gays and sexism on the left

At a recent convention of the New American Movement, a developing alliance of American left-wing tendencies, a major furor erupted over the presence of an information and recruiting table of the October League, a Marxist-Leninist organization. The issue of the October League's exclusion of gays from their membership, and an attempt to evict them from the convention floor was defeated by a narrow vote.

This incident was the latest example of an ongoing debate on the left over the decision by certain groups to exclude gays. The October League and the Revolutionary Union are two examples of this sexist tendency in our local community.

The staff of the Great Speckled Bird, which includes several gays, has decided to contribute to the debate over sexism on the left. The article below is adapted from "Toward a Scientific Analysis of the Gay Question," written by the Los Angeles Research Group, a group of gay communist women. The original article appeared in the "Radical Forum" section of The Guardian. The article strongly criticizes the left groups which now exclude gays, and the Bird staff agrees with its direction.

In view of the Bird's agreement with anti-gay tendencies on the left, the staff has also decided to change advertising policy.

Paid Advertising: For the future, we understand the Bird's advertising policy will exclude gay people. However, we will accompany any such ad with notice of the sexist nature of the organization.

Paid Advertising: We will still accept paid advertising from left organizations which exclude gay people. However, we will accompany any such ad with notice of the sexist nature of the organization.

We hope our printing of the article below, and our new advertising policies, will have the effect of increasing the number of left organizations which exclude gays.

In general, if there is any doubt as to an organization's policy toward gays, we will request a written statement of non-exclusionary intentions.

The anti-gay theory as adopted by leftist groups runs roughly as follows: Homosexuality in pre-capitalist societies clearly was not a response to decaying imperialism, which had not yet historically occurred. (2) The major thrust of the anti-gay theory is that gayness is a manifestation of bourgeois ideology. To answer this, it should be pointed out that bourgeois ideology is dominant under capitalism, permeates the lives of even working people, and guides most gay and heterosexual relationships. It is one's world outlook, not one's sexuality, that determines one's class stand; it is the consciousness that is brought to the relationship that determines the ideology manifested in the relationship. (6) Next, the anti-gay line says that gayness is a manifestation of bourgeois ideology; that gayness is the product of a dying bourgeois society, and as not involving people in struggle. But when do sexual relationships engage people in struggle? The anti-gay line makes sexuality rather than class relations, primary. The basis for social change is class struggle, not sexual relationships.

On what basis do these "dialectical materialists" say that gays, in general, see their relationships as sources of personal salvation in ways different from heterosexuals? Of course, some gays do—and some heterosexuals do. But no communist, gay or heterosexual, sees personal relationships as the solution to society's problems. To look only at aspects of the gay liberation movement which do, incorrectly, pose gayness as the solution to the contradictions of society and to assume that all gay people share that analysis, is to deny the role of conscious leadership and to ignore the very progressive elements of the gay movement.

To argue that gayness is an individual choice because gays are outside the mainstream of society, and consequently that gayness is not progressive, is likewise erroneous. Gays are not on the periphery of society. Most gays, like most people, are workers; they are next to you at work, in the school and in the community.

Paid Advertising: We hope our printing of the article below, and our new advertising policies, will have the effect of increasing the number of left organizations which exclude gays. (3) The anti-gay argument alleges that gayness is an escape from male chauvinist attitudes and male supremacy, and that gays have a responsibility to change anti-gay prejudices and divides and confuse people. Gay women are told that all they need is a good man; gay men are told that they are not "real" men. Heterosexuals are taught to ridicule their sisters and brothers on the basis of acquired sex role models. (4) The anti-gay line goes on to say that gayness is an unwillingness to relate to the opposite sex. This must flow from the bourgeois notion that homosexuality is "natural" and that gayness is "unnatural." This is incorrect. Marxist-Leninists know that there is no such thing as abstract human nature. Instead of unwillingness, gayness is often the willingness and ability to relate to the same sex.

In this historical period, a distinction can be made between sexuality and sex roles. For the future, we understand the meaning of social responsibility under a worker's state to be different from the continued on page 14...
The Atlanta Board of Education was still holding back, balking at so-called "forced" busing for desegregation. In reality, busing had long helped maintain segregation. Fulton County for many years bused their black students to an Atlanta high school, and as late as 1965, Cobb County sent their black students to Marietta schools.

With the city growing blacker and the suburbs becoming a white donut, a new concept became part of the desegregation struggle: metropolitan relief.

"THE METRO SUIT"

"When our children entered the Buckhead schools, many were up to three years behind in reading level and other skills. Tutoring and special help brought them up. Statistics show they have kept up with their classes, and did not lower the school average at all."

This was the experience of the children from Father Ford's Emmaus House project. These black parents felt that white schools were providing an improved education for their kids. But Atlanta was becoming resegregated. The parents went to ACLU of Georgia asking them to seek a metropolitan desegregation plan. But, neither the NAACP nor the Board of Education were interested in a metropolitan plan. In June, 1972, at the request of 26 black parents, the Georgia ACLU filed its own suit seeking metropolitan-wide integration.

The ACLU's Metro case requests cooperation of all nine metropolitan school systems with a minimum of change in present administrative structures, leaving intact the present local boards of education. Those boards would contribute members to a metropolitan board based on a per capita student attendance.

The complex system of sex roles that has developed along with and complementary to the monogamous family has been used in the bourgeois societies to perpetuate the division of labor between men and women which has been a bar to unity of the working class.

"Segregated schools cannot be equal in a racist society—and segregated schools are not necessary except in a racist society. Racially segregated schools damage white children as well as black children."

—sally gabb

Part 2—1972 present—next week