

WORKSHOP NOTES

Until recently in Toronto, attacks on gay men by the police/state/religious bigots etc. were not felt by the majority of lesbians as attacks on lesbians. The raids on the Body Politic, for instance, did not bring us into the streets because we did not feel our rights as women or as lesbians were being threatened.

Recently, the raids on the baths in Toronto have generated a sympathetic response from lesbians and heterosexual feminists - significant numbers of women showed up at the demonstrations protesting the raids.

On IWD this year a large (700-800) ^{picket} counter-demonstration was held at Massey Hall protesting the meeting being held inside the Hall by the Campaign for Decency, The Right to Privacy Committee (gay male organization concerned with bath raids), the March 8th Coalition, ~~etc~~ and the Toronto Abortion Committee organized the picket together. Why this unusual alliance? - because the right was attacking "extreme feminist militants", abortion rights and gay men in the same breath. Authoritarian conservatism is in a sense helping us forge alliances that are unprecedented in Toronto.

And, for the first time, lesbians are explicitly being mentioned and attacked in right-wing literature. With increasing visibility, we become a target for attacks: we're not just fighting for gay men any longer or for ourselves as women, but for ourselves as lesbians.

Effects of right-wing resurgence that can be seen in Toronto right now: increasing co-operation among feminist groups that a year ago wouldn't talk to each other (esp. radical socialist feminist detente). And gay male-lesbian detente - increasing #'s

of ~~gay~~ lesbians working with gay men. A lot of dykes seem to have come out / been politicized for the first time around the bath riots.

Where are political lesbians these days:

- in women's movement
- in gay movement
- anti nuke movement
- and scattered ^{here & there} in anti imperialist / anti racist / sectarian left groups.

↳ not in autonomous lesbian movement.

We fight the right from within these movements, and generally submerge lesbian issues within these struggles.

Rise of right hits dykes at a low organizational abt: closing of LOOT (Lesbian Organization of Toronto), closing of the Fly by Night (♀'s bar), folding of APPLE.

Lesbians are organized into a variety of social networks which don't overlap. Clustrophobic. Lack of support & solidarity across these networks. Hard to find a group when coming out.

Internal factionalism among dykes: little warring camps suspicious of each other's politics.

Result: when LOOT began we thought that there was such a thing as a cohesive lesbian feminist politics. Now we know that that doesn't exist: we're socialists, and radical feminists and bourgeois feminists and gay-aligned and anti-nuclear.... It's time to recognize these differences, expect them, and learn to

work with each other in spite of them. Because we need each other. Because the dispersion of the lesbian community is dangerous to us all. If another dyke is lesbian positive and pro woman, I've got enough in common to work with her.

Line: popular front.

How to fight back against the right:

- 1) by reconstituting lesbian organizations
- 2) pressure on unions to educate members at a grass-roots level on their positions on sexual orientation
- 3) internet lesbian political discussions
- 4) low-key lesbian social events - more pot-lucks, less concerts & dances.
- 5) getting our various organizations in their fight against the right to fight it wing attacks on lesbians.

let your mind run wild with other suggestions.