

FOR A MILITANT MASS ACTION PERSPECTIVE

The attempt to close down the Body Politic, the importing of Anita Bryant, and the escalation of media bigotry is part & parcel of the Conservative Government's quest to block the passage of the Ontario Human Rights Code amendment and drive lesbians and gays back into the closets.

Reacting to our growing strength and support gained over the past decade opponents of our liberation are digging in, campaigning to turn "public opinion" against us and to stop us from gaining even our most elementary rights.

It is clear that the front line of this battle has become the OHRC amendment. However we face assaults on many fronts including:

- increasing police repression and harrasment
- media exploitation of the Jacques trial
- continuing denial of full sexual rights for lesbian and gay youth
- continuing denial of custody rights for lesbian mothers and all the other ugly facets of our daily oppression

Just two days ago LOOT member Cheryl Freedman and her six year old daughter found they were being evicted from their home by the Ontario Housing Corporation. The case has already received considerable coverage by the press.

These attacks on lesbians and gay men are linked to broader assaults on the rights of women. Cutbacks in childcare, and the new cuts in healthcare and education hit women the hardest. Women still receive lower pay than men, are subjected to sex role stereotyping and face the constant threat of violence in many forms.

The government, courts, police, mass media, employers and the housing and education officials all enforce our oppression for reasons other than "lack of enlightenment". It is in their interests to do so. They need to keep lesbians, gay men and women in their place so they can preserve the power and profits which this social system accords them.

Our oppression is rooted not simply in "prejudiced minds" but in the fundamental institutions of this society particularly the family. The "crisis of federalism" and the economic crisis require that the limited "liberalization" they allowed in the late 60's be replaced by a right wing offensive against us. BUT WE ARE NOT GOING BACK!

This is the situation we face. 1978 promises to be a crucial year for the struggle for lesbian and gay liberation. We are facing our greatest threats and our greatest opportunities. We face a showdown that is already putting every lesbian and gay organization and their leaders to the test.

How has our movement fared so far? The response has been uneven. On the one hand we built a massive militant response to Anita Bryants first round in Canada. Of particular importance was the new found unity in action between lesbians, feminists and gay men. Large funds have been generated for the defence of the BP and much needed discussions on child-adult sexuality opened. The feminist movement for its part built extremely important actions around International Womens Day.

On the other hand the gay male movement in Ontario is in the midst of its deepest crisis of direction and organization. We are divided into a melange of fragmented and small groups, each pushing its own pet "project".

On the level of strategy, even the limited "public action" perspective of the "activist wing" of the gay movement has given way to what appears as an excessive reliance on lobbying, letter writing and petitioning. Defence of the BP, like that of Damien, is seen as largely a matter of raising funds.

This direction for our struggle is dangerously inadequate. Instead of trying to sweet talk our oppressors in the government or donate paper to their waste paper baskets, GATE and all the organizations of CGRO ought to be putting our energy into talking to thousands of potential allies in the schools, unions, and the other movements for social change. We should be working to build and unify our movement- mobilizing all our supporters in the street. were our power can't be ignored.

WOMEN, LESBIANS, GAYS UNITE!

Yesterdays demonstration of 1,500 organized by the women's movement was a big step forward in the revitalization of the women's liberation movement. One weakness was the low profile of lesbian organizations and a lack of serious support from large numbers of gay men. In the past the gay male movement has not adequately understood the double oppression of lesbians both because of their sexual orientation and as women. Oppression on the basis of gender, and on the basis of sexual orientation are so interrelated that there can be no gay liberation without women's liberation and vice versa. As only massive strength can secure us victories we must support each others struggles.

FOR A SPRING MASS ACTION

Both Gay Youth Toronto and GATE are proposing a central public action in the spring to respond to the right wing offensive. We should cut across the dispersion of our energies that has led many gay activists to say "yes an action is fine but I am too busy, I support it if somebody else organizes it." Such an attitude will result in but another small routine march, when much more is needed. Everyone should get fully behind this proposal to make it as large and successful as possible.

The government is trying to prevent the OHRC amendment from even being introduced and discussed in the house. Anita Bryant is being brought back to Canada by Renaissance for a cross country tour. So far there have been demonstrations and pickets to defend the BP in places like Vancouver, San Francisco, New York and London England but so far none in Toronto except for the antiBryant actions. The challenge is clear.

*** We must organize for a massive spring action against these attacks focusing on the sexual orientation amendment, on defense of the Body Politic, and the return of Anita Bryant for her cross country tour. This action must continue to forge the unity with the lesbian movement by also focusing on other key issues facing lesbians.

*** One of the ways we can lay the basis for this action is to seek ways to have broad discussions involving the lesbian and gay communities on the issues raised by the attacks and on how to best fight back. Today's conference should be seen as but a very small step in this direction.

*** We must recognize and act upon the need to reach out with our struggle and involve all our potential allies. In particular we must force the unions and the NDP to go beyond their formal positions of support for the OHRC ammendment. Cassidy must raise it in the house and NDP constituency organizations and trade union locals must put their resources and memberships behind our mobilizing efforts.

*** As we have seen in the past new instances of police repression can occur suddenly and become potent rallying issues. Therefore we must be prepared to respond quickly when these occur, in Toronto or across the country. In particular we must organize solidarity with our Quebecois brothers and sisters who face more severe attacks because of national oppression.

- REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS LEAGUE

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