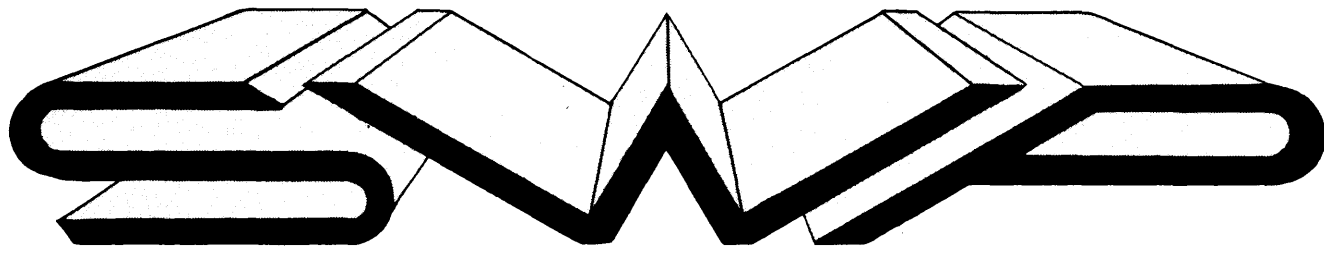


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Contents	Page
A CONTRIBUTION TO THE DISCUSSION ON GAY LIBERATION , by Gloria Albee, Seattle Branch	3
THE PARTY'S ORIENTATION TOWARD GAY LIBERATION , by George Novack, Lower Manhattan Branch, New York Local	4
CONCERNING THE DISCUSSION , by Barry Sheppard	6
A REPLY TO NAT WEINSTEIN , by Steve Beren, Chicago Branch	11
THE KEY QUESTIONS IN THIS DISCUSSION , by David Thorstad, Upper West Side Branch, New York Local	14
A STATEMENT TO THE PSYCHIATRIC PROFESSION BY GAY LIBERATION , by David Thorstad, Upper West Side Branch, New York Local	19
A BRIEF COMMENTARY ON AN IMPORTANT ISSUE IN THIS DISCUSSION , by Steve Beren, Chicago Branch	20
A LITTLE MORE ON TRANSVESTISM , by Sudie and Geb, Boston Branch	21
A LESBIAN SPEECH AND SOME COMMENTS , by Casey, Oakland-Berkeley Branch	22
GAY LIBERATION VS. "WORKERISM," by Sudie and Geb, Boston Branch	23
GAY IS GOOD, GAY IS BETTER — WHAT SHOULD THE PARTY'S POSITION BE? by Sudie and Geb, Boston Branch	28
SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS , by Kendall Green, Upper West Side Branch, New York Local	29
WHY IS A GAY RIGHTS STAND NOT ENOUGH? by Lucy Roedder, Seattle Branch	30
COMMENTS ON A SIDE ISSUE RAISED IN THE DISCUSSION ON GAY LIBERATION , By Betsey Stone, Upper West Side Branch, New York Local	31

Page 2 :

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A CONTRIBUTION TO THE DISCUSSION ON GAY LIBERATION

by Gloria Albee, Seattle Branch

Two points.

1. With respect to Jon Hillson's "Gay Liberation and the Sexual Revolution." I think it is important for us to have a clear understanding that female liberation means the liberation of females, not liberation from being females. (Female meaning that which bears young or produces eggs.) Female liberation is not tied to test-tube babies or any other mechanical substitution for child-bearing.

It may well be that some future society will choose to reproduce mechanically. That is for them to decide, not us. A great deal more investigation needs to be done in this area before that decision could be made. However, when we speak of female oppression we are speaking of a social creation, not a biological one. If test-tube babies never become a reality, does that mean that females are unable to be liberated? We reject that idea. There is a great deal of evidence that the aches and pains and horrors of child-bearing are just as much socially induced as the horrors of motherhood are.

Which is not to say that women are not ready to take advantage of science and technology in gaining control over their own bodies. Only in this way will it be possible to have genetically perfect embryos implanted. That represents complete control. Abortion and birth control currently give women the control which allows them to decide when *not* to bear a child. Future technology will provide them with the means of choosing when they wish to bear a child. When we defend women's right to control their own bodies, we are defending not only their right to choose not to have children, but also their right to choose to have them. It is a very important point with a lot of women.

2. On the roots of homosexuality. Greek history gives us the greatest clues if we examine that first experiment in state organization. Above all, we should bear in mind that from a society in which women were held in the highest esteem, as represented by Minoan culture, Greek society in its classical period had become notoriously anti-female with an extremely misogynist literature. Not only are 99 percent of all Greek plays concerned with sexual relationships which have women apparently reacting to, rebelling against, or subverting the order of men (causing nothing but sorrow and tragedy for all concerned), but these plays were staged annually in the form of contests at the Festival of Dionysus (the phallic God) and the winning plays were then sent on the road to preach to the provinces. In a society in which women were permitted *no* participation, were locked up in separate quarters within their homes, were not permitted to even view the Olympic Games, women and slaves were both admitted to these morality plays which preached the basically inferior, treacherous and evil nature of women. This was the result of a society which had decided to structure sexual relations in order to ensure the legitimacy of heirs to property. In order to do this it had been necessary to force women to comply by establishing the supremacy of the male.

We may assume that until this time humans had been under no heterosexual strictures, had no particular thoughts at all about the morality or immorality involved in choosing sexual partners, in short that human sexual nature had not been questioned or even considered. We should also assume that, humans being social creatures, they preferred human companionship to that of animals unless they are socialized in some restrictive way. We must imagine then the profound way in which, when women became the personal property of men (became, in short, less than human), their acceptability in men's eyes as companions, as comrades, as love objects underwent a change. We know from the literature of the time that men preferred the company of other men. All joys, sorrows, companionship, laughter, eating, drinking, hunting, games, all social intercourse was spent in the company of other men. In a society which did not place any social onus on sexual selection it would be only human to expect that these men also preferred men as their sexual partners. Any kind of *partnership* implies a relationship between equals. It is not something which can occur between master and slave, husband and wife or, in class society, male and female.

A sexual relationship between equals, however, immediately precluded the possibility for producing heirs, the very reason for degrading women in the first place. Out of such a contradiction undoubtedly came the first restrictions upon homosexuality and its social disapproval. (Until recently restrictions and legislation against homosexuality were directed solely against males. Women, being the property and responsibility of males, were not considered able to initiate any sexual activity.) Thus homosexuality becomes the twin of heterosexuality, just as Black ghettos are the twin side of white supremacy and prostitution is of marriage. It is in this context that we view both heterosexuality and homosexuality as being social problems as surely as are white supremacy, Black ghettos, marriage and prostitution. At this stage, integration, sexual freedom and bisexuality can only be ideals and organization of the oppressed must be on the basis of their oppression.

Sexuality (as opposed to sex) is as socially conditioned as the rest of our behavior is. Sexual oppression of all kinds arises out of the oppression of females. To the extent that gay liberation identifies its oppression with the oppression of women, to that extent it is revolutionary. If women were not despised, homosexuality (effeminacy) would not be despicable. The implicit homosexuality of the locker-room jocks personified by Nixon, Mailer, Westmoreland and company, is built into this system and should be recognized and differentiated as being male supremacist. It is not the same as gayness. It does not identify with women or women's oppression. It cannot permit women the ultimate freedom. The freedom to say, "No." To say, "My sexual nature — whatever it is — cannot be legislated and must not be violated. I am not a sexual being. I am a social being, a cerebral being, a human being."

The central focus of our political activity to end sexual oppression must continue to be directed towards the women's liberation movement. Considering the size of our own movement and the forces currently in motion,

I feel the party's orientation towards the gay liberation movement outlined by Comrade Sheppard, printed in Vol. 30, No. 1, of the Discussion Bulletin, to be the only possible course.

August 26, 1972

THE PARTY'S ORIENTATION TOWARD GAY LIBERATION

by George Novack, Lower Manhattan Branch,
New York Local

Three main questions are involved in the current party discussion on gay liberation. The first pertains to the social and historical significance and political weight of the movement. The second concerns the manner and extent of the party's intervention in the organized struggle of gays against their oppression at the present time. The third is the party's attitude toward homosexuality.

The resistance of female and male homosexuals to the hostility and discrimination they suffer is a phenomenon without parallel in modern society. Although homophile propaganda groups have been known since the 1880s, never before has their movement been so broad, open, aggressive and well organized. It has emerged as the belated manifestation of a drive for democratic rights by a hitherto terrorized and atomized section of the oppressed.

The many-sided struggles for equality and emancipation set off by the bourgeois democratic movement began centuries ago. It has since moved forward on a broad front and in a highly irregular manner. In the present period of capitalist decadence it is proceeding at an accelerated pace. The vanguard of homosexuals has come upon the arena long after other humiliated and neglected forces have made known their grievances, demanded justice, and fought for their demands against the vicious institutions of capitalism and the church.

The gay liberation movement is an outgrowth of profound changes in family relations, psychological and cultural attitudes, and moral standards, that are transforming sexual customs and judgments. It is an integral aspect of the youth radicalization and the women's liberation movement, an irrepressible expression of the opposition to all forms of oppression and repression instituted and maintained by class society. The gays want to obtain their right to determine their own sexual life and affirm their dignity as human beings without being subjected to any penalties for their way of life.

As yet the gay liberation movement is in its formative stage and limited in scope and numbers. But it has been growing in the groping way new social struggles do. Like other components of the current radicalization, this

sector of protest has a dynamic of its own. It can be expected to spread nationally and internationally and draw into its ranks hitherto silent and passive people; awaken, activate, and mobilize them against the prejudices and discrimination that afflict them.

It is one of the tenets of the theory of permanent revolution that demands for democratic and civil rights by large groups of people may be partially conceded but their needs cannot be fundamentally and fully satisfied and realized under imperialist auspices. The struggle of homosexuals for an end to their victimization is no exception. The removal of certain legal inequities and disabilities will not suffice to give them the dignity they seek. The changes they aspire to bring about not only affront deeply-logged prejudices of bourgeois society and the churches, but call into question auxiliary props of the nuclear family and the marriage code.

The attacks upon such institutional arrangements of the established order imparts an anticapitalist tendency to the gay struggle, even if many of its participants fail to recognize the underlying social and political implications of their challenge.

Except for the International Socialists, ours is the only organization on the left in this country to take a positive attitude toward the gay liberation movement and view it as a legitimate component of the rising radicalization. Its development indicates how certain novel phenomena of radicalism and democratism can spring forth in the highly advanced capitalism of North America sooner than elsewhere.

Some comrades dispute this evaluation of the significance of gay liberation, assign little weight to it as a social and political factor, and are dubious of its prospects. The actual growth rate of the movement as it takes more definite shape over the next years should settle this issue.

* * *

The second question to be considered is the party's orientation toward the movement. This is a tactical matter that has to be decided on a rounded view of the present

situation.

The premise from which the party proceeds is its principled position as a defender of democratic rights. The SWP is opposed to all forms of the oppression of homosexuals and vigorously supports the struggles for their rights, as we are doing. This is one of the planks in our national election platform.

This statement of policy and purposes does not, however, dispose of the tactical decision that has to be made: what the party should do in this area at the present conjuncture.

In Barry Sheppard's opinion, it would be inadvisable to engage in a concerted national intervention in gay liberation activities now, in view of the dispersed state of the movement and the schedule of political and organizational priorities of the party. Our participation as an organization should not go beyond support to the initiatives of gay groups around issues of their rights, sympathetic reporting of developments, and disseminating our ideas among them.

This is a more restricted approach than the one being implemented in the antiwar and other movements. Some comrades urge a full-scale participation in gay liberation on the same order as our work among the feminists. They want us to become the "leaders and best builders" of the movement. This does not seem warranted under the given circumstances. The orientation proposed by Barry Sheppard is adequate for the present. What further steps the party may take will depend upon the further development of the movement.

* * *

The third point at issue, which has been raised in several contributions to the discussion, concerns the party's attitude toward sexual relations and activities, and homosexuality in particular. This question is sometimes confused and fused with the second question, although the two are quite distinct and should be separately treated.

The jurisdiction of the revolutionary party does not encompass everything; it is not totalitarian. There are areas in which the Marxist vanguard takes positive and unambiguous positions. These embrace all aspects of the struggles of the exploited and oppressed against class domination and victimization. On this basis the SWP

staunchly defends full democratic rights for homosexuals and the removal of all disabilities from them. Freedom from sexual repression and oppression is an essential element of humanity's efforts to cast off the ills of class society.

At the same time there are many areas where the party does not assert an official opinion or exercise its authority. These include, for example, the conflict of rival concepts and theories in various branches of the natural sciences and in mathematics, the competition of artistic schools and literary tendencies, matters of dress, diet, amusement, etc. Individuals have the right to make up their own minds on all such matters so long as their conduct does not contravene party needs.

Some comrades insist that the SWP go beyond its present position to advocacy of the virtues of homosexuality in unblocking the full potential of sexuality. The party especially refrains from interfering in one of the most sensitive and intimate realms of personal relations, erotic life. It cannot be called upon to set a seal of approval or disapproval on any specific type of sexual relations or activities. Such matters belong to the sphere of personal preference and individual decision.

While the party does not prescribe norms of sexual practice for its members or anyone else, it does have one categorical imperative that applies to the conduct of its members in all areas. The interests of the collective take precedence over the actions of any single individual whose behavior may adversely affect the party's work.

* * *

Our party is the first to encounter and grapple with the problems presented by this novel feature of the radicalization processes. We should therefore proceed with a certain care in working out our policy. The lessons of our experiences and discussions can be helpful to other sections of our world movement in dealing with gay liberation.

Our work with and in the gay movement has essentially the same aims as in other sectors of the radicalization. We support their just struggles for democratic rights and seek to win over the best gay activists to our program for total human liberation through the socialist revolution.

August 28, 1972

CONCERNING THE DISCUSSION

by Barry Sheppard

The literary discussion on the gay liberation movement has tended to center on criticism of proposals I made in an article in Vol. 30, No. 1 of the Discussion Bulletin. On the one hand, a number of comrades have argued that the party should go beyond the proposals I made, both in terms of taking a position on a whole range of questions dealing with sexuality, and in terms of the extent of party involvement in the gay liberation movement as it now exists. On the other hand, Comrades Weinstein and Roland Sheppard are opposed to any party involvement in the gay liberation struggle, if I read them right.

Some of the questions raised about my own position seem to be based on misunderstandings, possibly caused by the brevity of my first comments. Others, however, reflect genuine differences.

Comrade Fred Feldman accurately characterized as a diversion from the purpose of the discussion the position developed most extensively by Comrades Gebert and Trippet, but also by other comrades, that the party must adopt a position on the nature of human sexuality and homosexuality in order to arrive at a correct party-building approach to the gay liberation movement, and his article developed the point well. I would like to comment on two things relevant to this question.

First, the party is a political organization. Its aim is a political one: to construct a mass revolutionary socialist political party that will lead in the conquest of state power by the working class, opening the road to the construction of socialism. In keeping with its aim, the party adopts political positions that guide its work. It does not take positions on a whole range of scientific, cultural and other questions—to do so would cut across its purpose, dilute its nature as a political organization, transform it into an organization advancing one or another scientific or cultural viewpoint, narrow its appeal, and cripple its ability to mobilize the masses on political questions.

Secondly, this particular problem is further complicated by the fact that the whole question of the scientific investigation of sexuality and the related one of psychology is still in its infancy. Especially concerning homosexuality, little is known, and it is difficult to ascertain what is objectively based and what represents prejudice in what knowledge is available. If we were to attempt to adopt a particular viewpoint on the nature of homosexuality, we would become embroiled in a hopeless tangle of opinions, prejudices and personal preferences with little hope of reaching any scientifically valid conclusions, even if that were within the purpose of the SWP, which it is not.

Look at some of the more ludicrous aspects from the political viewpoint, of this discussion: are we really going to allow ourselves to become diverted into a debate over the sex lives of cows, insects and chimpanzees? Over whether heterosexual love is even sexual (Comrades Gebert and Trippet apparently dismiss heterosexual love as merely the "reproductive act")? Over whether the future liberated human will include "liaisons with animals" in its sexual repertoire? Can we definitively answer even

the more germane questions, like the nature of sexual orientation among the communist humans of the future?

While some comrades seem to have very definite opinions about the nature of sexuality among future communist humanity, I assume that most comrades find themselves in the same uninformed position I am in—we can't tell what future sexuality will be like. The socialist revolution will lay the foundations for the transformation of human culture in all spheres, including sexual and other personal relations, but exactly how this will affect sexual relations can only be a subject for speculation at this stage, as is true of a whole range of aspects of the future classless society. We can say that, in sexual relations as in every other sphere, we can expect future communist humanity to be superior to present day humanity. We cannot go much beyond the assertion that the present sexual misery of masses of people will be overcome. And if we extrapolate further, we run a strong risk of merely projecting our own personal preferences, losing sight of the fact that each and every one of us has been formed (and deformed) under capitalism. And in any case, what we say or think about the subject, as Comrade Feldman has pointed out, will certainly be ignored by the free people of the communist future!

If a note of utopianism has crept into the discussion in the form of speculation on the nature of sexuality in the classless society, it is also present in the corollary that some comrades seem to draw from their conviction that bisexuality is the wave of the future—that gayness is in and of itself, per se, progressive right here and now. Comrades Trippet and Gebert are the most definite on this, asserting that gay is better. Their argument is two-fold: bisexuality is the "natural" state of humanity, and bisexuality and even exclusive homosexuality in the present are progressive because they represent some kind of revolt against the bourgeois family institution. The argument that bisexuality is the "natural" state of human sexuality falls into the area of speculation dealt with above. There is no definitive scientific proof either that this is so, or is so in the sense that present-day bisexuals preview what communist humanity will be like.

The argument that bisexuality and homosexuality are progressive because they imply sexual activities that fall outside the framework of the family institution, is false. Comrade Weinstein correctly refuted this argument, pointing out that it falls into the category of attempting to build a "counterculture." Homosexuality and bisexuality are no replacements for the family—sexual activities of any kind in no way replace the *social* functions of caring for the young and old, performing labor such as cooking, laundry, etc. The reactionary institutions of the patriarchal family will wither away in the process of the construction of socialism, as the social functions it now performs are progressively taken on by society as a whole. And it certainly remains to be seen whether homosexuality is an "answer" to the sexual problems of the masses.

All personal relations in capitalist society are warped and distorted, including relations among bisexuals and homosexuals. It is patently false to assert that homosexuals

or bisexuals in this society have superior personal relations to heterosexuals, including heterosexuals in family units. There are no personal solutions to the problems generated by capitalism, including intimate problems of personal life. No sexual orientation is revolutionary per se—the only criteria for determining what is revolutionary or not are political, and the only revolutionary people are those who are fighting for a revolutionary political program. A comrade who has a miserable personal or distressed sexual life but finds the energy to help build the party is a revolutionary. A bisexual, heterosexual, or homosexual totally immersed in the pursuit of the will 'o the wisp of a harmonious personal life under capitalism, coming up for air long enough to vote for capitalist candidates or otherwise support the system, is not.

The party should take no position at all on the nature of sexuality or homosexuality, nor try to determine what is "good" or "bad" about heterosexuality or homosexuality, and not advocate any specific sexual orientation.

Related to the question of the nature of the party is the one concerning the party's position on transvestism that Comrades Gebert and Trippet have raised. First, it should be clear that the party has no ban on membership of transvestites. It does have a concern with the image of the party in the eyes of its constituency as projected by the dress and decorum of individual members that would in fact prohibit certain female clothing, like dresses, from being worn by male comrades. This comes under the general guideline of not conducting ourselves as far-out types. If our image were to become exotic, that would stand in the way of recruiting and influencing masses of people justifiably suspicious of people that are obviously extremely eccentric. A political person who deviates too far from the social norm in questions like that of dress has lost or never had a sense of proportion about what is politically important and what is secondary, and this is immediately apparent to anyone she or he is trying to influence. The wearing of this or that kind of clothing has nothing to do with being a revolutionary, and responsible members should subordinate personal whims or desires in this regard to the political objective of not placing unnecessary obstacles in our way. Our general rule should be to dress within the socially accepted styles, and the party units have the responsibility to see to it that individual members do not abuse the party by projecting an exotic image of the party.

We have been talking about a tendency of some comrades to lose a sense of proportion in the course of this discussion. I think this is evidenced in another way, on the field of theory, which relates to the writings of Wilhelm Reich. Comrade Lauritsen, for example, mentions Reich along with Trotsky as a representative Marxist.

Wilhelm Reich was a disciple of Freud who developed psychoanalysis along the lines of Freud's early thinking. From his experience as a psychoanalyst, as well as from conclusions he drew from Freud's theory, Reich became convinced that emotional illness and sexual misery were widespread in the population as a whole, that they were fundamentally socially caused, and that therefore the individual treatment possible in psychoanalytic technique could never get at the root of the emotional problems of the masses. He became a socialist, seeing the necessity of a socialist revolution before the foundations for a healthy psychological and sexual life for the masses could be laid down. He first joined the Social Democracy and

then the German Communist Party, before the triumph of fascism.

He rejected Freud's view that psychoanalytical ideas and methods could explain history or society. He accepted the Marxist view, during this period of his life, of the origin of class society, the dynamic of the class struggle, the necessity for the socialist revolution. He accepted in general Engels' views on the origin of the family as having gone hand in hand with the rise of class society. He developed the theory that the place of psychological investigation as developed by psychoanalysis was to explain the psychological impact of the family upon the individual, especially the results of sexual repression rooted in the family that psychoanalysis had unearthed. This investigation, he asserted, could reveal part of the mechanism by which the family institution instills reactionary morals, a tendency to submit to authority, etc., in individuals, and that this knowledge could help revolutionists better understand the prejudices they are up against. It is my own opinion that there are important insights and food for thought for Marxists in many of Reich's earlier writings along these lines.

However, with the consolidation of Stalinism and the victory of German fascism, Reich became disillusioned with the proletarian revolution. He lost sight of and denied that the objective interests of the working class could impel it to struggle for power, and that this struggle could win, given the proper leadership. He retreated from the historical materialism of Marx back into psychology, finding the reasons for the defeat in Germany and the rise of Stalinism in the intrinsic psychological defects of the masses. He thus became an *opponent* of Marxism, *rejecting* our analysis of the factors leading to these defeats suffered by the proletariat. He became entrapped in a vicious circle, believing that the salvation of humanity could come about only through a social revolution, but that the social revolution was precluded as long as human sexuality was distorted, and it would remain distorted as long as there was no social revolution.

We can learn something from Reich's description of how reactionaries can use the sexual morality instilled in people by the family, religion, etc., to bolster their own rule, but only if we keep such insights in proportion, i.e., within the framework of Marxism, and not make the mistake that Reich did of elevating this one aspect of reality into the key factor, obliterating the class struggle in the process.

Concerning the theoretical question of developing a materialist explanation for the oppression of gay people, some comrades took exception to my statement that discussion about why homosexual impulses exist, or why a section of the population prefers homosexuality, need not concern us in trying to understand the nature of the *oppression* of gay people. These comrades assert that we must develop a full theory of sexuality in order to understand the oppression of gay people. Besides the difficulties in doing so already discussed, it is not necessary, although if such scientific knowledge were in fact developed by science, even under bourgeois auspices, it would shed light on this question.

I put forward the outline of a hypothesis that gay people are oppressed as a byproduct of the ideology and morality upholding the family system. However, in carefully reading the ideas of comrades on why homosexuals are oppressed, including comrades who took exception to my remark that we can discuss this question without

first fully understanding the nature of homosexuality, their viewpoints generally fall within the hypothesis I outlined. They find the roots of gay oppression in the ideological and moral superstructure of society.

Only Comrade Maggi has taken direct exception to this. However, I cannot follow his argument, for he points to the contribution by Comrade Thorstad to buttress his position. But Comrade Thorstad, too, traces the roots of the oppression of homosexuals to the ideological and moral superstructure.

There is not a one-to-one correspondence between the superstructure of society and its economic base, and this is especially true in relation to ideas, morals, etc. In the case under discussion, we can see that different class societies have taken very different attitudes towards homosexuals, although all have been class societies and had one form or another of the male-dominated family. In any case, an analysis of the causes of the oppression of gay people must be done in the concrete. We can expect that in time, our views on this can become more clarified, and we can afford to take that time.

The important thing now is the political conclusions to be drawn. Comrade Maggi agrees with me that the struggle for gay liberation is a democratic struggle. Some comrades have taken umbrage at this characterization of the nature of the gay liberation struggle, apparently feeling that it disparages that struggle. Comrade Maggi effectively answered them, and there is no need to repeat his arguments.

Comrades Weinstein and Roland Sheppard also agree with the position adopted by our last convention of full support to the struggles of gays for their democratic and human rights against all the forms of oppression and discrimination they suffer under capitalism. But the course they appear to favor would lead to relegating it to a file marked "positions adopted but better forgotten."

If Comrades Gebert and Trippet, based on their own views of human sexuality, present the dubious notion that gay people will soon be in the majority, Comrade Weinstein, through a few verbal sleights of the hand, has the mass of gay people not oppressed at all, except "psychologically." In the first place, the psychological oppression of gay people is real. We don't have to invent theories about this—many gay people have eloquently described it. We have dealt with this category of the psychological aspects of oppression and exploitation in relation to other spheres: Engels in the *Conditions of the Working Class in England*, Marx in *Capital*, and the speeches of Malcolm X are examples.

Secondly, while it is true that open gays suffer more direct discrimination than those concealing their sexual orientation, Comrade Weinstein draws too sharp a line between the two categories. Comrade Weinstein apparently thinks that workers don't have the time and energy to pursue a fulfilling sex life. But they are known to have a thought or two about it once in a while, and if they happen to be gay, that means they have to be "open" with at least one other human being, and quite probably a lot more. Thus almost all gays, except the most seclusive and repressed, are forced to deal with the discrimination and oppression gays suffer. We can expect that the mass of gay people will increasingly identify with the gay liberation movement since it is dealing with questions that directly affect the real interests of most gay people, especially as the movement matures, rejects the countercultur-

ism that is one trend within it (reflected, as we have noted, even in our party), and concentrates more on the *political* questions of opposition to the concrete forms of discrimination gays suffer.

Comrade Weinstein argues against those who equate the social weight of the gay liberation struggle with other more massive and central struggles, or who lose their sense of proportion in other ways, even to the point of obliterating the class analysis of society. But the errors of some proponents of gay liberation cannot be used as a justification for rejecting the gay liberation struggle altogether. Because someone may falsely equate the fight against the Vietnam war with the gay liberation struggle does not imply that the gay liberation struggle is not important.

Comrade Weinstein correctly points out that the dynamic of the gay liberation struggle is different from the Black struggle, for example. It is not as central to the dynamic of the coming American revolution. Starting with agreement with the observation I made that gays play no special social role, neither in relation to the means of production, nor to the family as a social unit, as women do, nor in a way similar to an oppressed nationality, he draws the incorrect conclusion that struggles like those of gays for an end to their oppression are of not much concern to us or to the anticapitalist revolution.

While it is true that gays play no special social-economic role as gays, that in and of itself does not exhaust the question. The oppression of gay people is related to class society and its needs. The struggle of gay people for their rights is directed against the class enemy and is in the interests of the working class and of socialism. It does confront and help break down the reactionary morality that helps preserve class society. To point out that it is not *necessary* to the overthrow of capitalism does not lead to the conclusion that it has no anticapitalist role to play whatever. (And we should add, that it is necessary to win gay liberation before we can say that a classless society has been built.)

Comrade Roland Sheppard makes this error in an even clearer way. He says that we take positions in favor of the oppressed nationalities and of the struggles of women only because this must be done to achieve the necessary unity of the class for the class to win. That is not so. Revolutionary situations have arisen time and again without the majority of the working class understanding the woman question, for example. Such situations will arise again—certainly in Bolivia and Argentina in the recent past there have been revolutionary situations, without the question of women's oppression coming to the fore.

We must not confuse the question of what may be necessary for the taking of power by the workers, and the program of the vanguard party that intends to lead not only the taking of power, but the mobilization of the working class and all its allies in the historic task of rebuilding society from top to bottom, eliminating every vestige of discrimination and oppression spawned by class society. And, while power will be taken by the working class around the most burning issues of the class struggle, which are *part* of our full program, power is much more likely to be taken by the working class to the extent that it succeeds in mobilizing the widest layers of the oppressed, convincing them by its deeds that the taking of power by the working class will in fact end all forms of oppression.

That's why the party which must be built to lead the

class has to help educate the class to fight capitalism on all fronts, as Lenin explained in *What Is To Be Done?* We do this through the vanguard party itself seeking to champion all struggles against discrimination, oppression, all people kicked around by capitalism and its state. Comrade Weinstein lists "repressed religious sects, pacifists, atheists, proponents of defense of the right to bear arms and drug culture cultists," raising the red herring of the rhetorical question of whether or not these should be placed on the same level as the working class, oppressed nationalities and women, and concluding, apparently, that whether these people are victimized is of no concern to the revolutionary party. (I don't understand his including "proponents of the right to bear arms" in this list—aren't we "proponents of the right to bear arms"?) Like Lenin we should say that, if pacifists suffer at the hands of the capitalist state, we should come to their defense—the specific character of that defense of course depends on all kinds of factors in any given situation.

What about repressed religious sects? We have a political position in favor of religious freedom—we're against them being kicked around. In certain countries today, this is a very important question—it was a key question in the bourgeois revolution, and remains a key question today in Israel, the Arab countries, the Soviet Union, and Ceylon, to mention just a few.

Comrade Roland Sheppard and Comrade Weinstein virtually exclude breaking down the prejudices of the mass of workers against gay people. In a certain sense, it is true that these prejudices will not be completely broken down until some time after the creation of a workers state. But it is not true that workers cannot be won to a position that gay people should not be oppressed. What interests do workers have in the oppression of gay people? If students can be by and large won to this position, in spite of their prejudices, why cannot workers be won to this position?

Comrade Roland Sheppard says that the prejudices against the oppressed nationalities and women held by the working class (obviously he is talking only about the white male section of it), can be subordinated to the needs for unity of the class, but this is not the case for gays. He is correct in stressing that it is the class interests of the workers that will lead them to act in ways that objectively overcome their prejudices, but he has too narrow a definition of class interests. These interests include not only a calculation of what degree of unity is necessary to win power, but also of the need of the working class to win the widest possible support in all layers of the population.

Let us assume for example that a labor party develops in the near future, based on a radicalization of the working class. It will be confronted by the issue of gay liberation, as the capitalist politicians already have. What would our policy be? Wouldn't we have to stand for the adoption of a plank supporting the rights of gay people? Couldn't good and reasonable arguments be advanced for our position, arguments which would find support among radicalized workers?

This leads to another question. If Comrades Weinstein and Roland Sheppard support the position adopted at the last convention, do they think that position should be made known to the public? If we should, like the CP, not be identified in any way with gay liberation because we would be "further isolated from the class if we take up this struggle," should the party have adopted this posi-

tion? Further, given that this is the position of the party, what should we do when an organization is formed to fight to carry it out? Do we support the objectives of that organization, insofar as they coincide with our position? Do we support concrete struggles against the oppression of gays? We can't have it both ways. We don't past political positions to file them away.

Comrade Weinstein points out correctly that the gay movement does not have the same direct links with the class struggle that the Black movement and other movements have. The movements of the oppressed nationalities in the United States—both because their national-democratic demands cannot be met except through the proletarian revolution, and because of their overwhelming proletarian composition—raise almost from the beginning demands of the working class as a whole. The women's movement, also, because of women's role in the family and work force, raises class demands. The gay movement is much narrower in the scope of its demands, which are essentially limited to democratic rights for gay people. (But it cannot be concluded from this that gay liberation is of no importance to the class struggle.)

The gay liberation movement does not have the potential mass of either the women's movement or the movements of the major oppressed nationalities, nor the social weight of these movements, which result both from their mass and the scope of the questions they raise. The gay liberation movement clearly does not raise such a central question of world politics as the antiwar movement does. In our long-term strategic priorities, then, it is certainly more peripheral to the central issues of the class struggle than either the women's movement or the movements of the oppressed nationalities, or the struggle against imperialist wars. But this estimate of relative proportions and priorities does not negate the significance of the movement for us.

This brings me to the final point, the question of our tactical approach to the gay liberation movement at the present time. Given our political position of support to the struggles of gay people against their oppression, how we carry out that support is a tactical question. I feel that much of the matters raised above, from both sides, has obscured the real issues concerning our tactical approach.

First of all, we should recognize that in discussing tactics we are attempting to determine what is the best thing to do to advance our political program and build our party. We do this in the context of the specific situation we face both objectively and in relation to our own forces, other campaigns we are involved in, and similar considerations. On many questions we are able to intervene only through our press. This does not mean that we do not support that particular issue. For example, we support the struggles of the Native Americans, but we do so primarily through our press and election campaigns at present. Comrades who insinuate that the party is prejudiced against Native Americans thereby, or has a position of an "inadequate compromise" with prejudice, would be wrong—we just do not have the strength at present to do much more, given other key areas of work.

Our conception of tactics implies flexibility. If the objective situation changes, our tactics may change also. The tactical approach I outlined in my original article was based upon an assessment of the state of the gay liberation movement at the present time. On the basis of this assessment, and given our commitment to other areas of

work, I stated my opinion that it would be a mistake for us to organize a national fractional intervention into the gay liberation movement at the present time. (Some comrades have misunderstood this to mean that the party press, national election campaign, etc., would not present the party's position; clearly, this is not what is meant.)

I do not believe that new information has been revealed by the discussion, or the objective situation has so changed as to necessitate a re-evaluation. On the national level, there remains no national coalition formed to carry out actions around the issues of gay oppression. There is no national organization of gay groups, with the exception of the National Coalition of Gay Organizations, as Comrade Maggi pointed out. But this group is oriented primarily towards the elections, and our political position on gay liberation as expressed in our campaign is clear. Comrade Maggi hopes that this coalition will develop into something more—if so, we can deal with it then.

Comrade Hillson and others have raised the argument that our intervention could be the crucial factor in forming a viable national gay liberation organization, and they cite the precedents of our work in the antiwar and women's liberation movements.

We have found from experience in both the antiwar and women's movement that any attempt by any of the socialist tendencies to form antiwar or women's groups essentially around their own organization are doomed to be very narrow in the present situation in this country. No tendency has sufficient hegemony in the left, let alone among the broader layers such groups could appeal to, to build any such groups on a viable basis. If this is true of the antiwar and women's movements, which have far wider appeal than the gay liberation movement, it is doubly true of the gay liberation movement.

We have been successful in helping to build antiwar and abortion action coalitions around key demands. We have been instrumental in helping to hold these coalitions together. But comrades must not misunderstand the real situation and slide over into thinking that, because of the role we have played in holding them together these coalitions are able to exist solely because we want them to.

In the women's movement, for example, we saw the independent development of action coalitions in a number of states before WONAAC was formed. It was clear that the abortion question was becoming more and more important, a focus of the women's movement. The success

that WONAAC has had—and the potential it continues to have—reflects this situation. Thousands of women have shown themselves ready in action to help build WONAAC, in collaboration with us, in the face of not unimportant difficulties. There is not yet an analogous situation in the gay liberation movement. No clear issue or issues has yet emerged as the rallying point of the gay liberation movement.

Under the circumstances, for us to attempt to build an action coalition around issues of gay oppression, before the issues are clear in the gay movement around which such a coalition would be built, before there is significant motion in the movement itself towards such an action coalition, would be premature. The effort most likely would fail in its objective and divert our energies from more immediately rewarding tasks.

The examples raised by various comrades of gay liberation struggles we would want to relate to have occurred on a local level. Thus, if the branches have the flexibility to relate to such developments as they occur, within our present priorities, we will not be missing the opportunities comrades have pointed to.

The kinds of struggles we should support include actions like the Christopher Street demonstrations (intervening with our political position), the defense case that occurred in Minneapolis, the struggle around Intro 475 in New York—concrete actions and struggles. It would do us little good to have comrades assigned to participate in essentially social events, or in the counterculture equivalent of the "livingroom feminists" of the gay liberation movement.

Comrade Roland Sheppard and others raised the question of whether this proposal to relate to gay liberation struggles on the local level, where they are occurring, isn't in fact some kind of federalist concept. No, for two reasons. Any such decisions by the branches are within the framework of the political position adopted by the party convention and in accordance with our priorities as decided upon nationally. This work, like all branch work, is under the supervision of the Political Committee and national office.

This orientation on the tactical level would enable us to support *concrete struggles and actions* around issues concerning the oppression of gays and still keep our activities in this area centered on the political questions and in proper proportion to the overall tasks of the party.

August 29, 1972

A REPLY TO NAT WEINSTEIN

By Steve Beren, Chicago Branch

In this article, I'm not going to try to reply to every argument advanced by Nat Weinstein against intervention in the gay liberation movement. But I do want to refute some of his most important arguments. Unless otherwise noted, quotes are from *A Contribution to the Discussion on Gay Liberation*, by Nat Weinstein, SWP Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 30, No. 4.

On the Oppression of Gay People

Weinstein does not seem to comprehend the nature and extent of the oppression and exploitation gay people suffer in this society. This misunderstanding leads to some very fundamental political errors.

First of all, he belittles the oppression of gay people. While conceding that open gays "are victims of a kind of overt oppression and the resultant reflection on their personalities which is no less real," he claims that "the great majority of gays escape overt oppression." And according to Weinstein, gays "are not *exploited* because they are gay." (I'm almost tempted to ask: "Well, if gays are not exploited because they are gay, then why are gays exploited?" See *Gay Economic Exploitation*, by Kendall Green in SWP discussion Bulletin, Vol. 30, No. 4, and *Antigay Laws in the United States and some Other Countries*, by David Thorstad in SWP Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 30, no. 3.)

Weinstein believes that exploitation is "a quality not affecting gay people." In order to prove the "quality and extent" of gay oppression, supporters of gay liberation had to search around for a "new category" of oppression. Weinstein writes:

"A new category was found, readymade, circulating as a popular phrase in the new feminist movement; 'psychological oppression.'

"'Psychological oppression' is an abstraction from both the concepts of exploitation and its derivative, oppression; having little connection with the meaning of oppression as it affects the three basic sectors of society we are considering [workers, oppressed nationalities, and women — SB]. It is an abstraction, to say the least, whose size, weight, intensity, etc., resist objective measurement. Nevertheless, the 'glue' that now holds the analogy together is provided by the concept of 'psychological oppression.' But to prove what? After all, with the affliction of 'psychological oppression' as our common denominator, all manners of people could be 'proven' to be the source of revolutionary contingents." (p. 9)

Compare Weinstein's approach to that of Caroline Lund at Oberlin in 1970:

"One of the most pernicious aspects of the oppression of women is the psychological oppression which the family system grinds into them. Women are deprived of their identity as individual human beings; in many respects they learn the mentality of a slave, in accordance with their role of drudges in the home and dependents on men. They consider themselves property of men, not freely acting individuals. So it was that the women of China submitted for centuries to crippling their feet by binding them up, and Moslem women submitted to covering themselves with veils. Women in this country submit to the

agony of wearing high heels and harnessing themselves into bras, girdles and corsets and go through such tortures as eyebrow plucking — all to please men.

"The women's liberation movement has exposed this deep psychological oppression of women by drawing out the feelings of women in consciousness-raising groups, through literature, and through such propagandistic actions as protests against beauty contests and bridal fairs and turning the tables by ogling and whistling at men on the street." (*The Family: Revolutionary or Oppressive Force?* pp. 11-12)

Psychological oppression is only one aspect of the oppression of women and gays. But it should not be discounted or minimized.

Weinstein continues:

"What is at issue, however, is the concept of 'psychological oppression' existing as a force capable of impelling significant numbers of gay people who are 'in the closet' into 'coming out.' The 'closet' avenue of escape from *overt* oppression, on the basis of historical experience, is too easy. The overwhelmingly large majority of 'closeted' gays (according to repeated assertions by gays) evidently find 'psychological oppression' more bearable than the overt form." (p. 10, his emphasis)

Gays do not *choose* to be in the closet as an "avenue of escape from *overt* oppression" because we "find 'psychological oppression' more bearable." Key to the oppression and exploitation gay people face is the fact that capitalist society *forces* us into the closet.

It is true that the majority of gays are not openly gay. As David Thorstad points out, "it is still occupational suicide for most gays to disclose their sexual orientation. Their secrecy is a matter of survival. But it is a secrecy that none of us ever willingly chose but that was instead thrust upon us by the institutions of a sick heterosexual society." (*Gay Liberation and Class Struggle*, SWP Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 30, No. 2, p. 13)

There does exist "a force capable of impelling significant numbers of gay people who are 'in the closet' into 'coming out.'" The rise of the gay liberation movement has created an atmosphere where large numbers of homosexuals are coming out and joining the struggle for liberation and against all aspects of gay oppression. One example of this is the following letter to the editor, printed in the August 2, 1972, *Advocate* (a leading West Coast gay newspaper), which also provides an eloquent response to Nat Weinstein:

"Editor:

"Yes, I remember the closet queen. How could I forget?

"I was a super closet case for close to 25 years. I remember high school, when everyone was dating and finding out about sex — everyone but me. I had a crush on a guy in my class — but I was too scared that somebody might 'find out' to ever do anything more than say a few words to him.

"I remember spending endless hours cruising the parks at night, wandering around looking for someone but not knowing how to find him.

"For years I thought I was the only queer in the world!

I wasted thousands of hours cruising that could have been put to more creative use. The few times I had sex were with men I never saw again. Just a quick blow job and goodbye. The whole trip was a lonely, frustrating experience.

"The best thing I ever did was to say the hell with this and join the Gay Rights Movement. I have seen many straight couples making out in public, yet if I want to do the same (equal rights), I am exposed to ridicule, annoyed, and attacked as immature and insecure. People don't seem to understand that I am being discriminated against, denied my Constitutional rights. After all, what good is a Constitution if nobody follows its laws?

"Julian Mark ('Let's hear it for the closet queen,' AD-VOCATE, Issue 84), I am glad you are happy as you are. Perhaps you don't hear the thousands of homosexuals who are not happy where they are. Perhaps you choose to ignore them. I am concerned with the millions of closet cases who remain where they are not because of self-satisfaction but because of fear. As a liberationist, my goal is to free those people by fighting against repression with the hope that they will not have to suffer the closet case repression that still lurks in the depths of my mind.

"Don Goldman (Red Devil)
"Chicago, Ill."

Nat Weinstein is absolutely wrong when he writes: "There are no driving forces that can impel in a mass effort a significant portion of the claimed tens of millions of gays out of the 'closet' and into their full struggle for their rights." (p. 11) I have already discussed this question in my earlier article. (See *For National Party Intervention in the Gay Liberation Movement*, SWP Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 30, No. 5, particularly the subsections entitled "The Potential of the Gay Liberation Movement" and "Wide Support for Homosexual Rights.")

Weinstein doesn't understand the depth and reality of the psychological oppression of gays. He also does not seem to realize that psychological oppression is only one aspect of gay oppression. Thus he writes that if we intervened in gay liberation, "psychological oppression" would have to be our key operative premise in this arena." And he refers to the gay liberation movement as "driven only by essentially psychological factors."

Weinstein writes:

"I will not insult the intelligence of the comrades by illustrating the chasm that separates the exploitation, the depth of the oppression and its psychological reflection suffered by workers, oppressed nationalities and women from that experienced by gay people. 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, however, should be kept in mind when estimating (particularly when the analogy is employed as a tool) the possibilities and limits of gay liberation to play a role in the revolutionary process." (p. 10)

It is absurd to speak of an "absence of a daily grinding exploitation and overt physical oppression in gay people's lives."

Weinstein continues:

"The superexploitation and oppression of nationalities and women—the lower wage levels, the great predominance in the capitalists' pool of unemployed workers—lowers all workers' living standards and serves as both a

source of super profits and as a daily weapon in the hands of the capitalist class.

"This superexploitation of oppressed nationalities and women which flows from the special subordinate roles they play, is a quality it has been noted before, not present in the lives of gays. Neither are gays as gays, involved in any way in this vicious and intricate process of exploitation and oppression which I have briefly sketched. For while it may be true that many gays are also workers, they are not doubly exploited and oppressed because they are gay, as for example are oppressed nationalities and women because of their nationality or sex or both. And therefore, unless these workers are *known* homosexuals, which is rare, their homosexuality is effectively irrelevant." (p. 10, his emphasis)

Economic superexploitation is only one aspect of the oppression of women, Blacks, Chicanos, and gays. By denying gay economic exploitation and the double oppression of gays, Weinstein lapses into the trap of narrow workerism.

Caroline Lund, in her pamphlet on the family, argues against the workerism of the Communist Party and the Progressive Labor Party.

Lund notes that PL, in an undated resolution on women, says: "The real basis of male chauvinism in contemporary capitalist society is the *profits* made off of the superexploitation of women workers." She further notes that the March 1970 issue of PL's newspaper *Challenge* stated: "the major oppression of women is as working people (whether employed or unemployed) rather than, as most middle-class 'women's liberation' groups maintain, in the home as housewives or sex objects."

Lund replies:

"In order to analyze where the Stalinists go wrong, we should take a closer look at their arguments.

"The main line is that the basic division in society is between the capitalist class and the working class; consequently, struggles against other forms of oppression like sexual and national oppression must be subordinated to the struggle between the two major classes. The Stalinists argue that the root of the special oppression of women is in their role as doubly-exploited workers—leaving out of consideration the oppressive character of the family.

"This kind of theorizing is a gross oversimplification. Oppression in the epoch of imperialism takes many forms. Revolutionary socialists give wholehearted support to *all* struggles against oppression. We don't measure one oppression against another, saying that one is more 'real' or more important than any other, and we don't attempt to dictate which section of the oppressed should begin the struggle against imperialism.

"Marxism is the theory of the class struggle aimed at socialist revolution. But it is not a formula prescribing what forms the revolution will take in the course of its development. It is a tool that helps revolutionaries understand and better intervene in the class struggle. Above all, it helps us assess the *new* forms in which the class struggle takes place—nationalism, the student movement, the women's liberation movement. It helps us to appreciate the revolutionary implications of these struggles and to determine how to participate in them effectively and how to give them a more radical direction. . . .

"National oppression and women's oppression are just as 'real' as the oppression of workers as workers even though sexual oppression and national oppression cut

across class lines. We favor all oppressed sections of society—workers, oppressed nationalities and women—organizing themselves to fight in their own organizations." (pp. 5-6)

On the Prejudices of the Workers

Gay oppression, including physical attacks on gays by police and others, is a material oppression against *all* the oppressed and exploited, particularly the working class. The scapegoat role played by gays aids capitalism in beating the rest of the masses into submission and subservience.

The violent repression of homosexuality and the deep and widespread anti-gay prejudices of this society are conservatizing and demobilizing factors in the overall class struggle.

Weinstein points out that prejudices held by workers against women, Blacks and Chicanos "are so crucially opposed to their economic, social and political interests, that not only are they at a disadvantage in the day-to-day struggles with the class enemy, but it would doom them to defeat in the long run." Weinstein goes on to say: "Some common or compatible interests are mistakenly seen as antagonistic. Our task is to explain to each sector why each other's aims that might appear to be separate or antagonistic to the other's interests, aren't at all, and actually are in fact quite in the mutual interest. . . . After making clear whose side we are on, . . . we must explain to the workers how and why it is *directly in their class interest* to support this struggle." (his emphasis)

But Weinstein does not extend this approach to the struggle for gay liberation:

"You would have to stretch logic tortuously to try to make such a case. On the contrary, a much better case can be made for the argument that the disproportionate emphasis on gay liberation based on the false notion that this issue is in some way decisive to the success of the revolution—or even an important contributor—will prove to be a diversion in our approach to oppressed nationalities, workers and women. Undue emphasis on minor issues can give an organization like ours an exotic image, erecting barriers that cannot be justified by subsequent historical development." (pp. 10-11)

Of course, we do not want to be "diverted" in presenting our politics to the workers. Our politics must be adopted by the working class if there is to be a revolution in this country. Only our class-struggle program can provide the basis for principled unity of all sectors of the working class in common struggle against capitalist oppression.

This class-struggle program incorporates the democratic and transitional demands of all oppressed sectors of society. When we speak of working-class unity, we are talking of unity around this program, unity of the entire

working class around the just demands of *all* workers—especially the demands of the most oppressed workers: women, the oppressed nationalities, homosexuals. When we speak of the class struggle, we mean struggle against *all* forms of class oppression.

In striving to win the working class to this program, we will clash head-on with the capitalist rulers of this country in a battle for the political and ideological allegiance of the workers. We know that one key way the capitalists rule is by maintaining illusions in the minds of the masses—illusions of "patriotic" wars, racist "law and order," peaceful change through the electoral system, "getting ahead" in college and the business world, the "inferiority" of women, Blacks, Chicanos, and gays. And so on. When the workers of this country reject these ideas and unite in action around our program, nothing will stop them from taking power.

It is precisely these illusions that are being challenged by the independent movements of the new radicalization. Thus these movements are already playing an important role in breaking the masses of Americans from capitalist ideology. That is why these movements are the place for the SWP to be *now*. We must lead these movements into greater and greater mass actions, deepening the radicalization, destroying the illusions, changing the mood in the country, moving the workers more and more towards an ideological break with the capitalists, moving them closer to our class-struggle program.

The gay liberation struggle is the struggle of all workers; the oppression and exploitation of gays is part of the oppression and exploitation of the entire working class.

The workers must be won to support and defend the gay liberation movement, just as they must be won to defend women in their fight for liberation or the right of Black people to self-determination. That is the kind of working-class unity Marxists are for. Instead of labelling gay liberation a "minor issue," "exotic," a "diversion" from the struggle, etc., the revolutionary party should be in the forefront of winning heterosexual workers to supporting the just demands of gays.

It is not a question of "diverting" the class struggle. To say that gay liberation leads away from or contradicts the class struggle, or to say, as Weinstein does, that intervention in the gay liberation movement would be a "dangerous step on the disastrous road followed by every tendency that thought it had found a new shortcut to rapid growth," is a capitulation to the backward prejudices of those straight workers opposed to gay liberation.

If the party were to adopt Nat Weinstein's views on gay liberation as its public stance, it would appear to young radicals that our support for gay liberation was nothing more than printed words on paper.

August 29, 1972

THE KEY QUESTIONS IN THIS DISCUSSION

by David Thorstad, Upper West Side Branch,
New York Local

Is homosexuality a normal and natural form of human sexual behavior?

The gay liberation movement has responded to this question with the assertion that "Gay is Good." The meaning of this slogan is the rejection of the notion that heterosexuality is superior to homosexuality, or that homosexuality is a deviation, and abnormality, or a sickness. It is both a message to closeted gays that they should accept their homosexuality with pride and a notification to straight society that we will no longer allow it to use its warped norm of exclusive heterosexuality to deny us the humanity we share with heterosexually oriented persons.

Before going any further, let me clear up one thing. That is the matter of whether or not it is proper or necessary for the revolutionary party to take a position on such a question.

It is true that the party does not take a formal position on all social, scientific, or historical questions. So far as I know, for instance, it has never taken a formal vote on whether biology is women's destiny, on the matriarchy, or on whether Black is beautiful. I have heard such observations used in an attempt to justify taking no position on the "controversial" question of whether homosexual behavior is normal and natural. But the comparison is misleading: In spite of the fact that we have no formal position on these matters, there is no pretense in our propaganda of leaving aside or suspending judgment on whether biology is woman's destiny, on whether there ever was a matriarchy, or on whether Blacks are inferior to whites; if there were, our intervention into the women's and Black liberation movements would be quite different from what it is. Yet it is precisely such a suspension of judgment on the normality of homosexuality that is implied by the argument that no position on the question should be taken.

To suspend judgment on this question would be to place a question mark over the underlying assertion of the gay liberation movement that gay is just as good as straight, that homosexual behavior is as much a part of human sexual potential as heterosexual behavior. There is no justification for such a question mark.

An affirmative answer to this question is not only required from a scientific point of view, it is also essential for a correct political appreciation of gay liberation. A negative answer to this question, or even a suspension of judgment on the matter, would not merely hamper, but actually damage any intervention into the gay liberation movement that the party should attempt to undertake. Indeed, if the party does not take a firm stand upon the concept that gay is good, it would probably be better off not attempting to intervene in the gay liberation movement at all.

The scientific evidence in favor of an affirmative response to this question has been presented elsewhere in this discussion and does not need to be repeated. So far no one has attempted to dispute it. I will not degrade the discussion at this point by adding to it a refutation

of the various theories of quack psychiatrists and other pseudo-scientists over the years as to the cause of homosexual impulses (masturbation, degenerated genes, moral insanity, oversatiety with natural pleasures, "inversion" [man's brain in a woman's body and vice versa], hereditary inferiority, "psychic hermaphroditism," failure to evolve beyond a primitive state of bisexuality, distribution of genital nerves around the rectum, *larghezza desolante* [male aversion to the largeness of the human vagina, thus driving them to the tightness of the male rectum], hormonal imbalance, prenatal stress, close-binding-intimate mothers, etc.). For a general view of the gay liberation movement's attitude toward the psychiatric profession's "sickness theory" of homosexuality, I refer comrades to the excellent statement distributed to a meeting of the American Psychiatric Association last May which follows this article.

The Stalinist-inspired theory that homosexuality is a product of a transitory period of history (class society) I attempted to refute in my discussion of Wilhelm Reich ("Gay Liberation and Class Struggle," SWP Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 30, No. 2). This mystical and antiscientific theory, which I have never seen advanced with a shred of evidence, ought to be unceremoniously buried along with the rest of the antihomosexual garbage churned out in the name of science and Marxism during the past century. Certainly there can be no room for such a theory in the SWP's approach to gay liberation.

If there are any comrades who believe these or any other theories to the effect that homosexual behavior is not as natural and normal as heterosexual behavior, or that it is a form of behavior that will disappear under a socialist society free of sexual restraints, they should present their arguments. The burden of proof, in my opinion, would lie with them. In any case, the existence of such sexist notions cannot be allowed to get in the way of the party's effort to develop a proper orientation to the gay liberation movement.

Why is an affirmative answer to this question necessary? Because it is a prerequisite for a correct grasp of the role of homosexual oppression and the potential of the struggle against it, as well as for a correct political intervention into the gay liberation movement.

Even if gay people are viewed as social misfits, pathological perverts, or aberrations of class society, or if judgment is suspended on the matter, their struggle for equal rights could still be supported on the basis that, for instance, they are helping to stir things up and challenge the prevailing standards of capitalist society. But such an approach would hardly lead the revolutionary party to embrace, champion, and aggressively intervene in that struggle. On the contrary, it would logically result in attributing a rather low priority to the struggle. In addition, it would stunt the necessary task of developing a theory of homosexual liberation and sexual revolution, and it would cripple any effort to intervene in that struggle with a socialist analysis of homosexual oppression and program for gay liberation.

If, on the other hand, the struggle for gay liberation is understood to be not merely the struggle of a presently constituted behavioral minority ("gay people") against discrimination, but a struggle for a society in which the natural homosexual impulses of the human animal can once again be expressed without the constraining exclusively heterosexual norms of patriarchal society, then both the character of the gay liberation struggle and its importance to the tasks of the revolutionary party will be seen in a qualitatively different light.

A materialist approach to the struggle for gay liberation must view it as a struggle for the freedom of expression of homosexual *behavior*, not simply as a struggle of "gay people" for their rights. The "gay people" concept is altogether too static and reflects the heterosexual myth that homosexually oriented people are some kind of special, separate variety of human being. It also reflects a failure to grasp the dynamic and revolutionary potential of the struggle to regain humanity's freedom of sexual expression, including the freedom to engage in homosexual behavior. It falls far short of a proper appreciation of what gay liberation is all about and would place severe limitations on our ability to intervene in the gay liberation movement.

This somewhat static view of gay liberation and the failure to see that homosexual oppression is not merely the oppression of "homosexuals" or "gay people," but the result of an attempt by patriarchal society to suppress homosexual *behavior* in all members of society runs through Barry Sheppard's contribution to the discussion ("Concerning the Gay Liberation Movement and the Party's Orientation to It," SWP Discussion Bulletin Vol. 30, No. 1). He states this precisely when he proposes "leaving aside all discussion about why homosexual impulses exist, or why a section of the population prefers homosexuality, which need not concern us in trying to understand the nature of the oppression of gay people. . . ." Yet if a proper understanding of homosexual oppression and liberation is to be achieved, such a discussion does indeed concern us. It cannot be "left aside." If we were to leave aside the question of the normality of "homosexual impulses" and fail to plant our feet solidly on the concept that gay is good, the nature of our intervention into the gay liberation movement would be adversely affected. Let me illustrate this point with a couple of examples.

1) A refusal to recognize that homosexual behavior is a natural part of human sexual potential would make impossible any positive approach to homosexuality in our press or by party spokespersons. It would place such comrades—including those in gay liberation organizations—in the awkward and absurd position of having to withhold judgment on an issue that is central to the gay liberation struggle or of having (in the style of the old SDS) to preface any analysis of the matter with the qualifier that they were speaking for themselves, not the party. Such comrades would be hooted off the stage by any self-respecting gay audience.

2) Were the party to fail to recognize the naturalness and normality of homosexual behavior, it would be in no position to educate either its own ranks or the gay liberation movement on the relationship between the struggle against homosexual oppression and the coming socialist revolution. Indeed, such a failure would imply an abdication of the responsibility to develop a theory of homosexual liberation—a task that only Marxists can carry through. Even such an obviously necessary task

as publishing a pamphlet explaining why Marxists support gay liberation and why gays should be Marxists would become impossible without a correct position on this question.

The practical effect of refusing to take a stand on this question would be to limit the party's relationship to and intervention in the gay liberation movement to sporadic involvement. Such a refusal would lead to a low priority being assigned to party intervention in gay liberation at the present time and to a suspension of judgment entirely on the overall potential and importance of gay liberation for the socialist revolution. (If one cannot be sure that homosexuality is normal, one can hardly be sure that the struggle for homosexual liberation has any more than a passing, and peripheral relation to the struggle for socialism. Such doubts do not constitute a basis for a serious intervention into the gay movement.)

The net effect of refusing to take a stand on this question would be to restrict the party's intervention into the gay liberation movement to one of essentially supporting what the movement is doing (through news articles in *The Militant*, and perhaps even assigning some cadres where this did not conflict with party work in other areas with higher priority) rather than aggressively intervening with a revolutionary-socialist program for gay liberation and socialism with an aim of educating and providing leadership (both on an organizational and political level) for that movement, as well as of recruiting the best gay liberationists to the revolutionary party. Such a restriction would be consistent with the logic of "leaving aside" any discussion of, or failing to reach the correct agreement on, the central, underlying issue of the gay liberation movement: The equality of homosexuality with heterosexuality on every level and the contemptuous rejection of any position that falls short of recognizing this.

Such a restricted intervention would also appear to be consistent with both the cautious tone and altogether vague outline presented in Barry Sheppard's article initiating this literary discussion. Indeed, such a restricted intervention would appear to logically flow from his determination to avoid the question of "why homosexual impulses exist." (The very fact that he phrases the question in this manner suggests that he harbors doubts as to the normality of homosexuality that he does not harbor in the case of heterosexual impulses [Why do heterosexual impulses exist?]) If he does not, then why does he avoid this question? What, besides greater confusion, is gained by skirting it?) I have attempted to show that a proper intervention into the gay liberation movement will be impossible without confronting it head-on.

I shall take up the question of the nature of a proper SWP intervention into gay liberation shortly.

Should the SWP Intervene in Gay Liberation?

The answer to this question must be an unequivocal "Yes" for the following reasons.

1) Potentially very large numbers of persons can be mobilized in anticapitalist struggle by the gay liberation struggle. There are some twenty million homosexually oriented people in the United States. The new, but still small, gay liberation movement has already provided them with an unexpected hope for a world without discrimination and persecution on the basis of sexual orientation. We, above all, can and must show them how to

make this hope a reality. This is a task for which we are better qualified than anyone else.

2) Without intervening, we cannot hope to recruit conscious gays to the party. We must be able to offer the gay liberation movement more than general support for its struggles for gay rights or statements by our candidates in support of gay rights. To have a credible approach to precisely the serious kind of gay activist whom we should want to recruit, we will have to go beyond our present policy of nonintervention or the wait-and-see, low-profile kind of intervention suggested by Barry Sheppard.

3) The gay liberation movement confronts the revolutionary Marxist movement with a unique challenge. Never before has the Marxist movement seriously attempted to explain the links between the struggle against gay oppression and the class struggle, nor has it attempted to integrate the struggle for gay liberation into the struggle for socialism. In other words, the challenge facing it is one of developing a theory of homosexual liberation. This is a challenge we must accept.

4) Homosexual behavior is suppressed and gays are oppressed in ways that serve to buttress the antihuman values and institutions of patriarchal class society. The struggle against such oppression is one that it is in the interests of the revolutionary movement to advance. This question has been dealt with elsewhere in this discussion, notably in my article "Gay Liberation and Class Struggle" (SWP Discussion Bulletin Vol. 30, No. 2).

5) Our intervention in gay liberation would provide us with a useful club against our opponents, none of whom—with the somewhat sporadic now-you-see-it-now-you-don't exception of International Socialists—are involved in gay liberation. Our intervention would be most useful in fighting our major opponent—Stalinism—whose line on homosexuality has not altered a bit since Stalin branded it a product of bourgeois decadence and began to purge gays from all areas of Soviet life, including the party, in 1933-1934. The very absence of most of our opponents from this field of struggle would, of course, in some ways offer us a wide-open field.

We should not hesitate to utilize an aggressive intervention into the gay liberation movement as a weapon in our fight to gain hegemony over the current radicalization and the American left.

6) Our task of constructing a revolutionary vanguard party at the head of the working masses and of all mass sectors struggling against capitalism would be damaged if we were not to intervene in this movement. Not only would we then have to explain to gay liberationists why the revolutionary socialist movement considers the struggle peripheral or incidental to the struggle to overthrow capitalism, but we would also have to explain why an intervention into gay liberation is not consistent with our own analysis of the current youth radicalization. Neither explanation would be persuasive.

7) We have a duty not only to our own movement but to the Fourth International to take a correct, interventionist approach toward this movement. Gay liberation is a rapidly growing international phenomenon. Gay groups exist in many countries where the Fourth International has sections or sympathizing groups. Some—as, for instance, FUORI (Fronte Unitario Omosessuale Rivoluzionario Italiano) in Italy, and a group of Latin American gays living in New York, who publish a Spanish-language magazine called *Afuera*—are putting out very

attractive and radical-oriented publications.

Some steps have already been taken toward international coordination between gay liberation organizations. In September, for instance, a gathering of some two dozen European gay groups is scheduled to occur at Aarhus University in Denmark to discuss future international cooperation.

Discussion—not always correct—on gay liberation has begun to find its way into the press of several Trotskyist groups besides the SWP, among them those in Canada, France, New Zealand, and Australia. In Canada a discussion on gay liberation similar to our own is now being conducted.

The SWP, in my opinion, has a crucial role to play in bringing the world Trotskyist movement to a correct appreciation of homosexual oppression and liberation and how they relate to the present and future tasks of the international Marxist movement. This will not be an easy role to fulfill, but while difficult, it is not impossible, and it is necessary.

How Should the SWP Intervene in Gay Liberation?

I think Steve Beren provides a very good general outline of the kind of intervention the party should undertake at the end of his article "For National Party Intervention in the Gay Liberation Movement" (SWP Discussion Bulletin Vol. 30, No. 5). He proposes essentially the following: the assignment of comrades to gay work in each branch; the assignment of comrades to intervene in (whether by joining or by collaborating with) gay groups existing in their area, especially on campuses, and the initiation of actions around specific issues where openings exist; fractional intervention at local and national gay conferences with not only our ideas on other movements and on socialism, but also with our ideas on building the gay liberation movement; increased efforts to build gay contingents in antiwar and abortion demonstrations; an aggressive propaganda campaign in our press and publications, through our forums, and in our election campaigns; internal party educational programs on gay liberation touching on the origins of homosexual oppression, the relationship of the gay movement to the rest of the radicalization, etc.

I would like to add to and elaborate upon these proposals.

If the gay movement is ever to develop into a veritable mass movement, that is, if it is ever to fully realize its potential, society's right to victimize, persecute, and imprison gay people must be taken away. So long as gays can lose their jobs or their apartments for being gay, and so long as they have no legal way of fighting back, a relatively small number of them can be expected to come out publicly as homosexuals. For it is still occupational suicide for the overwhelming majority of gays to come out.

And yet, you cannot build a mass gay movement unless gays have the choice of whether or not to come out; and as long as the present antigay laws exist, and as long as equal rights guarantees are not applied to homosexually oriented persons, large masses of homosexuals cannot be expected to do so. Winning this right to come out (to be who we are and to stop masquerading as heterosexuals in order to survive) seems to me to be the first major task of the gay liberation movement.

Concretely, this means fighting to abolish the antigay

laws; to get city councils to adopt policies banning discrimination against persons because of sexual orientation in employment, housing, and public accommodations; and to have the Equal Rights Amendment—once it is ratified by the state legislatures—extended to include homosexually oriented persons.

Such fights can be won and would gain the support of the overwhelming majority of gays, I believe. Certainly, achieving such victories will not eliminate patriarchal society's built-in need for gay oppression. But in the course of fighting for such preliminary goals, the gay movement will gain not only in numbers, but in combat experience and political understanding. And, until such goals are achieved, that is, until homosexually oriented person can come out without danger of losing their lives or their livelihood, the full potential and "weight" of the gay liberation movement in the coming transformation of society cannot be felt.

But most of these gays will not come out simply in response to exhortations from gay activists who already have. They must see coming out as a realistic proposition, not as a suicide mission. The gay liberation movement must not only chant "Out of the closets and into the streets!"; it must develop a strategy for placing the alternative to hiding within the reach of the millions of gays who identify with the gay movement but are still afraid or unable to join it.

This is a task that we must help carry out, and it can only be done by getting involved in the gay liberation movement. It does not merely "remain to be seen" how extensively gays will be mobilized in struggles for their rights, as Barry Sheppard states; what remains is for us to begin applying to the gay liberation struggle the historic knowledge and experience of the revolutionary movement. Both the gay movement and our own movement will benefit from such a decision.

Through our intervention in gay organizations, we should propagandize for and help organize coalitions to abolish the antigay laws (sodomy, cross dressing, solicitation, impersonation . . .) and to struggle for the adoption of equal rights legislation by city councils (and eventually by the U.S. Congress, when the Equal Rights Amendment is ratified) prohibiting discrimination against persons in employment, housing, and public accommodations because of their sexual orientation. We should begin to educate the movement to the necessity of eventually forming a national coalition along these lines. Eliminating such laws and winning equal rights for gays, are, it seems to me, a related, priority task for the gay liberation movement. It is a task that we should take the lead in expalining and, where action along these lines has already been undertaken by the movement (New York, California. . .), we should get involved and work toward the success of such struggles.

One such struggle is currently going on in New York, where the city council still has before its Committee on General Welfare the bill Intro 475, which would ban discrimination against gays in employment, housing, and public accommodations. It has received a great deal of support, including that of the executive council of District Council 37 of AFSCME (whose president, Victor Gotbaum, personally appeared in public hearings to testify in support of the bill), a number of legislators and congress-people, and, belatedly and under pressure from gay activists, Mayor Lindsay.

If this bill is defeated for good, it will be an important setback for gay liberation not only in New York City, but throughout the entire country.

Our movement has done very little to support this struggle—certainly far less than it can or ought to do. Essentially, our support has amounted to peridodic news reports in *The Militant*. Important though these are, we could have done more. We sent no representative of our election campaign to testify at the public hearings, for instance, nor did we even distribute a statement of support at the hearings—both of which would have been possible even with out current position of nonintervention in gay liberation. To relate properly to this and other similar struggles, however, we will have to be directly involved in gay liberation.

If we were intervening in gay liberation, our comrades would be able to join groups like GAA and campus gay groups and argue for our approach on how best to fight for such measures as Intro 475. Were we to join GAA, for instance, we would be active in the committees of the organization where we could be most effective, including the committee in charge of the struggle for Intro 475. As activists in gay liberation, we would be in a position to present our ideas, our proposals, and our criticisms, both in committees and in membership meetings, with an authority we will never acquire as observers of gay liberation. Even where our proposals were opposed by the reformist-minded leadership of the organization or where we might be defeated in votes of the membership, we would stand to make considerable gains for our movement as socialists committed to gay liberation.

Among the things we would probably have wanted to do around Intro 475 as members of GAA are the following, in addition, of course, to covering the struggle in *The Militant*: write articles outlining our strategy for GAA's newsletter, *Gay Activist*; emphasize the need for mass demonstrations and not reliance on negotiations with public officials (the reformist leadership tends to view mass demonstrations as a last resort, as it never takes the task of building them as seriously as we do); take part in the GAA speakers' bureau; help organize an aggressive press and public relations campaign; propose that GAA publish an educational pamphlet or brochure on the issues in the struggle; use the endorsement of District Council 37 of AFSCME to attempt to get GAA representatives to address union meetings and to press other unions to come out in support of the bill, which would, after all, help provide job protection for many of their own members and potential members (among the non-unionized); propose some kind of coalition for homosexual rights to back the campaign, with the coalition to include both gay and sympathizing straight groups.

Most of these steps could also be taken by comrades belonging to other gay groups in New York City, such as groups on campus.

The GAA leadership's tendency to rely on negotiations with politicians has failed to galvanize New York's gay community in a true mobilization around Intro 475 (not to mention the sympathizing straight community, which is not small). Our intervention into gay liberation might very well have been able to alter that state of affairs somewhat. In any case, further abstention from struggles such as these is, in my opinion, beneficial neither to our own movement nor to the cause of gay liberation.

While I believe an important focus of our intervention

into gay liberation should be the elimination of the existing antigay laws and the adoption of equal rights legislation for gays, our intervention should not be limited to these issues. Obviously, we should be involved in other struggles of the gay movement as well, whether these be defense campaigns (such as the one at the University of Minnesota last fall, or the case of Morty Manfred in New York this spring), gay pride marches, campus recognition battles, gay studies fights, job discrimination fights, protests against news media discrimination, police harassment, or what ever.

In addition to the activities and projects that have already been mentioned, I believe that we should take a serious educational and propagandistic approach to gay liberation. Useful elements of such an approach would, it seems to me, be the following:

- Teach-ins on sexual oppression and sexual liberation. A few years ago, the French antiwar movement staged huge teach-ins throughout France called "Six Hours for Vietnam." I think we should propose that the gay liberation movement do the same kind of thing today. The teach-ins could be sponsored by united front coalitions and could be called "Six Hours for Gay Liberation," or "Six Hours on Homosexuality" (or they could be given a broader scope and dubbed "Six Hours on Sexuality," or "Six Hours on Sexual Liberation," and the women's liberation movement could be involved). Such teach-ins could consist of films of gay liberation demonstrations (there are now a number of these films), of films dealing with the topic of homosexuality ("Portrait of Jason," for instance), short plays on gay themes (there are a growing number), gay entertainment, and speeches. Representatives of foreign gay groups and sexologists like Daniel Guerin could be invited to give the meeting an international flavor. Naturally, we should want to present our socialist analysis of gay oppression and gay liberation at such teach-ins (and should fight for our right to do so)—both as speakers and salespeople for Pathfinder Press titles on gay liberation (and other topics, to be sure).

A mass meeting on the subject of homosexuality and sex would draw a lot of people. It is a popular topic. I see no reason why such teach-ins, properly organized, could not draw hundreds and even thousands of people (including many closeted gays who would feel safe turning out for such an event of the gay liberation movement) in a place like New York City, for instance, or even on some campuses. It would be to our advantage to help organize and present a socialist analysis at such teach-ins. Yet I doubt that they will ever take place on the scale that is possible without our intervention.

- A publications program that includes gay liberation related topics in both pamphlet and book form. Many bourgeois publishers already have their "token" gay title—the profit instinct has led them to do this despite what they may think of the question on its own merits. In my opinion, it is unthinkable that Pathfinder Press should con-

tinue to be without any titles on gay liberation. This is not only politically wrong, but it is unfortunate from a financial point of view: gay liberation and homosexuality are subjects that sell. Sources for pamphlets could include some of the contributions to this discussion, some of the articles suggested below, etc.

On books, let me suggest one in particular that would be useful for us to translate and publish: Daniel Guerin's *Essai sur la revolution sexuelle* (Essay on Sexual Revolution). This book presents a theory of sexual revolution, basing itself essentially on Kinsey and Reich. In addition, it includes several short essays on Fourier, Shakespeare, Gide, and Proudhon, among others. This book was translated into Spanish about a year ago, but it has yet to be translated into English. I think it would make a positive addition to Pathfinder's catalogue.

- An active intervention in the gay liberation movement through *The Militant* and the *ISR*. We should regularly run feature and analytical articles, in addition to news articles, on topics relating to gay liberation. Among these should be reviews of books relevant to gay liberation, as well as articles on topics of which the following are only a few suggestions: the relationship between gay liberation and the class struggle; religion and the oppression of homosexuals; socialism and gay liberation; why Marxists support gay liberation and why gays should be Marxists; gay history and culture (including portraits of important gays in history, such as Walt Whitman, Magnus Hirschfeld, and the British Victorian socialist Edward Carpenter, who is destined someday to become a hero of gay liberation, etc.); feminism, lesbianism, and gay liberation; psychiatry as an instrument of gay oppression; Stalinism and antihomosexuality (taking up the degeneration of the Soviet revolution, the antigay witchhunt under Stalin, the decadence theory of homosexuality popularized by the Stalinists, and the potential for gay involvement in the political revolution in the degenerated workers states); a critique of the Cuban position on homosexuality; a history of the socialist movement and its relationship to the question of homosexual oppression and liberation; and a defense of our politics in the face of attacks in the gay press, of which there have been approximately a dozen during the past year that called for a reply, but which we have—incorrectly, I believe—ignored.

When Should the SWP Intervene in Gay Liberation?

One of the things that this discussion must make clear is that we support gay liberation not only in words but also in deeds, that we embrace the gay liberation struggle, and that we are determined to help build that struggle and integrate it into the overall struggle to overthrow capitalism. There is nothing to be gained, and plenty to lose, by waiting any longer before beginning to get involved in gay liberation. We must recognize the relationship between this struggle and the coming socialist revolution and begin to relate to it accordingly. The time to do so is now.

August 30, 1972

A STATEMENT TO THE PSYCHIATRIC PROFESSION BY GAY LIBERATION

by David Thorstad, Upper West Side Branch,
New York Local

The American Psychiatric Association met in Dallas May 1-5. Representatives of the gay liberation movement were on hand with a gay information booth to attempt to inject a ray of rationalism and intelligence into the prevailing backwardness and pseudoscientific approach of an institution whose rabid antihomosexuality is backed up by medical titles, passed on to the American people as the authoritative word of the scientific community on homosexuality, and used to buttress bigoted attitudes toward gays and to justify the oppression of homosexually oriented persons. A leaflet was distributed to psychiatrists succinctly presenting the position of the gay liberation on this institution. The text of this leaflet, in part, follows (as published in the June 12 issue of *Gay*).

* * *

Central to the conflict between psychiatry and the homosexual community is the "sickness theory" of homosexuality and the whole related complex of negative attitudes toward homosexuality, which try to make of homosexuality something inferior to and less desirable than heterosexuality. It matters not whether the word used be sickness, disorder, affliction, disturbance, dysfunction, neurosis, immaturity, fixation, character or personality disorder, pathology, or any other—or whether homosexuality be considered as merely symptomatic of these—the effects are the same: 1) To support and buttress the prejudices of society and to assist the bigots in the perpetration and perpetuation of their bigotry; and, at least equally important 2) To destroy the homosexual's self-confidence and self-esteem, impair his or her self-image, degrade his or her basic human dignity.

Before any theory having consequences as disastrous as these is accepted, there should be certainty that it rests upon a sound scientific basis. As anyone with even a rudimentary scientific training is aware, the approach of psychiatry to homosexuality violates every canon of good scientific research. For psychiatry cavalierly to spout forth its characterizations of homosexuality as less than fully healthy represents utter irresponsibility. If the profession wishes to continue to take pride in its alleged scientific accomplishments, it had better be sure that its "researches" really are scientific. Insofar as homosexuality is concerned, they could not be less so. They are the distilled, concentrated essence of bad science; they are a textbook illustration of "science" gone wrong. When the psychiatric position on homosexuality is examined, we find that we have been DEFINED into sickness and pathology by cultural, social, moral, teleological and theological value judgments, camouflaged and cloaked in the language of science, but with none of the substance of science.

Deeply resented by the gay community are persistent efforts by psychiatrists to convert homosexuals to heterosexuality, instead of inculcating them with pride in their homosexuality. Increasingly, we hear psychiatrists piously

declare that they attempt to convert "only those homosexuals who wish to be changed." That is an unacceptably simplistic, superficial, and shallow approach. When society generally, and psychiatry particularly, have "brainwashed" homosexuals into a belief in the inferiority of their homosexuality, the homosexual who asks to be changed is merely the creation of a self-fulfilling process. How many whites choose to try to "pass" as Black, and why is the number so small, and why do any Blacks at all choose to "pass" as white, and is it not better that now in an era of "Black is Beautiful," fewer and fewer Blacks are trying to be untrue to themselves? We must investigate and often challenge the motives before we accept the desire to change. The great majority of homosexuals desiring to change to heterosexuality should be instilled with a belief that "Gay is Good," not blandly welcomed as candidates for change.

The homosexual community looks upon efforts to change homosexuals to heterosexuality, or to mold younger, supposedly malleable homosexuals into heterosexuality (the very existence of this "plastic teenager" is questionable at best) as an assault upon our people comparable in its way to genocide. We find offensive the entire vocabulary of the psychiatric literature, in which "help," "improvement," "success," "recovery" and similar terms relating to the therapy of homosexuals, is related to the extent of increase in heterosexual tendency and activity. The goals of therapy of homosexuals must be subjected to searching re-examination.

Not only do we insist that homosexuals, as people, are in no way inferior to heterosexuals as people (a precept to which we are sure that most psychiatrists will take no exception) but we insist, equally uncompromisingly, that homosexuality—as a condition, a state of being, a way of life or lifestyle, an expression of love and affection—is fully on par with and in no slightest way inferior to heterosexuality.

We are working to create a sense of community among our people, to create, in turn, a sense of unity, solidarity, militancy, and activism, in order to assist us to achieve our full rights and status in a society which is ours as much as it is that of the heterosexuals. We are working with success to create among our people a sense of *pride* in their homosexuality and a sense of the rightness of what they are and the goodness of what they do.

In order to do this, it is necessary to extract homosexuality from the medical context in which it has long and persistently been placed, and to place it in a *sociological* context of minority group relationships involving prejudice, discrimination, and bigotry. This is the *only* context in which the real problems of real homosexuals in our society today will be constructively and productively addressed. It has been well and truly said that in our society there is no Black problem, there is a white problem. We say that there is no homosexual problem, there is a heterosexual problem. Psychiatry, as it presently

deals with homosexuality, is a major part of that problem.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

1. Both individually, and collectively as a profession and an Association, re-examine your past positions on homosexuality. Discard the negative attitudes and the biases which have afflicted you in the past.

2. Work for a public renunciation, by psychiatry, of the "sickness theory" of homosexuality in ANY semantic guise.

3. Undertake an active, vigorous campaign to ameliorate and ultimately to eliminate popular prejudice on this question, both through work to change attitudes and in such specific areas as law reform, equal opportunity legislation, etc.

4. Consult on an on-going basis with representatives of the homosexual community.

August 30, 1972

A BRIEF COMMENTARY ON AN IMPORTANT ISSUE IN THIS DISCUSSION

By Steve Beren, Chicago Branch

In my first contribution to this discussion, I discussed the question "is gay good?" (Vol. 30, No. 5, pp. 8-9) I did so, not because I wanted the party to put its stamp of approval on homosexuality, but because I consider it a relevant political issue.

I don't propose that the party take a yes-or-no vote on "is gay good?" But I do think that a correct political approach to this question is important in understanding the concept of gay pride.

The Wrong Kind of Questions

But some heterosexuals resist the notion that gay is good. They ask: "But how can you just say that gay is good? Where is your definitive proof?" The proof exists, but that is hardly the point.

A friend of mine, who has never believed in God, as a youth always considered himself only an agnostic because he felt he had no way of "proving" that God did not exist. Then, one day, he realized that the burden of proof belonged to those who insisted there was a God. Since then, he has considered himself an atheist.

Similarly, the burden of proof lies with those who say gay is not good. Those straights who ask, "But what causes homosexuality? It is perhaps an illness? Or some other threat to our society? Where is your proof?" etc., are asking the wrong kind of questions.

In their introduction to *Twenty Questions About Homosexuality: A Political Primer*, the Gay Activists Alliance of New York states:

"It is important for our heterosexual brothers and sisters to understand that most of the questions they ask themselves offend and oppress us, for they are not asked of other groups (in) our society, and they have little to do with our lives since they are based entirely on misinformation and myth. But these myths have often been used as excuses for the denial of our Constitutional and human rights. So—despite the fact that our lives need no justification—we are compelled to provide answers.

"One major source is our own experience. We know that

we are neither criminal, immoral nor sick. But we have also used the bulk of the most recent literature on homosexuality; objective information which proves our point. . . ."

Refuting the anti-homosexual mythology of class society is not only important because it is a question of scientific fact, but also as a directly political question because of the concrete social effects of anti-gay prejudice.

A Correct Political Approach

Question 200 in GAA's pamphlet asks: "Is it better, in this society, to be heterosexual?" And GAA replies:

"Is it better to be white? Or gentile? Or descended from the settlers on the Mayflower? These are questions that should never be asked seriously by anyone who believes in our Constitutional principles. But they are asked nonetheless, and members of our oppressed ethnic minorities once wondered whether it wouldn't be better to 'pass' if possible, or at least try as hard as they could to fit into the prescribed patterns. Now these minorities have come to understand that the only answer is to be exactly what you are and proud of it—that avoidance of insanity does not consist in conformity but in protest against injustice.

"Homosexuals too now realize that our first duty toward ourselves is to accept nothing less than the same rights and dignities accorded others. We are no longer willing to accept the tyranny of the majority and we see the efforts to describe us a 'criminal' or 'immoral' or 'sick' for what these efforts always have been, *political* maneuvers aimed at stripping us of our personal values, at constricting the human personality and at substituting conformity for social diversity. We are serving notice that we'll tolerate no more brainwashing or brutalization. . . ." (their emphasis)

This political approach to the question "is gay good?" is essentially correct and should be the approach of the Socialist Workers Party.

August 30, 1972

A LITTLE MORE ON TRANSVESTISM

by Sudie and Geb, Boston Branch

As of this writing we haven't seen the response of the party center to our article about party membership policy concerning transvestism. The national office received that document in early June; with just a little effort it could have released its response long ago. Is the delay because the national leadership did not want to give its critics a full chance to respond before the end of the present discussion? That, unfortunately, is the effect.

We have, however, indirectly heard some rough indications of what that response will be. Apparently we will be told: there is no policy specifically about transvestists, and they are allowed in the party like anyone else; however, the party's dress code says that comrades must not appear publicly in such a way as to appear as extreme non-conformists, lest the party be unnecessarily isolated; thus, under present conditions it's o.k. for female comrades to wear pants but not for male comrades to wear dresses, etc.

Apparently comrades may wear drag in the privacy of their homes, perhaps even with other persons present. But comrades apparently may not wear drag to movement parties or even to gay bars, even if they are there for purely social purposes.

The statements of Comrade Sheppard at the second gay probe panel in August 1971 that transvestism involves an "obsession" absent in other people, are apparently to be understood as his personal opinion and not party policy. This is good. Still, we feel the situation is comparable to the party's National Organization Secretary hypothetically expressing the personal view that homosexuality involves such an "obsession."

If our understanding of the party center's response is correct, we must wonder about the lack of flexibility, both concerning the place and the type of comrade involved.

Our dress code is designed to avoid unnecessary isolation of the party. As now carried out, this involves a sort of deception of the masses; some comrades may be transvestists, hippies, etc., but we try to keep it secret, and instead try to give the public impression that we are all plain, ordinary Americans except for our politics.

But if a comrade went to a gay bar in drag, how would this isolate us? Even if they went there to sell *Militants*, who would we be isolated from?

Just be attending gay liberation demonstrations we might be isolated from some layers. Would it be much different if a comrade went there in drag?

A gay was elected student body president of the University of Minnesota; his campaign literature included a photo of a pair of high heels which were supposed to be his. Doesn't this suggest that a comrade wearing drag at a fairly political campus nowadays might not have intolerable repercussions?

For the most part our dress code flexibly takes into account each particular circumstance. Comrades wear things at YSA softball games which they might not wear at a press conference. What we wear while selling *Militants*

at a rock concert, we might not wear at a plant gate. But apparently transvestist comrades even at a gay liberation rally are no freer than if they were on trial in the bourgeois courts.

For better or worse, our dress code now states that male candidates for public office should have short hair, that female candidates should wear dresses or the like and male candidates wear jacket-and-tie on television appearances and similar situations, etc. But not all comrades are required to meet the same standards of conformity to bourgeois norms, even in public, and even in public speaking situations.

For the most part, our dress code is aimed for our main public representatives. Rank-and-file comrades may appear in public in sloppy clothes, with "improper" hair length, wearing freaky tee-shirts, barefoot, etc.

But concerning transvestism, even the rankest and filest of rank-and-file comrades are treated as if they were candidate for president.

Although we have some questions about our dress code in general, we must especially wonder about what appears to be a double standard for transvestists, where we have some reasonable flexibility in most areas of our dress code, but total inflexibility concerning transvestism. Is there less concern for the needs and desires of transvestist comrades? We would have to object to that.

Comrades should keep in mind that we are writing this without having actually seen the response to our original article. To whatever extent we may be misunderstanding that response, we apologize to the comrades, and hope they will try to imagine how we would have responded if we had seen it. The lateness of that response made this situation something we could not control.

But it does seem certain that the national leadership at present intends to keep our transvestist comrades locked in the closet. It is the same closet in which the party until recently locked its gay members, and the same closet in which masses of gays and transvestists are locked by bourgeois society and the Stalinist bureaucracies. A hateful, oppressive closet. It is one thing to lock yourself in a closet to avoid some worse fate, and something else again to be locked in by others.

Do we want the image of a party which locks its members in closets? Is the compromise to our image and character worth it?

Our policy, until less than two years ago, of banning gays from membership in our movement, involved a serious misjudgment of the actual social and political conditions around us. It has taken us three years since Christopher Street to get around to beginning a serious discussion of the gay liberation movement. And our dress code as now applied can only bring us distrust and hostility from the gay liberation movement. Is there a connection?

August 30, 1972

A LESBIAN SPEECH AND SOME COMMENTS

by Casey, Oakland-Berkeley Branch

On August 26 in San Francisco, the Women's Abortion Coalition and several other feminist organizations sponsored a teach-in in celebration of the victory women won through the suffragette movement 52 years ago. The teach-in was attended by nearly 500 women and many of the workshops held that day were filled to capacity. One of the largest workshops was the lesbian workshop, attended by approximately 100 women. I would like to present some of the ideas that were discussed in that workshop as a basis for beginning a discussion on the relationship of lesbians to the women's movement and the gay movement.

The following speech which I gave at the workshop received the most enthusiastic response from the women there.

"Where are they coming from, these outrageous women who dare to identify themselves as lesbian, gay; who dare to fly in the face of some of the most ugly prejudice in this society; who dare to slaughter some of the most sacred cows of every established religious order?

"We are women who love women, women who make love to women. We are blatant (and some latent) deviants from the safeguarded sexual norm. We are "lesbians," one of the sexual categories by which men have divided up humanity. In one of the first essays put out at the rebirth of the gay liberation movement, Radical-Lesbians stated: 'It should first be understood that lesbianism, like male homosexuality, is a category of behavior possible only in a sexist society characterized by rigid sex roles and dominated by male supremacy. These sex roles dehumanize women by defining us as a supporting, serving caste in relation to men, and emotionally cripple men by demanding they be alienated from their own bodies in order to perform their economic/political/military functions effectively.' The investment in keeping women in their contemptuous role is great. Lesbian is the word, label, condition of life that will surely hold women in line. . . . For if any woman decides to assert herself and be independent, she must not be a 'real woman' she must be a queer, dyke, lesbian of society. Yet the only difference between lesbians and straight women is sexual orientation, so as Radical-Lesbians quite aptly put it: 'The essence of being a "real woman" is to get fucked by men.' That is what the nuclear family and every institution in this society would have us think, if we continue to look to these sources for insight on who we are and where we are going.

"Sisterhood is powerful. Woman-identified-woman, we are looking to each other for insight and knowledge. An important part of the women's movement and feminist consciousness raising today is the role of lesbians, who are in the forefront of dispelling myths around female sexuality. Kinsey, in his studies on sexuality in the human female, states that 28 percent of the female population is conscious of erotic responses to other females. He also states: 'The homosexual has been a significant part of

human sexual activity ever since the dawn of history, primarily because it is an expression of capacities that are basic in the human animal.' So where are we? Many of us are living isolated, dispersed in the population among men, rigorously denying our erotic feeling to our own sex; many of us have become so good at sexual repression that we are unable to feel attraction to the same sex, and those of us who do are so distorted with fear and guilt that we live lives of self-denial. After all, from the very beginning of our lives, this culture based on the Judeo-Christian tradition defined quite well our female model: Eve, the shameful sinner, who because of her search for sexual pleasure and knowledge received the curse of the feminine role, i.e., that of forced procreator under penitent submission to her husband, the male authority.

"So the programming began and continues from the small child forbidden to stimulate herself or other children in sex play, to the repressed adolescent who is allowed to flirt with sex only under specific conditions and then only to the opposite sex; the good girl/bad girl syndrome, the double standard, the fear and dread of gay sex or homosexual child molesters. The need to safeguard the female into a well defined sex role with few sex outlets has been absolutely necessary to maintain that bastion of all citadels: the nuclear family. This economic unit must be glued together with the subjugation of women, accompanied by monogamous heterosexuality, in order to keep each new product which roles off the reproductive assembly line in her/his place. This unit is also necessary to safeguard the private property ownership of children, through whom the wealth or poverty is passed down through the male line.

"As lesbians, as lesbian women, we are challenging the foundation on which this sacred unit exists. The women's liberation and gay liberation movements are creating an explosion in the worldwide system of prejudice, exploitation and sexual repression. As lesbian women, we will no longer hide in closets which deny our sexual identity; for our survival depends on our uniting against all the institutions of society which propagate oppression through prejudice: the media, with its distorted sex-role images; the church; the state which has the authority to imprison an individual up to 20 years for the infamous "crime against nature"; the psychiatric institutions, notorious for "curing" the homosexual, prescribe electric treatments and even a lobotomy here and there to maintain the righteous heterosexual norm; the education system; the system on the job, where disclosure of one's private sex life could mean the loss of livelihood; the system where lesbian identification could mean the loss of a child and attacks on the street. And where gays are allowed to gather together, we fall prey to the mafia-run bars, the police harassment and entrapment.

So as gay liberationists, lesbians are refusing to internalize the self hatred which has poisoned every aspect of

our relations to ourselves and others. We refuse to live double lives, laugh at jokes which ridicule and stifle us. Gay liberation means gays coming out, standing up and being proud. Uniting to fight in a massive way against society's institutionalized torture and distortion of human sexuality. Gay liberation cannot mean mere toleration for homosexuals. It must result in the transformation of existing institutions and social relations, the breakdown of relationships that foster male supremacy, subjugation of women and sexual exclusivity."

The family?

* * *

So then, it is difficult to talk about lesbian oppression without talking about the role of the lesbian and her fight on two fronts: in the women's movement and the gay movement. Lesbians are doubly oppressed as women and as gays, by sex and by sexual orientation. She is in the forefront of dispelling myths around our bodies. She is the ultimate in threat to male sexual domination for her choice of a sex partner is another woman, and surely this is a woman's right which must be taken up

and defended by the feminist movement as a whole. As a lesbian woman she is taking the lessons learned about the nature of sex roles and sexism in society and applying them to the gay movement. As a gay liberationist, she is fighting alongside gay men for freedom of sexual choice without interference from the state, and isn't freedom of sexual choice in everyone's interest, straights as well as gays, male as well as female? The power of this movement lies in the fact that it undermines the authority of the state, through its various institutions, to dictate to the mass populace who they can have sex with and under what conditions. Gays are demanding an end to discrimination on the basis of sex orientation, by all the institutions of society; but how can the nuclear family, education, the church, media, the courts, the psychiatric institutions stop channelling youth by rigid sex roles and sex orientation in isolation from a major transformation of society? A movement to defend the basic democratic rights of gays is the beginning, its implications are farreaching.

August 31, 1972

GAY LIBERATION VS. "WORKERISM"

by Sudie and Geb, Boston Branch

Comrade Nat Weinstein has done the party a service in writing his "Contribution . . ." which appears in Discussion Bulletin No. 4 of this series. He is the only comrade as of this writing who has presented this discussion with an argument for what we called abstentionism in our reply to Barry Sheppard which appeared in the same bulletin (Roland Sheppard gives us a last-minute second example).

We have felt all along that abstentionism must involve a break from the basic political insights our party has. To the extent that Nat can be taken as a typical abstentionist, we now have stronger evidence for this. In Nat's article can be seen a blend of economism, empiricism, and dogmatism—a blend which adds up to what the party often calls "workerism."

On page 12 Nat states that ". . . gay liberation has no revolutionary role to play." Any comrade who feels that gay liberation can play a small revolutionary role is in opposition to Nat, and is closer to the gay liberationist comrades, differing with us only in degree.

Nat denies that "gay liberation represents a factor with significant potential in the American revolution." He asks: "Is the prejudice held by workers against gays a factor in the workers' struggle?" Absolutely not, not even a little bit, he answers: "You would have to stretch logic tortuously to try to make such a case."

Comrade Roland's ideas are similar. He doesn't think antigay prejudices are significantly against the class interests of the working class: ". . . there is no special obstacle requiring a subordination by the class, of these prejudices."

In *other* cases, he says, the party must "take these prejudices of the class head on and with absolutely no compromise." But with antigay sexism—we don't have to take it head on; we can *compromise!!!*

Both of them say that it is compatible with the interests of the proletariat, for the workers to be sexist bigots (not antifemale, of course; just—*just*—antigay).

Nat supports the demands of the gay liberation movement, sure, but he opposes the movement itself. Any involvement in it "will prove to be a diversion in our approach to oppressed nationalities, workers and women," he says. "Undue emphasis on minor issues can give an organization like ours an exotic image, erecting barriers that cannot be justified by subsequent historical development."

The barely unspoken conclusion of this is that the gay liberation movement is counterrevolutionary. After all, it diverts a lot of gay people who could spend their energies more productively in the antiwar movement, the feminist movement, the Trotskyist movement, etc. And it further threatens to divert the party itself from the revolutionary road. Nat wishes the gay liberation movement would go away, perhaps back into the closet.

If we adopted Nat's position, we would have to tell gay activists they should drop out of gay liberation and get into something revolutionary. This might earn us a certain amount of distrust within that movement.

Nat's position represents a synthesis of the positions on gay liberation taken a year ago by some comrades during the preconvention discussion. Some were also concerned about not "erecting barriers." Others advocated

"support" from the sidelines (although they said this was just because we don't have enough cadres; they never said that "gay liberation has no revolutionary role to play," as Nat does). Nat's approach to gay liberation is a mixture of economism, empiricism, and rigid traditionalism. We refer the reader to pages 17-18 of Discussion Bulletin No. 4 for our discussion of the abstentionists of a year ago.

Nat's Basic Thesis

Nat's whole argument rests on the statement that "gay people play no special subordinate role" in bourgeois society, which he borrowed from Barry's article. To Nat, this is equivalent to the statement that gay people play no special subordinate role in the bourgeois *economy*, which is basically true. Likewise, the Jews played no special subordinate role in the Nazi *economy*. But the Jews did play a very special subordinate role in Nazi Germany—the role of scapegoat. This is very similar to the role gays have played in class society for thousands of years. Nat's refusal to see this gives us grounds for accusing him of economism. Do Barry and Nat think that gays play no special role, *at all*? But if gays do play a special role, isn't it clearly *subordinate*—and worthy of our notice?

But in order to understand the role of gay oppression in our society, we must not look mainly at the oppression of gay individuals, but at the suppression of gayness in the whole society.

There is a reason why McCarthyism equated gayness and communism, why gays were gassed with Jews by Hitler, why Stalin re-introduced gay oppression into the Soviet Union, and why gays are oppressed in the U. S. today.

Nat believes that "there are no effective links [between gays and] the exploited and oppressed layers of society." Let's take them one by one:

Workers: Nat states that "Certain prejudices held by workers are so crucially opposed to their economic, social, and political interests, that not only are they at a disadvantage in the day-to-day struggles with the class enemy, but it would doom them to defeat in the long run." But antigay prejudices are not so opposed to the interests of the workers, Nat says. Let us just consider working-class youth and the bourgeois army.

The Kinsey studies have established that some 50 percent of U. S. males have conscious homosexual tendencies, and a slightly larger percent of working-class males. When they report for their draft physicals, they are asked whether they have homosexual tendencies—the army won't take anyone like that. Almost all of the draftees with conscious homosexual tendencies deny it at the time of their physicals! Not because they want to get into the army—not at all. As much as they don't want to be drafted, they would rather be drafted than admit their homosexual tendencies.

Once in the army, they are constantly baited into proving their "manhood," proving that they are not "sissies" or "fags." Remember the mutiny in Vietnam, when a whole platoon of antiwar GIs refused to go on a mission? Their commanding officer tried everything to get them to change their minds. What finally worked? He questioned their "manhood"! The whole group then went out on the dangerous mission in a war they opposed, just to prove

their "manhood."

That was just the one incident that made the U. S. press; there surely have been many others just like it. Throughout the whole of this war and every other in memory, U. S. GIs have fought to prove their "manhood" when there was nothing else left to get them to fight. That is, their antigay prejudices were used to get them to do *things which were opposed to their class interests*.

Oppressed nationalities: Again, we give only one example. Police brutality is a very real part of the oppression of Blacks, La Raza, Native Americans, etc. Gays are in the very same boat. When gays struggle against the right of the cops to beat up and murder anyone they want to, isn't that a link?

Women: Nat's economism is clearest here. What is Nat's conception of the class interest workers have in supporting women's liberation? He says: "The superexploitation and oppression of nationalities and women—the lower wage levels, the great predominance in the capitalists' pool of unemployed workers—lower all workers' living standards and serve as both a source of superprofits and as a deadly weapon in the hands of the capitalist class." That's all.

What Nat says is both true and important. But it is already an oversimplification of the economist type to present this as an overall explanation of the workers' class interest in opposing national oppression (he again leaves out the very important scapegoat factor, for instance). But to present this as *the* link between feminism and the working class is to take economism to the extreme. Nat likes Marxist classics; he will find a different conception of the role of the oppression of women in the *Communist Manifesto*. Do the capitalists deny women abortions in order to lower the wages of the working class?

Antigay prejudice teaches everyone to believe in the inequality of the sexes. It teaches men to find a woman to rule over and to take their frustrations out on. It teaches women to get families to devote themselves to. In "Women and Gay Liberation," we discuss how gay liberation can weaken the bourgeois family even before it can be completely abolished, and how gays and women have a common interest in struggling for sexual freedom, whether it be for legalizing sodomy or for legalizing abortion; we refer the reader to that article.

Nat doesn't think that antigay prejudice conflicts in any serious way with the class interest of the workers or with the interest of oppressed nationalities or of women. "Certain prejudices held by workers are . . . crucially opposed to their economic, social and political interests"—but antigay prejudices are not so opposed to the workers' interests, he says. He asks: "Is the prejudice held by workers against gays a factor in the workers' struggle?" Not at all, he answers.

This is central to his whole argument, and he spends about 130 lines telling us so. For a Marxist, what this boils down to is saying simply that *antigay prejudice is really not all that reactionary, really not so bad at all*. Nat and Roland have a conciliatory attitude toward antigay prejudice—a liberal attitude, an attitude which might not have been suicidal for the party ten years ago. But today is different.

To be Marxists, we must agree that *the ruling ideas*

within any class society express the interests of the ruling class.

Of course, there may be an exception here or there, of secondary importance. But gay-hating is an obsession of every capitalist society, and has always been so. The most viciously antigay societies in modern times are consistently the most bourgeois societies. The U. S. always wins the Olympic gold medal in gay-persecuting. Runners-up are Canada, Great Britain, Germany, etc. Can a Marxist even suspect that it might be coincidental?

Do Nat and Roland agree that the ruling ideas of every class society express the class interests of its ruling class?

If they disagree, they should explain why they have broken with Marxism (surely this isn't the case).

If they agree, then how can they propose "compromise" with the class interests of the capitalists, with gay-hating? Isn't that what we call *opportunism*?

Nat has accused us of shortcutism—of looking for a shortcut to fast party growth (by looking to the gay liberation movement for potential recruits!) But Nat has his own shortcut in mind. He wants us to go directly to even the more backward of workers, those who are antigay bigots, for recruitment—and he therefore doesn't want any "unnecessary barriers" between us and them—such as the party having a militant position on gay liberation. Which side is really guilty of shortcutism?

Who's More Oppressed Than Whom?

Nat throughout his document argues that gays are not oppressed anywhere near as bad as workers, women, and oppressed nationalities. This gives him grounds for arguing that there will never be much of a gay movement, that gay's don't deserve our attention; gays are making a mountain out of a molehill, and the party should not intervene in a molehill.

Suppose it's true that gays aren't oppressed as bad as the others? Does this mean we don't intervene in their movement?

Are high school students oppressed as bad as women, etc.? Nat surely wouldn't think so—it only lasts a few years at most, and you can always drop out if it gets too much for you. But Nat hasn't objected to our intervening in the growing struggle for high school student rights. Good.

But actually there is something basically wrong in the whole idea of comparing two different types of oppression to see which is worse. It's like asking: is it hotter in the summer, or in the South? We have often seen how people who are oppressed in different ways can be gotten to fighting each other over who's more oppressed. Such divisiveness is very harmful. Nat is doing a disservice to all the oppressed by encouraging them to play that game.

Psychological Oppression

Comrade Nat is under the impression that gay people suffer mainly just from psychological oppression, which is something he doesn't take very seriously. He notes that the gay movement learned the concept of psychological oppression from the women's liberation movement. Now, if only Nat will learn the concept, we'll be all set!

Psychological oppression of workers is when the boss insults you and you have to say "Yes, sir!" or you might lose your job.

Psychological oppression of Blacks and La Raza is

when a cop calls you "Nigger" or "wetback" and you know there's nothing you can do about it.

Psychological oppression of women is when you're six years old and your brother gets an erector set with a motor for Christmas and you get a dolly that actually urinates.

And each of those groups faces still worse psychological oppression as well. Just like gays.

Psychological oppression of gays is involuntary castration. Ten states of the U. S. allow involuntary castration for chronic "sex offenders," many of whom are gay. You can also get "voluntary" castration in other states—they lock you up and won't let you out unless you agree to be "voluntarily" castrated. Gays are also involuntarily sterilized in seven states—so you won't reproduce your kind.

Psychological oppression of gays is a prefrontal lobotomy. That's where they open your skull and cut out a piece of your brain. If the operation works, you're still able to function in most ways, but you don't really care about anything anymore—never very happy, never very sad, just like a vegetable all the time. You're a "good worker," but not much interested in love anymore. That way they stop you from trying to seduce plainclothes cops in public restrooms.

Psychological oppression of gays is when they show you a picture of someone of your sex and hit you with a wicked electric shock, then switch to a picture of someone of the other sex and turn the electricity off, over and over, until you become heterosexual; a curious blend of Freudian and Pavlovian psychology.

Psychological oppression of gays is the "sex psychopath" laws which in at least twenty states allow gays and others to be locked up, *without due process of law*, for an indefinite period, even for the rest of your life, until the antigay shrinks decide you're cured. No jury, no lawyer, no appeal, just the antigay shrinks.

Psychological oppression of gays is always knowing that you may be next.

Other Ways That Gays Are Oppressed

The official legal death penalty appears to be more or less abolished in the U. S. today, but there's still lots of things you can get life sentences for. In three states you can get life for sodomy with a consenting adult partner; in Georgia the life sentence is mandatory unless the jury recommends clemency.

In North Carolina they can't give you any more than sixty years for sodomy; in Connecticut until very recently a fifteen-year-old could get thirty years. In eight other states you can get twenty, another eight give you up to fifteen, and another seventeen give you up to ten years for sodomy. California and Nevada give you one year to life, the indeterminate sentence.

Of course, they usually don't hit you with the worst. For instance, they'll charge you with sodomy, with no evidence, and then they'll offer to reduce the charge to loitering or public indecency or whatever, if you plead guilty; that way you get maybe just a month or ten days, or even a suspended sentence (with a criminal record, of course). And of course, most cops and judges will be extra forgiving if you give a little something to their retirement fund.

This very minute there are *thousands* of gays rotting in U. S. prisons for just being gay. Of course, Nat is quite

correct; most gays are not in jail at any given moment.

The extralegal death penalty does still exist in the U. S. and suspected gays are a prime target. Note: "*suspected*" gays. Nat is quite right; most gays are not "known" gays. Even if you are quite "straight", if someone thinks you're gay you may at any time, at any place, in the U. S. be beaten bloody and even killed. Don't rely on police protection; the cops are the worst offenders. The number of gays (and "straights" who are taken for gay) who are murdered for being gay each year in the U. S. is probably several hundred, and maybe well over a thousand (the government doesn't keep a count).

Even when the murderer is caught, there still is no justice. "Self-defense" against a supposed attempt at a homosexual seduction may be considered informal grounds for dropping of charges or a not-guilty verdict, in the U. S. today.

Nat doesn't believe that gays suffer "oppression" in any real sense. He says "Gay historians had to reach back into the dark pages of the Inquisition to find a modicum of support for this thesis." Now will you dig this! The Inquisition was over several centuries ago, and since that time there has not been a modicum of support for the claim that gays are really oppressed. Oh, it hurts! it hurts!

Well, the Inquisition impressed Nat, so apparently large-scale extermination of gays counts as real oppression in Nat's book. It has been about thirty years since Hitler rounded up tens of thousands of German gays and threw them into the gas chambers, right next to the Jews. Now, that's really not *that* long ago, is it?

The gas chambers have been closed down, at least for now, and the antigay law that Hitler passed has been repealed. In 1969!

Gay Economic Exploitation, and a Comparison of Styles

We are afraid that Nat will be impressed by nothing less than evidence that gays suffer job discrimination and similar problems forcing their wages down, and dragging down the wages of the rest of the workers as a result.

Nat tries to make a big deal out of the fact that whether you are gay is not as immediately obvious in all cases as whether you are Black or female or Spanish-speaking or whatever. But in most cases gays suffer not as "known" gays but as "suspected" gays.

On this subject, Comrade Kendall's presentation rates a solid A plus. The "A" is for the presentation itself, and the "plus" is for his timing in getting his article into the Discussion Bulletin right next to Nat's (telepathy, we guess).

We hope everyone will notice a difference in style between Kendall's article and Nat's. Kendall did some research; he gives facts, figures, details, and evidence. In all of Nat's article there is not one detail.

Lack of detail was also evident in Barry's original article; he did not do that much research, it seems, either. As of this writing, Lee Smith's article in Discussion Bulletin No. 5 is the only other article we have seen which opposes immediate national intervention—and it, also, does not contain a single blessed detail (at the last minute, this has been out-dated somewhat, though the trend continues).

One side gives you a whole list of historical events, tells you the size of various demonstrations, tells you details of laws, gives you exact statistics and estimates where there are no exact figures, tells you what book to read

if you're skeptical about this or that, throws in some anthropology and biology, etc.

The other side avoids questions, makes assumptions and expresses intuitions.

More on Methodology

Nat is afraid that if we were to intervene in the gay liberation movement, we would be forced ". . . to refer more young people to psychiatric writers of treatises—some of them of dubious scientific credibility—explaining these psychological phenomena, than to the traditional Marxist classics".

Actually, the psychiatric treatises are all antigay (it is true that they are of "dubious scientific credibility," but the gay liberation movement wants nothing to do with them).

The two main treatises that gay liberation would probably refer people to are Wainwright Churchill's *Homosexual Behavior Among Males* and Ford and Beach's *Patterns of Sexual Behavior*. Has Nat read them?

Ford and Beach give us the most thorough evidence that homosexuality exists in nature in mammals in general, especially in those species closest to our own. Their evidence is based on the observations of hundreds of zoologists.

Both books give evidence that bisexuality in one form or another is taken for normal in the great majority of human cultures. For instance, among the Ancients, the Greeks were not the only gay society; there were also the Hebrews before the Babylonian exile, the later Persians, the Celts, the Scandinavians, the Egyptians, the Etruscans, the Cretans, the Carthaginians, the Sumerians, the whole "cradle of civilization" area, the Canaanites, the Chaldeans, the Hittites, the early Romans, the Germans, the Chinese, the Japanese (where only the occupying U. S. army finally crushed the gay subculture), the Buddhists and the Moslems, in one way or another.

Among recent "primitive" societies, based on the Human Relations Area Files (formerly known as the Yale Cross-Cultural Survey), there are 76 societies in which the status of homosexuality is known. They break down into three basic groups. One group, which resembles the old Greeks, considers homosexual love—making a basic, normal part of life, at least among males (most anthropologists don't record data about homosexuality when doing field work, and of those that do, most don't record data concerning female homosexuality). Typically, young males play the "passive" role in anal intercourse with grown males; it is supposed to help make "men" out of them.

A second group typically has a minority of males who play the "female" role for the rest of the males. Commonly these males are transvestists who even marry other males, usually leaders of the society. They are typically held in awe by the rest of their peers, being considered to have special supernatural natures, as powerful magicians or whatever. Generally they are said to have more social prestige and respect than they would have had without their special sex-roles. Though the "passive" and "active" homosexual roles are separated in these societies, bisexuality, and even active bisexuality, are still usually taken for granted—even the male "wives" often have their own female wife.

These two groups make up two-thirds of the "primitive" societies about which Western anthropology has data.

In the remaining one-third, homosexuality is in one

way or another taboo. But usually gay love-making goes on anyway, sometimes barely hidden from view—as in the U. S. today. But anthropologists suspect that information about these societies may be often unreliable or misleading. The taboo may be on discussing gay love, not on taking part in it. There may be a mistranslation involved; what we call homosexual acts, the local folk may not. The anthropologist may refuse to see what is obvious. The people may feel pressured to tell the anthropologists what they want to hear, especially after dealing with Christian missionaries.

Perhaps most important is the possibility that the homosexuality taboo may have been picked up from invading Christians at one time or another. For example, the Haitians are counted as one of the "primitive" societies with such a taboo. But their official religion is a 50-50 mixture of voodoo and Catholicism; there is no evidence that they would have had the taboo if it were not for Catholicism. Many of the other societies in this category are very close geographically to the Judeo-Christian centers (as in the Mideast), or were not examined until they were herded onto reservations by the Christians; and so it is really questionable how many of them would have been antigay without Christian influence.

With the possible exception of the Sirionos of Bolivia, *gayness is taken for granted in every society where it is not actively suppressed: even when it is actively suppressed it may still be very common and just kept secret.*

The commonness of gay love even in antigay societies, and the universality of it in others, causes Kinsey to conclude (in *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*) that "the capacity of an individual to respond erotically to any sort of stimulus, whether it is provided by another person of the same or of the opposite sex, is basic in the species."

Is Kinsey one of the "psychiatric writers of treatises . . . of dubious scientific credibility" that Nat attacks? We have no way of knowing. Nat wants us to take his personal word for it that the scientific resources of the gay liberation movement cannot be trusted. He gives not a word of evidence or argument; just take Nat's word for it, that's all. We don't even know which scientists Nat is talking about. Nat possibly doesn't know either. Nat has possibly not read any of the sources in question. This is not Marxism.

We feel that it is important to study Nat's methodology very closely; we cannot reject his "credibility" without specific arguments, the way he tries to do with the scientific resources of the gay liberation movement.

Nat's methodology is deeply infected with empiricism; he thinks that just because things have been a certain way (or seem to have been), therefore they will continue to be the same.

For this reason, he rejects all claims that ever-increasing numbers of gays will come out of the closet and into the streets. He says "The 'closet' avenue of escape from overt oppression, *on the basis of historical experience*, is too easy" (our emphasis—S&G). Thus it has always been, and thus it will always be, he says. But one problem with empiricism is that you don't always know which trend to project into the future. After all, over the past five years ever-increasing numbers of gays *have* come out of the closet and into the streets. We have even seen this within the party. Is it so unreasonable to suggest that maybe the trend of the past several years will continue

into the future?

The trend of the past several years is pretty obviously connected with the deepening of the general radicalization. If we assume that the radicalization will continue to deepen, isn't it reasonable to expect that this trend among gays, like so many other unprecedented trends, will also continue?

In a similar way, Nat argues that "*Never before* have such formations [as gay liberation] driven only by essentially psychological factors played any significant role in history" (Again, our emphasis—S&G). We will leave aside the obvious question of whether gays are to be driven only by essentially psychological factors, or whether they may also be driven by their material interests (as if you couldn't have both); we will just deal with the "Never before." Never before has Afro-America or La Raza been organized into an independent political party. Never before has there been a mass movement for legalizing abortion. Never before has the SWP gotten on the ballot in thirty states. We can only answer: so what? Such an argument has no weight for Marxists.

Nat makes highly controversial statements without dealing with the obvious counterarguments. He does this in rejecting the scientific resources we have mentioned. He does this in saying that "there are no effective social bonds linking gays together." (But then why are there gay bars in every large U. S. city and most small ones? Why do 20,000 gays get together for a rally in Central Park? Why do gays congregate in gay ghettos, such as Greenwich Village, which is larger than most Black ghettos? Why do tens of thousands of U. S. gays belong to the various homophile and gay liberation groups? Why are there national gay newspapers with circulations larger than that of *The Militant*?)

Nat doesn't think there really are so many gays. He refers skeptically to the "claimed tens of millions" of gays in the U. S. Of course, he doesn't deal with the evidence that everyone is gay. But even just counting those who are actively gay, how can he ignore the Kinsey study, without a word of evidence or argument? Not one word!

Nat's "Marxism" is actually dogmatism, and as a result it violates the real spirit of Marxism and its methodology.

He concludes his explanation of the link between the class struggle and the struggle of oppressed nations by saying "I think it is important to note here that Trotsky taught us that the national struggle is an organic part of the class struggle."

The implication is clear. Trotsky *didn't* teach us that gay liberation is an organic part of the class struggle, so therefore it isn't! But this goes both ways. Trotsky also didn't teach us that gay liberation was a "diversion in our approach to oppressed nationalities, workers and women" either.

Nat also says that if we got into gay liberation, we would have to "refer more young people to psychiatric writers of treatises . . . than to the traditional Marxist classics." But what traditional Marxist classics could we refer anyone to for a discussion of homosexuality and gay liberation? There's always *Origins of the Family*, in which Engels refers to homosexuality in passing as a degrading abomination.

Does Nat agree with Engels' bias about homosexuality? Can this trivial detail of that otherwise excellent book withstand modern empirical data?

Possibly we could refer people to the works of Reich.

Nat wouldn't like that, because of Reich's enthusiasm about the sexual freedom movement, but at least Reich was also bigoted against gays.

Even if we didn't dare trust our own judgment and experience, even if slavish worshipping of the Marxist classics were the best policy for us, what Marxist classic could we possibly refer people to on the subject of gayness—unless we want to retain the prejudice of Engels and Reich and openly adopt the Stalinist position that gayness is a disease of class society?

Nat's methodology, and his conclusions, bear a striking resemblance to those of the various "workerist" trends in the radical movement.

Economism is not Marxism. Empiricism is not Marxism. Dogmatism is not Marxism. Marxism must be in

a perpetual state of learning, of revolution in theory. The Marxism of one generation will not be fully adequate for the needs of the next.

The original Marxism of Marx was revolutionized by the findings of the anthropologist Morgan a century ago. It was again revolutionized by Lenin's theories of the party and of imperialism, and by Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution. It was again revolutionized by Trotsky's theory of the bureaucracy in workers' states.

Black nationalism and women's liberation have already revolutionized Marxism in substantial ways. It is time for gay liberation to do the same. We must do as every form of life must do: either grow, or rot.

September 1, 1972

GAY IS GOOD, GAY IS BETTER—WHAT SHOULD THE PARTY'S POSITION BE?

by Sudie and Geb, Boston Branch

We have argued in other articles that, in different ways and in different senses, gay is *better* than "straight." We feel this is firmly established by science, and that it is a vital concept for comrades to consider and deal with.

But we wish to prevent some misunderstanding. We do *not* feel that the party must accept the full idea that gay is better than "straight," at the present time. Our successful intervention in the gay liberation movement, at present, does not require our having a party position on this question.

At present, by far the most important focus for the gay liberation movement must be the struggle for civil rights for gays. For the time being, this allows us a lot of flexibility.

But we do feel that the time is already here that the party must take a principled stand on the question whether gay is *good*.

Do we dare say this to the gay liberation movement:

"The SWP feels that maybe gay people are just as normal, healthy, and desirable as anyone. But the SWP also feels that maybe gay people are biologically inferior freaks, maybe gays are physically sick, maybe gayness is a mental illness, maybe gays are a degenerate product of class society. We just aren't really sure.

"But in any case, no matter what you really are, we support your struggle for full civil and human rights."

What a "degrading abomination" it would be for the party to say such a thing to the gay liberation movement

in 1972! Any self-respecting gay would have utter contempt for us (even if we still were better than any of the alternatives).

Wouldn't it be much better—and the absolute minimum that could be acceptable—for us to say:

"The SWP respects people's individual opinions, especially if they attempt to defend themselves scientifically, even on such questions as the supposed inferiority of Blacks, women, and gays. But we feel that there is no serious scientific evidence for the inferiority of Blacks, women, and gays—and substantial scientific evidence against these notions.

"Historically, these notions have been reactionary prejudices used to divide and oppress the masses. Any attempt to make a scientific argument for the inferiority of Blacks, women, or gays should be viewed with suspicion—in the past, the 'science' has always been quackery, used to give 'scientific' backing to the most vicious of injustices.

"It is in this spirit that the SWP wholeheartedly endorses the concept of Gay Pride and the slogan, 'Gay is good.' All the more reason why we demand: full civil and human rights for gays!"

We feel that the party should formally adopt this preceding italicized statement (or another which is clearly equally strong). If any comrade cannot as an individual agree with this statement, or does not think the party should formally adopt it, we would like to know why.

September 1, 1972

SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

by Kendall Green, Upper West Side Branch,
New York Local

Q: *Why is it necessary to have a national intervention in the gay movement?*

A: A national intervention is necessary to allow the SWP to work out and implement a strategy for the gay liberation movement. A national intervention means that each branch would be expected to review its opportunities for work in the gay movement at each Tasks and Perspectives report and to decide upon a plan for such work if it is able to take advantage of these opportunities. Branches that are working in the gay movement would send in regular reports to an individual in the national office assigned to coordinate such activities. Periodic reports would be made at branch meetings and to the branch Executive Committee. The national office would be in a position to advise the gay liberation fractions across the country of the latest developments and suggest perspectives for the fractions.

A concrete example of the need for a national intervention might be the question of whether to push for gay demonstrations across the country on October 1, a date decided upon by Southern California gay groups to demand repeal of antigay laws and an end to job discrimination. Before the national office could make such a decision, it would have to know how many gay comrades could be spared from other assignments to work on such a demonstration, how receptive gay groups would be to such a plan, how many independent gay activists could we draw into working on such an action, how successful would they be, etc. The fact that we are far from being able to answer such questions today shows the need for a nationally coordinated intervention.

Leaving aside the decision of how, and even whether, to relate to the gay movement to the individual branches would increase the divisions in the SWP over gay liberation. As most comrades know, some branches are more involved in the gay movement than others due to the degree of opposition or support for the gay movement in the branch leadership. If we do not have a national policy which specifically outlines how and when we can intervene, then individuals in the leadership of branches who are hostile to the gay movement will continue to press for little or no involvement in the gay movement. Others will press for maximum activity. Even if the National Committee were able to draft a detailed outline sufficient to guide the most reluctant as well as the most enthusiastic, it would still be a static document unable to foresee new developments and hence conservative.

Finally, a national intervention in the gay movement does not mean that every branch would have to assign so many comrades to gay work or that we would have to help organize a national coalition of gay organizations. Such decisions would be based on our opportunities and ability to utilize those opportunities nationally and in each branch. A national intervention is simply the kind of activity we do every day in the Black, Chicano, women's liberation, and antiwar movements. To develop any

program or strategy for the gay movement we should begin a national intervention now.

Q: *What is the "social weight" of the gay movement?*

A: The term "social weight" is used to describe the power that a sector of society has to aid the overthrow of capitalism. Workers engaged in production and transportation of commodities have more social weight than service workers because of their position in production of surplus values. While winning the industrial proletariat to a revolutionary socialist program is crucial before the seizure of state power can be accomplished, the "social weight" of a sector of the population is not the most important consideration in deciding our orientation towards that sector now and in the near future. Far more important considerations are the degree of combativity shown, the relationship to our other areas of work, and the number of cadre we could recruit from such a sector.

The gay liberation movement has shown a very high degree of combativity during the last three years. Starting with the Stonewall riots, confrontations with public officials, politicians, university administrators, and others, large gay contingents in antiwar and abortion demonstrations, and three national Christopher Street Gay Pride demonstrations, the gay movement has been as visible and angry as any other movement for social change. Without socialist involvement, the number of gay groups has grown from a handful of conservative, closeted homosexual organizations to well over three hundred militant open gay organizations located on every major campus and city in the country. Without socialist involvement, the Christopher Street Gay Pride demonstrations took place in a dozen cities across the country and, in many places, were among the largest political demonstrations during this election year. Philadelphia's action, for example, drew 6000 people with about 50 percent being Black.

Our intervention in the gay movement would complement our work in the SWP campaign, student, antiwar, women's, Black and Chicano movements. Although gay contingents have not always been fully implemented when possible, we have seen an overwhelming response of gay people wishing to participate in the antiwar and abortion demonstrations through these contingents. Because gay groups have been established on most of the campuses where the YSA has members or contacts, our participation in these groups will be important in differentiating the YSA from other tendencies on campus and recruiting radicalizing students. Without a national orientation for work in gay groups, we would be cut off from the systematic activity necessary to win gay support for the socialist campaign and we would miss opportunities to involve the campaign in the gay liberation struggles as we did in New York around Intro 475.

Finally the gay movement has shown itself to be an important area for recruitment to the SWP and YSA. Although no statistics have been published regarding the nationwide recruitment of gay comrades, the experiences reported by Sudie and Geb in Boston are probably not

atypical. They report that ten out of twenty-four new recruits are openly gay and four were elected to the branch Executive Committee. Our present policy hampers such recruitment by forcing the individual to choose between remaining active in the gay movement and joining the socialists who participate in an irregular manner at best. We recruit from the antiwar and women's movements because we are "the best builders" of those movements, can we expect the gay movement to be any different?

Q: *Must the party take a position of "Gay Is Good"?*

A: Apart from the scientific evidence that homosexual behavior is as natural as heterosexual behavior, which is discussed by John Lauritsen in bulletins number 1 and 5, the slogan "Gay Is Good" serves the same purpose in the gay liberation movement as "Black Is Beautiful" does for the Black liberation struggle or the attacks on the myth of male superiority do in the feminist movement. They are attacks against the prevailing concepts about oppressed people. They serve to unite the oppressed people and divide them from even the most liberal apologist for the status quo who argue we should be "tolerant" of differences in race, sex, or sexual preference.

To my knowledge, the SWP has never formally adopted the position that "Black Is Beautiful," although it underlies all of our work in the Black struggle. Comrades can imagine how difficult it would be for us to intervene in the Black nationalist struggles of today, or even write

a *Militant* article about them, if we had hesitated or refused to support that slogan. We would have similar difficulties in the gay movement without a correct position.

Sudie and Geb have confused this question by misuse of the conclusions of Kinsey, Wainwright Churchill, and Ford and Beach in their contribution in bulletin number four. These scientists observed the extent of homosexual behavior in various human societies and in other species and concluded that such behavior is natural. Sudie and Geb feel that since homosexuality is suppressed in class societies, "gayness," by which they mean bisexuality, must be better than either exclusive homosexuality or exclusive heterosexuality. The logic of Sudie and Geb would force them to adopt the slogan that "Black Is *More* Beautiful than White or Yellow, Brown and Red" because Blacks have been oppressed. Of course, Yellows, Browns and Reds have been oppressed, but so have exclusive homosexuals. One may have the personal feeling that Blacks are more beautiful or that bisexuality is best, but it does not mean you force your aesthetic values on the party. We can leave the question of whose sexual preferences are the healthiest (and whose are the sickest) or who will be in the majority after the socialist revolution to the test of time or at least more competent theoreticians of social behavior and Marxism.

August 27, 1972

WHY IS A GAY RIGHTS STAND NOT ENOUGH?

by Lucy Roedder, Seattle Branch

One question that is constantly raised in discussions with comrades concerning gay liberation runs like this: "Why does the revolutionary party have to take a position on whether gay relationships are a natural expression of human sexuality? The revolutionary party doesn't take positions on such things. Of course, we must stand against the interference of the government in the lives of gay people and for their equality in housing and employment. We do this already, but why is there any need to go beyond this gay rights stand?"

I'd like to give just some considerations in response to this line of thought.

First, the implication behind the objection that the party does not take positions on human sexuality is that this is entirely a personal matter. Of course, we cannot require or urge any type of sexual behavior on either our own members or the people we speak to with our propaganda, but in addition to opposing all laws that limit our sexual choices, we can present a body of evidence concerning human sexuality aimed at proving that gayness is quite natural in human beings. "But," as the objection comes again, "these are personal matters." Whenever an entire group of people are oppressed and exploited because of a personal choice, it becomes a political matter. And whenever they rise up against this oppression, it is a matter of concern for the revolutionary

party. A parallel may be drawn: We do not advocate abortion for any individual. We stand against all laws that restrict a woman's choice however. But also, we stand against all anti-abortion propaganda and procedures that attempt to convince the woman not to have an abortion (such as "counselling"). Information concerning the simplicity and safety of abortion plays a big role in our propaganda for the repeal of all abortion laws.

But isn't our gay rights stand enough to answer the ruling class on this question?

No. Bourgeois society's main justification for attacks upon gays in the moral evilness, sickness, or otherwise lesser nature of gayness (gay sex is less satisfying, gay relationships are dead end, in other words they don't fulfill the reactionary functions of the family, gay people have a one-sided outlook on the world. . .). The gay liberation movement has begun to respond to this, consciously breaking with the old homophile organizations that bent to these prejudices by advocating tolerance for gay people and proposing such things as counselling programs to help gay people. Gay is GOOD, they assert, it is not a handicap that can be lived with.

In this context, many gay rights struggles have the dynamic of becoming gay liberation struggles. For example, take the case of a gay teacher who is fired. The

ruling class justifies the action by claiming that it would be harmful to the young people to have such an example of perversion in the school. They will try to mobilize the community behind their effort to keep the schools clean of sick individuals. The gay liberation organizations do not hesitate to counter this, asserting that gay relationships are natural and fulfilling and that children should be allowed to see all varieties of human love in action. Of course, the defense effort is waged as much as possible on a civil liberties basis. I'm sure the comrades can see this dynamic in action in gay defense cases in their areas.

In many cases, the struggles being waged by the gay liberation organizations go beyond gay rights struggles from the very outset. For instance, in Toronto a program concerning gay people called "Nothing to Hide" was shown by CDC, a major Canadian TV station. It claimed to advocate gay rights, but the psychological "authority" on gay people was viciously antigay. The gay liberation organizations in Toronto mounted a protest demanding equal time from CEC. This is more than a civil liberties situation. It hits at the entire bourgeois propaganda machine created to portray the man-woman-child nuclear family as the only real human relationship. Or take the demand raised in a southern university for a gay people's lounge. Clearly this goes beyond asking that the university allow gay relationships at the university, and affirms that gay relationships should be *encouraged*. You don't create a lounge where people can go if they want to contract syphilis. Or consider the demand for gay studies courses in the universities. This too attacks one purpose of the university and of bourgeois psychology — to uphold the already disintegrating family.

For gay people to be free of all restraints on the development of their sexuality, both the "psychological" and the economic ones, and to be freed from the physical misery of having few or no sexual relations, much more is needed than gay rights (although gay rights will undoubtedly be the action focus for the gay liberation movement for a long time to come).

Gay liberation requires the elimination of all antihomosexual teachings in the schools, the media, psychology, training programs for social work, police, or prisons, etc. All sexist books out of the classroom. Equal time on all programs and talk shows that deal with the problem of sexuality.

Gay liberation requires in fact the elimination of all teaching of stereotypes for men and women in the schools. The elimination of all channeling by sex in education, the military, etc., and elimination of all sexist job categorizations.

Gay liberation requires that other types of sexual relations in addition to the man-woman-child one be held up as examples in the schools, media, etc., and be visible in

practice. Gay people's representation on all family courts, family commissions, in all counselling centers of the schools and universities, in all sex-education and family-living courses. Gay studies courses in the universities taught by gays.

The very formation of these relationships cannot happen unless the children of society have places to go where they can form relationships, free of the disapproval and coercion of their families. Self-governed young people's centers. State support for every person so that the bludgeon of having nowhere to go and/or no means of support cannot be used to enforce sexual norms.

For the party to take on these battles, it must recognize that there is nothing lesser about gay relationships and that they grow quite naturally out of human sexuality. (Powerful initial data in support of this position has been cited by Comrades Lauritsen, Thorstad, and highlighted in Studie and Geb's third contribution.)

With demands such as these, the gay movement can strengthen and ally with the women's liberation movement, and the youth movement. In this all-out assault on the family and this dismantling of the propaganda machine created to maintain it, the question of antisexuality also becomes central. Why does bourgeois society condemn sex that is not for reproduction but simply for the benefit of the individuals involved? Why does society pit the "oversexed" against the "prudes" and the "just-rights" against them both (with such importance attached to the distinctions that if a person is not just-right for a particular situation, it may mean the loss of a job or a marriage partner)? Why do many if not most social mores set up barriers against the simple sexual friendship of two people? Why does society extol the "self-sacrificing" family member (the guy who goes to work day-in-day-out to support a wife and kids, the woman who does housework for years on end just to please her husband, the obedient child who puts his/her family above his/her own pleasure) instead of the person who is interested in their own capacity to love and be sexual? Why does society seek to control so closely the sexual lives of its young people?

In the course of raising and answering these questions, the gay movement begins to rouse and pull together the forces for a human sexual liberation struggle. To many this will be the aspect of oppression that most angers them, that reaches deep into their lives, and many will begin to see the authoritarian nature of the entire society and the exploitative nature of a system that denies human sexual needs in order to create plentiful, submissive workers and slavish wives. The gay liberation movement is the first step toward a powerful sexual liberation struggle. The revolutionary party cannot lag behind this development.

August 30, 1972

COMMENTS ON A SIDE ISSUE RAISED IN THE DISCUSSION ON GAY LIBERATION

By Betsey Stone, Upper West Side Branch,
New York Local

In their article on transvestism (Volume 30, Number 2), Comrades Studie Trippet and Bob Gebert raise the ques-

tion of what the party's attitude is in regard to dress. The article states:

"It came as a surprise to some of us to discover last August that the party had a formal policy banning transvestism. This policy—naturally—had never been, and still has never been, voted on or even discussed by a party convention. It is the sort of policy whose advocates aren't very interested in having it discussed, or else they would have brought up the subject themselves. Are there any other erotic types banned from the SWP that we don't know about? How about masochists? Exhibitionists? Boot-fetishists? Animal-lovers? Etc.?"

It is true that in the party there has been very little discussion on the question of dress. This is because we do not see this question as having much importance as a political issue. There is no dress "code" or set of rules which has been voted upon by the party outlining what clothes comrades can and cannot wear. Nor do we have a formal policy banning transvestites, nudists, exhibitionists or boot-fetishists.

What we do have is a tradition in the party whereby it is assumed that our members will dress and act as to project the SWP as a serious organization. When our comrades speak in public or go on TV, for example, they attempt to use good judgment concerning what they wear. It is assumed, without having any rules passed or voted on to that effect, that when Andrew Pulley makes a public appearance, he will not be wearing some unusual attire—that he will not be wearing his bathing suit, or a halloween outfit, or a Santa Claus suit, or dirty or torn clothing, or a lampshade over his head, or lipstick and a dress. The reason for this is obvious.

The same general assumption which holds for all our candidates also applies to party members who are acting as representatives for the party in other ways, by they selling *Militants*, handing out campaign literature, teaching a class, participating in an antiwar meeting, or simply attending a party or a forum.

Because of our unique nature as a revolutionary political organization, we understand that there are already enough barriers between us and others in society without adding to this the barrier of wearing clothing which is considered unacceptable by large numbers of people. Our understanding of the importance of what we are doing politically leads us to subordinate inclinations we might have toward personal expressionism which might be harmful to the party as a whole.

Styles and dress are changing and there is more of a diversity in dress today than there used to be. With such changes, our comrades tend to change also. But, it is not true that things have changed so much that people we are trying to reach would not be affected if our comrades began to dress in very unusual attire.

There is no question that if members of the party began to wear clothes that made us stand out in some way—if, for example, male comrades began to wear dresses—it would unnecessarily prejudice people against us, and would have an impact on our ability to recruit and reach out to newly radicalizing people.

In arguing for the "right" of transvestites within the party to practice an obvious type of transvestism at party functions, Trippet and Gebert make several false parallels. They are wrong, for example, when they make a parallel between fighting for the right of Jews to partici-

pate in the Bolshevik party in the Soviet Union on an equal par with others, and the question of whether a male has the "right" to wear obviously female clothing at an SWP function. Transvestites can join the party on an equal basis with anyone else. They are simply asked, along with everyone else, to use judgment in the way they dress and to put the needs of the party above their individual inclinations in this regard.

People who might have tendencies toward transvestism are not the only ones who modify personal habits which might be harmful to the party as a whole. In our day-to-day life, most comrades modify their personal behavior in various ways, because we understand that we have special responsibilities as revolutionary socialists and we do not think this represents any great sacrifice, given the difficulty and the importance of the work the party is doing.

Another point of confusion in Trippet and Gebert's article concerns the question of new dress trends among women. Their article asserts that, "In recent times, such a large proportion of American women often wear the sorts of slacks that are traditionally associated with men, that this type of transvestism is generally not even thought of as being transvestism."

Many women are beginning to turn to more comfortable clothes, but this new trend has nothing to do with transvestism or with clothes fetishism of any kind. What is happening is that women are rejecting modes of dress which are associated with female oppression—high-heeled shoes, tight skirts, fancy hair arrangements, long fingernails, cosmetics, restrictive girdles, and all the other paraphernalia which is designed to keep women helpless, restrict their movements, and which takes huge sums of money and literally hours of a woman's day to maintain.

In regard to dress, women have for a long time been the victims of extreme fetishes that have been ingrained into the male population in our society which connect sex with particular kinds of clothing. The new trends, accepted by millions of women, represent a rejection of the idea that women should continue to subordinate their needs and comfort to such fetishes.

Does the fact that women are beginning to reject clothing such as high-heeled shoes or hair arrangements that take hours to maintain mean that we condemn males who wish to do this? Does it mean that we condemn women who continue to do this because they feel they must in order to survive in a world where clothes fetishism is so rampant? Of course not. The role of our party is not to outline, or pass judgment, on what is the best life style. We are not creating a counterculture, or attempting to determine how people should live (including what kind of clothes they will wear) under the future communist society. And we want to avoid like the plague any tendency towards creating our own little isolated social milieu which may be comfortable to ourselves but which puts barriers in the way of winning new people.

What we want to do is to concentrate on those issues and those questions that appeal to and can mobilize the masses of people, with other questions and considerations being subordinate to this goal.

September 1, 1972