*. There have been a number of regional conferences since that time and NCGO has engaged in some activities recently reported in *The Militant*, such as the telegram it sent to McGovern demanding he repudiate the stand taken in his name on the Gay Rights Plank in the Democratic Party Platform Committee and the demonstrations NCGO has called.

The Christopher Street actions that occurred throughout the country are another indication of the development of the gay liberation movement. The underdevelopment in the gay movement is of an organizational conjuncture that is in contradiction to the national development of the movement. The NCGO could be the solution to this problem and be the national coordinator of the demonstrations on October 7 in cities throughout the country on the four demands, and the organizer of a national campaign to repeal all sodomy laws and solicitation laws.

As if to denigrate the development of the gay liberation movement, Sheppard says, "The gay liberation movement at present encompasses a small fraction of homosexual people. It remains to be seen how extensively gay people will be mobilized to struggle for their rights, exactly what forms this struggle will take, and the tempo of the struggle." I cannot understand the point Sheppard is trying to make here. It is obvious that no movement has mobilized the whole, or any large percentage, of the people who sympathize with their actions, let alone support their cause generally. The antiwar movement has had a demonstration of a million; who would denigrate this action because it did not mobilize the 70 percent of the population who are against the war? Has the women's movement encompassed more than a small fraction of women in actions? It remains to be seen how extensively any of these movements will actually mobilize the masses. Yet, we do have some expectations and organize in order to maximize the numbers involved in the mass movements. The point of these remarks by Sheppard seems to mean that he considers the gay movement peripheral to the radicalization at best, and possibly a "fad," so the party should just wait and see if it evaporates from the political heat of this country or starts to go somewhere.

The important point to be made about the current state of the gay liberation movement is exactly the opposite of the one Sheppard makes. The gay movement has mobilized tens of thousands of people in nationally coordinated actions in an election year that have become increasingly militant and political. The gay movement is not in the slightest concerned with increased toleration by straights indicated by the change in prevailing attitudes. The gay liberation movement is a movement committed to changing this society to deliver on the demands being made by the gay movement. We should anticipate that the oppressed—including oppressed gays—will not only continue to rebel, and rebel in larger numbers, but we should work toward advancing the mass gay liberation movement and its confrontation with the capitalist system and its government. Gay activists will have to bring this system down and replace it before any fundamental change will occur for the benefit of gays. Only our party understands the importance and the dynamic of the mass movements and knows how to build them.

Sheppard never raises the central question posed to the

party by the gay liberation movement: does the gay liberation movement have the potential of bringing more and more gays into action against this system reinforcing the radicalization as a whole and adding an additional arena of anticapitalist struggle against the ruling class? If the answer to this question is "yes," which I believe it is, then at least two points follow: (1) this movement holds additional opportunities for our party for recruitment of serious revolutionary cadre, and (2) providing leadership for the movement is a part of our assuming the vanguard leadership of this radicalization as a whole.

Sheppard's proposals for orientation by the party does nothing other than continue the current policy of the party. Except his contribution cannot freeze time. Opportunities are open for us to intervene in the gay liberation movement even within the general approach laid down at the last convention. But even now we have not taken advantage of these opportunities because of the deep political hostility some of our comrades feel toward the gay liberation movement. Continuing our present policy and following Sheppard's recommendations would only lead to

organizational warfare in some of the branches over what should, could or might be done in any specific situation.

I disagree with Sheppard on every point of his analysis of the current state of the gay movement, and if the analysis I have begun is essentially correct, then I think national direction is imperative to undertaking any intervention. This would enable the party to reap the maximum gains and overcome any problem in individual branches in a political way without personal hostility.

Naturally branches will have to rationally develop gay work if the guidelines I proposed were to be implemented. The T & Ps of individual branches will require certain resources at a specific given time for one area of work that might necessitate not doing something in gay liberation that might otherwise be done. But I am opposed to any formal statement or attitude of the party that would state that gay work would be undertaken only after all other opportunities for party work were exhausted. This would only mean that nothing would be done in gay liberation. I am for the intergration of gay work into the perspectives of intervention and activity by the Socialist Workers Party.

August 1, 1972

IN DEFENSE OF MARXISM AGAINST COMRADE WEINSTEIN

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

Comrade Weinstein concludes his bulletin, *A Contribution To The Discussion On Gay Liberation*: "More important, by drawing all the correct lessons from this whole chapter we can give a new dimension to the understanding of the younger comrades in what a class approach to politics is all about."

One modest aim of the present contribution is to give a new dimension to Comrade Weinstein's understanding of Marxism, as philosophy and as method of analysis.

A difficulty presents itself, however, in Weinstein's method of presentation. Much of his bulletin has the character of shadow-boxing—specifically, when Weinstein presents an argument to be refuted, one does not know who said or wrote it. There are no attributed quotes in the entire contribution, and one cannot tell if these ideas came from private conversations in California, from things I or others have written, or from Weinstein's head alone.

By setting up and jabbing at various straw dummies, Weinstein presents a viewpoint or viewpoints on the quality and extent of gay oppression; he concludes with a negative assessment of the role gay oppression plays in the revolutionary movement and of the desirability of recruiting gays.

I believe Weinstein's major points can fairly be stated in the following two propositions, which I hope to show

are incorrect:

- 1) Gay people are oppressed—if at all—only trivially.
- 2) This oppression (real or imagined) plays no appreciable part in the class struggle.

Is Gay Oppression Real?

It is difficult to believe that anyone in America with a modicum of common sense could deny that gay people are oppressed. Ask people if they would like to be homosexual. Ask them if they'd like their sons or daughters to be homosexual. Ask them if they *are* homosexual. Most would answer "no" to these questions, but I'd bet they'd communicate a lot more. New York City Councilman Ribustello recently said, "If one of my sons was a homosexual, I'd hang him!" a not untypical sentiment.

Huey Newtom stated that gay people may well be the most oppressed section of American society. In Cleveland, Philadelphia, and New York, I have heard gay Black men discuss whether they felt more oppressed as Blacks or as gays. Almost all felt far more oppressed as gays, and I assume they knew what they were talking about. Gay oppression is not the same as Black oppression, but both are real.

Apparently it is necessary one more time to spell out some concrete aspects of the oppression of gay people.

I wrote the following for the pamphlet, *Gay Liberation*, published by the Red Butterfly on February 13, 1970, for the national SMC conference held in Cleveland:

"1. *Physical Attacks*

Hatred and fear of homosexuals is so strong among much of the population, particularly the police, that we are subject to a summary death sentence, for no other reason than being gay. Dozens of gay people have been murdered in New York and San Francisco alone during the last few years. Thousands are beaten every year.

"2. *Archaic Legal Codes*

Even private homosexual acts between consenting adults, which harm no one, are illegal in every state except Illinois. Some state laws call for life imprisonment.

"3. *Occupational Exclusion*

Very few gay people are hairdressers, interior decorators, etc., and not all of these are gay. Gay women and men can be found in all occupations. But very few jobs anywhere are open to anyone who is known to be gay. A gay person can only find and keep employment by living in secrecy and falsifying his own life.

"4. *Psychological Oppression*

Gay people can be slandered by all of the media, public institutions, organized religions, and every part of the establishment.

The hatred of society can be internalized in a selfhatred which poisons every aspect of an individual's relations with himself and others.

The adolescence of a gay person . . . Have you ever had to laugh at a joke ridiculing what you are?

5. *Blackmail*

6. *Housing*

Limited by our openness.

7. *Freedom to Assemble*

Often the only places we can safely meet each other are in the gay ghetto bars and restaurants owned by criminal syndicates."

Many things could be added to this list: for example, the denial of elementary protection under the law, as recently demonstrated by the Michael Maye affair. See Kendall Green's contribution (Vol. 30, No. 4) for numerous examples of economic discrimination.

The oppression of gay people transcends isolated instances of discrimination, persecution, etc. To understand it fully, one must realize that a gay in Judeo-Christian capitalist America is an "abomination," the worst and most shameful thing in the world.

Weinstein writes: ". . . gays play no special subordinate social role. . . ." I reply that gays play a role as involuntary criminals, outcasts and pariahs. If that isn't subordinate, what is?

The Marxist Overview

I hope we can agree that gays in America are oppressed, concretely and severely.

If we see this phenomenon historically, as a 3000-year persecution corresponding in time and place with the

triumph of the patriarchy and class-domination societies, then as Marxists we have some explaining to do. Obviously, something like this doesn't perpetuate itself by accident for 3000 years. Historical materialism requires us to find a material basis for the oppression of gay people. It requires us to explain how sexual repression supports class rule.

Marxism is holistic. The overall view is always kept in mind, and aspects of reality are seen as organically interrelated. This is opposed to the method of the bourgeois social sciences, which split things into separate and isolated compartments. For example, bourgeois economics is stripped of all social, political, and historic content.

From time to time every major Marxist has had to argue against some variety of "vulgar" or "mechanical Marxism" which would reduce the forces of history to simple, cause-effect economic issues. Weinstein's hangup over "exploitation" and rigid yet far-fetched quality of his logic perfectly exemplify mechanical Marxism.

Most of Lenin's polemic, *What Is To Be Done?* is directed against the Economists, mechanical Marxists who denigrated theory and intellectual activity, who idealized the "average worker," and who neglected the larger radicalization of the period by confining themselves to trade-unionist activity teaching "the sellers of labour-power to sell their 'commodity' on better terms and to fight the purchasers over a purely commercial deal." (*What Is To Be Done?*)

Lenin insisted that: "To bring political knowledge to the workers the Social-Democrats must go among all classes of the population; they must dispatch units of their army in all directions." (*What Is To Be Done* - emphasis in original)

True historical materialism as distinguished from vulgar economic determinism is well represented by Engels in his letter to Joseph Bloch (1890):

"According to the materialist conception of history, the ultimately determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the *only* determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure — political forms of the class struggle and its results, to wit: constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc., juridical forms, and even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brain of the participants, political, juristic, philosophical theories, religious views and their further development into systems of dogmas — also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their *form*. There is an interaction of all these elements in which, amid all the endless host of accidents (that is, of things and events whose inner interconnection is so remote or so impossible of proof that we can regard it as nonexistent, as negligible) the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary. Otherwise the application of the theory to any period of history would be easier than the solution of a simple equation of the first degree.

"We make our history ourselves, but, in the first place, under very definite assumptions and conditions. Among

these the economic ones are ultimately decisive. But the political ones, etc., and, indeed, even the traditions which haunt human minds, also play a part, although not the decisive one." (In *Marx and Engels on Religion*, Schocken Books, New York, pp. 274-5)

A mechanical approach like Weinstein's is useless in explaining the major events in history. Take such an immense social upheaval as the Protestant Reformation. Suppose Weinstein had been in 16th-century Germany. Would he have explained to the Reformers that the Burghers were the revolutionary class destined to lead in the overthrow of feudalism and the establishment of capitalist democracy? Would he have told them to restrict themselves to economic demands relating to markets, credit, property, etc? He would no doubt have considered irrelevant the demands of the Reformation itself: Abolish the priestly class! Every man his own priest! The Bible in plain German! Down with the superstitions about miracles, relics, etc! End ritualism! No more indulgences!

As Weinstein wasn't there to offer advice, Brother Luther on October 31, 1517, posted a list of 95 theses for academic debate on the door of Castle Church in Wittenburg — all 95 theses revolving around the single topic: indulgences. One thing led to another, though not in a smooth upward spiral; human reason came out of hiding; and soon, capitalist democracy was on the order of the day.

Now, with gay liberation we can't necessarily make simple one-by-one analogies between gay liberation and the unionist struggles that are sometimes incorrectly identified with the class struggle as a whole. We wouldn't want to. We do not need to understand everything about how gay liberation makes — and is made by — the socialist revolution. To fully explain such aspects of social psychology may be the task of socialist scientists far in the future.

Every struggle for reason is now a struggle for socialism. One does not have to devise mechanical one-by-one analogies to demonstrate this any more than to show that the Copernican astronomy revolution and the bourgeois-democratic revolutions reinforced each other, and that the same forces that burned Giordano Bruno at the stake threw all their weight against the newly emerging property and political relations.

Gay liberation is part of the class struggle and it is on our side of the class barricades. On the other side are the enemies of gay liberation: fascists, Stalinists, big business, feudal religionists. . . .

Marxist Economics and Gay Liberation:

Class Definitions

Weinstein writes, ". . . workers are generally the victims of the worst prejudices perpetuated by the capitalist rulers and their agencies." I feel this is condescending, and should like to know which class or classes have less prejudice than the working class. Marxists from Trotsky to Reich have tended to regard the intermediate strata (petty bourgeoisie) and the little-businessman mentality as the sources of the greatest philistinism and prejudice.

Weinstein implies that, because of their prejudice, the workers will be turned off if they know we support gay liberation. He then, after an explanation of the reserve army of labor, comes to the extraordinary conclusion that since no economic interest is involved for the workers,

we should not ask them to give up their antigay prejudice.

It is obvious that when Weinstein says "worker," he really has a stereotyped "blue-collar worker" in mind. This is wrong. Because of the advancement of the productive forces themselves, an ever-increasing proportion of the working class consists of skilled and educated workers. "Blue-collar" workers are now a minority within the working class itself.

It is unadulterated idealism to define the working class in terms of clothing, life-style, education or the lack of it, skill or the lack of it, prejudice or the lack of it, or physical characteristics. A Marxist defines a working-class person as someone who creates value, works for wages, and is at the mercy of the market for his or her type of work.

The socialist revolution must bring into motion the working class as a whole and must involve persons from every layer of the proletariat. For purposes of recruitment to the revolutionary vanguard, however, young people destined to enter the educated portion of the working class are especially desirable. As Lenin pointed out, ". . . really capable agitators, etc., are not often promoted from the ranks of the 'average.'" (*What Is To Be Done?*)

We cannot afford to cater to backwardness on the basis of some idealised picture of an "average" worker. This is an insult to the working class itself, and to the revolutionary vanguard that will lead it.

Most Gays Are Working Class

If about 80 percent of the American population is working class, then about 80 percent of gays are working class. Gay women and men belong to every economic class and are found in every layer of the working class, approximately in the same proportions as straights.

When Weinstein writes, "This absence of a daily grinding exploitation and overt physical oppression in gay people's lives in contrast to the lives of Blacks, Browns, women and workers," we can see that his image of a "worker" is so stereotyped that a gay person couldn't even be one. Nevertheless, most gays are working class, as such they are exploited, and in addition they suffer real oppression far worse than anything experienced by straight workers, either male or female.

The Reserve Army of Labor

Marx's "reserve army of labor" is a permanent pool of unemployed persons who through their active competition on the labor market keep the wages of employed workers in check. If this reserve army did not exist, it would be theoretically possible for wages to rise to a point at which the accumulation of capital — and the system itself — would be threatened.

Weinstein makes the point that women and oppressed nationalities make up a disproportionate share of the reserve army of labor. The oppression of women and oppressed nationalities is thus tied in with the exploitation of the working class as a whole, through the role they play in the reserve army of labor.

This is a very good point. However, Weinstein then goes on to claim that gay workers, though exploited as workers, are not exploited as gays and furthermore play no role in the reserve army of labor analogous to the roles of women or oppressed nationalities.

Needless to say, the case for gay liberation does not

hinge upon whether or not gays play a special role in the reserve army of labor. It is only Weinstein's "mechanical Marxism" that would imply this. Nevertheless, I think there is something here. I think gays play a very profound role in the reserve army of labor and in the threat it poses to the employed workers.

Kendall Green's article (Vol. 30, No. 4) illustrates the extremes business and government will go to in hunting out gays—detective companies, government witchhunts, insurance company investigations, military discharge papers, etc. Weinstein seems to feel an ordinary gay person can just stay in the closet and avoid being *known*. But it's not always that easy.

When gays are found out and fired, they not only join the reserve army of labor, they join it permanently. Either that, or they find employment only in a lower paid or totally different field than the one they left. Women, etc., are hired in periods of prosperity and let go during depressions. That's how the reserve army works. But gays, once found out and fired, are finished. Whether or not the role of gays is analogous to the roles of women and oppressed nationalities depends upon the factor of being known or not being known. The threat of being discovered and becoming a marginal person is always there.

On another level, the threat to gay people affects the consciousness of all workers. A white male worker is not going to turn into a Black or into a woman. He has no guarantee, however, that he will never be labeled as "queer."

When workers can see their company investigating their heterosexuality, when they see gays hunted out and fired, their reaction will be to act as straight as possible. Straight equals conforming. Queer equals stepping out of line. To be straight, workers support the war in Vietnam. They wear American flags as badges of their heterosexuality. Because of fear and prejudice revolving around gays, they support capitalism, in which they have no objective stake whatever.

Just as thousands of American boys have given their lives in the imperialist war in Southeast Asia rather than permit their "manhood" to be questioned—in the same way millions of workers remove doubts about the system from consciousness so they won't be "queer." In this way, the oppression of gay people aids in the exploitation of all workers.

Recruiting

Weinstein doesn't feel the gay liberation movement has much potential for involving masses of people. At the same time, his main qualm about recruiting gays is that it might prove *too successful*. A peculiar stand for a revolutionist, to say the least.

Let's take this issue head on. I think if we intervene in gay liberation with a correct analysis that we can recruit large numbers of gays, and gays of the highest revolutionary caliber. It is entirely possible that in the future a large part of the membership and leadership of our movement might be gay. We should not be the least bit afraid of this possibility.

Gay people can be found in all layers of the proletariat and yet are sharply oppressed. This dual fact is of the greatest significance for recruiting a revolutionary vanguard.

The capitalist system has a network of interlocking

institutions designed to coopt the most capable members of the working class. Elite universities, for example, exist not only to train the educated proletariat, but also to recruit the brains of the working class to act as managing agents, ideologues, etc., for the capitalists, who can't run things for themselves. In return for certain real and imagined privileges, some of the most capable young people enter the service of the enemy class.

Gays are not so easily coopted. Gay people are sharply aware of their own oppression, and I think most gays feel genuine rage at the injustice which is done them. When we have established the link between gay liberation and socialism, there are large numbers of highly capable gay people who will stop at nothing to abolish the system which is the source of oppression.

Of course, gay people should be recruited on the same basis as anyone else—acceptance of a socialist program. Gays will join our movement because they agree with our one great goal: the abolition of private property!

Science and Gay Liberation Theory

Throughout his contribution Weinstein uses the straw dummy of "psychological oppression," as though some theorist (of our movement?) had pushed the absurd line that gay oppression is predominantly or entirely "psychological" (perhaps even imaginary?). As materialists we can say that when society persecutes us in concrete ways, then it does things to us psychologically. It makes us suffer; it gives us hangups; it makes us angry; it toughens us up. But gay oppression itself is not just in the head—it is real and concrete.

Weinstein claims the "psychological oppression" premise means, "We would also find a greater necessity to refer young people to psychiatric writers of treatises—some of dubious scientific credibility—explaining these psychological phenomena, than to the traditional Marxist classics in order that the comrades could be 'armed' to try to defend this vulnerable line."

It is true that psychiatric treatises are often of "dubious scientific credibility." The fact is that the gay liberation movement recognizes the psychiatric quacks as a major enemy, an enemy who has carried forward Judeo-Christian superstition under a pseudo-scientific cover. No gay person in our movement has suggested that psychiatry is the discipline to consult for a scientific understanding of sexuality, and it is infuriating that Weinstein should be so oblivious to what we have written on the subject. I presented a consensus of scientific opinion regarding homosexuality in my first article (Vol. 30, No. 1). The disciplines I used were history, anthropology, and statistical research—disciplines which Marx, Engels, and Lenin used and felt at home with.

If Weinstein wishes to express a scientific opinion on the nature of human sexual behavior, then he's got some homework to do. At the very least, he should read Churchill's *Homosexual Behavior Among Males* and Ford and Beach's *Patterns of Sexual Behavior*.

If he doesn't feel competent to express a scientific opinion on the subject, then he should step aside for those of us who are competent.

I, for one, have an academic and professional background in the social sciences, have spent years studying the literature on homosexuality, and have been an activist for gay liberation. I am prepared to debate any-

one—from a bourgeois shrink to a backward comrade—on the naturalness of homosexuality, or related topics. Others have also done research and thinking, and we are eagerly awaiting the go-ahead to prepare Trotskyist literature on gay liberation in its many aspects. We cannot afford to be held back by amateurs.

The time has come to talk about serious things in a serious manner. The present discussion has serious theoretical and strategic issues to deal with, and we should not be reduced to pleading with recalcitrant comrades to give up their prejudices.

David Keepnews' "Intervening In The Gay Liberation Movement" and Sudie and Geb's "Concerning An Inade-

quate Compromise" (Vol. 30, No. 4) treat in a serious way the theoretical and practical aspects of an intervention. Sudie and Geb's article is written with their customary flair—I hope this does not prevent comrades from appreciating the high level of analysis in their excellent contribution. The questions which Sudie and Geb raise in "Concerning An Inadequate Compromise" are questions which we must be able to answer.

I am convinced that our orientation towards gay liberation has far-reaching implications. It will demonstrate whether the course of our movement is determined by the principles of scientific socialism or whether it is determined by catering to the subjectivity of individuals.

August 4, 1972

ON COMRADE SHEPPARD'S REMARKS CONCERNING THE PARTY'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE GAY LIBERATION MOVEMENT

Jon Hillson, Denver Branch

Comrade Sheppard's contribution to the gay liberation discussion raises points open to serious inquiry.

He states at the outset it is unnecessary to concern ourselves with ". . . *why homosexual impulses exist, or why a section of the population prefers homosexuality.*" (my emphasis)

Why does this not merit concern, considering the general discussion of the possibilities and advantages of our movement in a *wholly new and unprecedented area of work?* To be sure, the discussion of intervention in the gay liberation movement, *per se*, involves serious tactical considerations, but without a thorough discussion of *sexuality in class society*—"impulses" of any kind notwithstanding—the outline the comrade has proposed is incomplete, in fact. It tends to compartmentalize into a tactical discussion the whole *impact* of mass (though not yet massive) movements (the women's liberation and gay liberation movements) whose central dynamics objectively, and many times subjectively, aim at the complete overthrow of the compulsive sexual roles which dominate and are dominated by class society and its institutions. In the absence of discussion on these impulses (the *word* itself, by the way, has its own implications) and sexual oppression generally, we are left in a political limbo: homosexuality *may or may not* be a sickness, socialism will abolish the material conditions which then may have "bred" homosexuality, etc.

Even within the limits for the discussion proposed by Comrade Sheppard that question, among others, is *objectively asked*, or conversely *not posed*, but in any event is a real factor in formulations, outlooks, proposals, etc.

The difference between humans and animals—animals, even insects are bisexual, sometimes androgynous—is the ability to decide, consciousness the ability to control and shape events, to create.

While material conditions have changed in the process

of societal development from primitive communism to feudalism to capitalism, with both known and barely identifiable revolutions having transformed the planet, the creation of an embryo of understanding that sexual norms are *socially shaped*—the norm of exclusive heterosexuality—is essentially unparalleled.

One hundred and more decades of sexual mysticism that has bottled and compressed human sexual energy and capacity into one rigid norm is being totally challenged: as if the "mystical" skin of the onion is being ripped with great speed to get to that manifestly simple center.

What exists now, in the period of vast decomposition of class society, in the gay liberation movement is at once a movement whose central goals are democratic—although the bourgeois revolution did not demand the right to be treated as human beings for the mass of society—but whose impact, whose thrust is far greater than *the self-defense of a specific sexual taste or practice.*

It challenges the fundamental sexual norm of class society. That norm is a pillar of bourgeois society, of bourgeois society, of the workers states which have incorporated the sexual ideology of the previous and vanquished ruling class.

The advent of the gay liberation movement is a signal of the advanced stage of capitalism we are in. Capitalism, truly, digs its own grave: the more *advanced* the capitalist society, the *greater* the development of the productive forces, the more *far reaching* the powers of reification in that society, all the *greater* is the depth (and the *necessity* of that depth) of the challenge of the radicalization to it. There are no coiled horrors of human oppression left uncovered as that advanced shovel of advanced capitalism digs a grave befitting its increasingly imminent burial.

Indeed, new tasks are required of the Bolshevik vanguard to fully discuss and understand the depth of human

oppression, so that it can meet the requirements of knowledge and action imposed by the most monstrous grave digger of all.

Quickly stated: the development of revolutionary class consciousness will be stalled and stunted by the ruling class insofar as the revolutionary vanguard hangs back from the fullest understanding and translation into action the central dynamics of the class radicalization. If the vanguard adapts to white supremacy; if the vanguard bends to male chauvinism; if the vanguard lacks the fullest confidence in the revolutionary potential of the proletariat; if the vanguard minimizes the linkage between the material reality of class society and sexual oppression, the impact of sexual backwardness, the powers of adhesion which *limit the speed and deepening* of the consciousness required by a radicalization whose socio-sexual overtones are nothing less than the *fullest* response to the system of oppression it seeks to dismantle.

Comrade Lauritsen's quote of Jarvis Tyner's position on the question illuminates the pitfalls we could run into with an *unenunciated* position on sexual oppression. Says Tyner, "We are opposed to the oppression of homosexuals on the basis of their being homosexuals . . . but it is a psychological problem. It's based on the bourgeois concept of manhood." Jarvis's civil libertarianism obviously does not endear him to gay militants. The question remains: what is the *radical* analysis, the analysis which probes the very roots of sexual oppression, the analysis which responds to the unprecedented rise of and challenges posed by the gay liberation movement?

We oppose the oppression of homosexuals, the special oppression they face in class society (and, to be included, in the workers states) as homosexuals.

And we oppose sexual oppression in general. But . . . *what is sexual oppression?* What is the social, material, sexual context in which gay oppression *specifically* occurs? What of those sexual impulses: are they a product of capitalist decay, as sickness? What of the challenge gay liberation poses to the norm of compulsive heterosexual monogamy? Is it a healthy challenge? Does it demand an analysis of the norm which has brought of that challenge? Isn't sexual oppression a central aspect of *alienation*, thus requiring a deepening and expansion of the Marxist understanding of alienation, a requirement inherent for understanding the unfolding of the class struggle?

Is there a general, *undefined human sexual capacity* at birth which, because of the dominant sexual ideology of bourgeois culture, is warped and distorted? Isn't bisexuality what humans have the sexual capacity for in a free society? Isn't it *more* than a question of a tactical discussion on whether or not to commit cadre to a progressive movement headed by democratic demands?

The institutions of human oppression, church, state, feudal aristocracy, capitalist bourgeoisie, have spent a hundred generations, built a civilization, written God's word, incorporating what sexuality should be, must be, not only for happiness on earth, but ultimate good humor in eternity.

Certainly then, to limit our discussion to a *civil libertarian* outlook based upon the central questions of tactics is incomplete. Certainly, then, "sexual impulses," heterosexual and homosexual, the very meaning and oppression of sexuality in society, become points of discussion for revolutionary Marxists.

The very fact that Comrade Sheppard postpones until an unnamed time answering the question of where those impulses come from points to both his asking and *answering* that question. That is, he leaves unchallenged the possibility that those impulses are likely *not* natural (that is the dominant view in society and on the organized left), that heterosexuality is the norm and will be for unstated reasons. On the other hand, a *discussion* involving those points, among others, Comrade Sheppard says should be *left aside*.

The controversial and provocative subject of this discussion may well lead to informal discussion after the literary discussion closes. The healthiest circulation of ideas, the most productive exchange of views and differences requires not "leaving aside" important questions, but facing and attempting to answer them.

Comrade Sheppard's brief statement on the character of our intervention stresses the following points:

Comrade Sheppard states:

"There is no national action coalition around specific issues of gay oppression which we could start from scratch and help build. Any attempt to start from scratch and try to build an organization or coalition would be a very difficult enterprise. . . ."

He concludes it would fail.

He raises the point that our own movement should not substitute itself for "the broader forces we might like to see organized but which are not at the present time."

While the latter formulation is certainly correct, it is simply axiomatic to *all* our mass work. That is, if we apply Comrade Sheppard's statement to other areas of our mass work, would we come up with similar conclusions on building the movement for repeal of all abortion laws, for instance? Conclusions calling for a branch-to-branch orientation? The answer is, obviously no. Yet, a different perspective is offered for gay work in spite of real, similar problems encountered in the abortion law repeal movement and in antiwar work. That general contradictoriness should be kept in mind in the present discussion.

Stated another way, the real day-to-day activity of comrades in the antiwar and abortion law repeal movement—especially in this period—reveals the organizational weakness and problems of "substitutionism" Comrade Sheppard finds in the gay movement.

Hasn't the problem of "breadth of forces" been raised practically, seriously, periodically in all our work?

And while NPAC, of course, wasn't started from "scratch" certainly whole sectors of the antiwar movement abstained from its construction—opposed it in fact—making our participation in it decisive.

Comrade Sheppard's political conclusions about our intervention in the gay movement should be studied in light of the political and organizational contexts of our work in other movements, in the crises, organizationally and politically those movements have faced *and the concrete organizational and political responsibility and activity of our movement in them*: especially keeping in mind Comrade Sheppard's correct point on substitutionism.

At the same time, I believe it is necessary to go over the empirical evidence of activity in the gay movement which Comrade Sheppard reported in his document, the empirical evidence from which he has drawn his organizational conclusions for his proposal for our work orientation.

First, I believe Comrade Sheppard's remarks on activity in the gay liberation movement are incomplete. His documentation is indeed scant, in fact, in outlining a general perspective for our movement's orientation to a new arena of work, is unnecessarily insufficient. That very insufficiency however, in his document, is the given material proof *requiring* Comrade Sheppard's proposal for our intervention. A full, complete, rounded picture of gay activity, given the organizational criteria Comrade Sheppard discusses—and applying the lessons of our initial work—and the concrete political situations in which that occurred—in the antiwar and abortion law repeal movement, we can see a wholly different orientation than that proposed by Comrade Sheppard's proposal is called for.

At the *outset*, it should be clear to all that the *absence* of a Trotskyist tendency, armed with an analysis gay oppression and a programmatic, mass-action response to it, to some extent has contributed both to the ultraleft utopianism and reformism which have stunted the development of the gay movement. Comrade Sheppard's analysis at once documents the problems and pitfalls which have plagued the gay movement *without mentioning the specific absence of the struggle for leadership* of the movement by revolutionary Marxist current, the struggle for the orienting of the movement to a class-struggle mass-action approach. *That gap in analysis confirms* how important our activity is in the unfolding mass movements, that *in spite of our absence*, the presence of the gay movement has become even more evident, its impact has grown, and it has *stayed in the streets in mass actions against gay oppression*. Witness the continuity of Gay Pride demonstrations, Christopher Street actions, etc., on the one hand, and the decline of similar mass activity on August 26 after the first mass action three years ago.

This summer's gay actions, organized around clearly formulated, militant democratic demands, in San Francisco, New York, Philadelphia and other cities, organized in the absence of our intervention, in a one-month period doubled the size of all the abortion law repeal demonstrations thus far organized by WONAAC. I don't believe that comparison slights in any way WONAAC's activities, their impact, our strategy in the abortion law repeal movement, nor am I attempting to skip aside the tremendous problems posed by red-baiting, election-year pressures, the attitudes of NOW and the National Women's Political Caucus and the attacks of the church and state on a woman's right to choose.

What that comparison points out is the incomplete conclusion Comrade Sheppard has drawn from scant documentation of gay liberation activities. In fairness, his remarks occurred prior to those activities: nonetheless, the mass defense activities of the gay movement for victimized militants—in New York, the New York City council gay rights bill support activity; the job-defense activity in Minneapolis; even *larger* Gay Pride demonstrations *last year* are real, no matter the timing of this summer's activity. And the social and political pressures generally facing the gay movement are by no means minimal.

For instance, the Gay Pride demonstration in Philadelphia this summer of 10,000 (*Philadelphia Bulletin* estimate) was both the largest demonstration in any area of mass activity in Philadelphia in more than a few months—it was for instance, in size, as big as all the

combined citywide antiwar and abortion law repeal demonstrations in Philadelphia in the past year—as well as being a very large mobilization of the Black community (half the crowd).

The response of large layers of gay activists to their manipulation and deception by the McGovern camp (*The Militant*, July 28) has been to toughen up; to call, in fact, for demonstrations against the betrayal by the "new politics." In contrast, the Black reformists of Gary who chimed "one more chance" for the Democratic Party to accede to their demands chucked first the Black Agenda, then an emaciated Black "bill of rights" as the excess baggage which would have slowed their chances for grabbing McGovern's 30 pieces of silver. And while feminist Democrats split over McGovern's cavalier and arrogant treatment of their demands, no denunciation comparable to that of the gay militants has been forthcoming.

Finally, the size of gay contingents since the real inception of contingents in antiwar demonstrations has been very significant. The gay contingent was the largest contingent on April 24 in San Francisco, on November 6 in the Bay Area, in numerous other cities on that day, of considerable size if not the largest, in actions across the country since then.

The real evidence of militancy, the continuity of mass actions and the nature of the struggles all point to an affirmative response on our part in the commitment of our forces to the building of the gay liberation movement on a national level, on the basis of a worked-out national program, within organizational and political guidelines generally similar to those required by our activity in the feminist, Chicano, Black and antiwar movements.

Comrade Sheppard does not favor this at the present time. He proposes a branch-to-branch orientation. While I believe that conclusion is insufficient generally in terms of what we should do, there are also other objections which flow from that orientation.

1) Because of the absence of any national strategy or line of real significance, any outline, the intervention could become the center of interbranch disagreements which could have the objective dynamic of forcing gay comrades (and other comrades) *out* and making our commitment to recruitment of gay activists verbal only.

2) It could give a handle to comrades whose *political outlook* on homosexuality and gay liberation is backward, to beat back any attempts to seriously intervene. Political disagreements could become "priority arguments" with some comrades seeking to substitute "priorities" as foils for holding back gay work, something which would hamper the education of comrades on how we define priorities, etc.

3) While the application of our work in many areas may generally differ from branch to branch—that is, *what we are able to accomplish*—our political work is carried out in a democratic centralist fashion, in the context of general and specific strategy and tactics the whole party decides on. While, for instance, Chicano work may vary from branch to branch—there may be no Chicano comrades in branch X while there are in branch Y; or, there is no ballot fight in branch A but there is in branch B—the party's work is not the *aggregate of locally decided activity*, which then forms a vague national policy. We are not a federation of fractions, branches, work areas,

etc. That, however, I believe, *may* be the result of Comrade Sheppard's proposal, in practice, in terms of gay work. In other words, we have the *possibility* of branch X intervening in an existing gay organization, or constructing a campus-based gay liberation coalition or organization while branch Y confines itself to press statements through the campaign because the "priority" was not there for certain activity proposed. *Is each branch essentially faced with the responsibility of making up its own program for intervention?* What if the program of the Colorado SWP campaign differs from that of the Massachusetts campaign? The San Francisco branch differs from . . . the branch across the bay? What if branch A decides they do not need to present a program, rather the general demand of democratic and civil rights our party now supports and branch B thinks that absence is incorrect while it disagrees with demands raised in the program of branch C? The branch decision to intervene should *be* programmatic, shouldn't it? What if the gay organization branches X, Y and Z are involved in splits and the branches have different positions on the split?

Don't the norms of democratic centralism become con-

fused?

Couldn't that perspective (and the possible problems it will accrue) confuse potential gay (as well as straight partisans of gay liberation) recruits about the seriousness of the party in the application of our work in that area?

4) And because of all the aforementioned in 1, 2 and 3, couldn't large numbers of comrades, out of the best motivated party loyalty and patriotism, seek to avoid that confusion and tension by simply *holding back*; or, put another way, self impose a conservative outlook and approach for *tactical* reasons?

The dynamic of sexual revolution, especially now under neo-capitalism (and just beginning in the deformed workers states), is unprecedented in scope. The underestimation of its impact, potential and power is the minimization of the total scope of the social revolution.

The understanding of the intermingling of those "two" revolutions, our concurrent ability to exacerbate the social tensions that proceed their consummation are new tests of the dialectical materialist method and Leninist approach which characterize our party.

July 30, 1972