

Nº 11

# GAY LIBERATOR



detroit ■ september 1971 ■ 25¢

# THE GAY LIBERATOR

■detroit, michigan■september 1971■no.11■

## Anti-Gay Law Challenged

On July 23rd at 10:45 AM in the Traffic Court in downtown Detroit the first step in a legal battle between Michael Fylstra and the local accosting and soliciting ordinance took place.

Fylstra pleaded not guilty to a charge of "accosting and soliciting to commit an immoral act." Fylstra has been involved in the now defunct Detroit Gay Liberation Front and is anxious to help himself and other Gay people come out without legal harassment. His lawyer, Dick McMillan, put a motion before Judge Kirwan maintaining that the law was too vague and therefore unconstitutional.

Accosting and soliciting, section 39-1-52 of the Detroit city ordinances, makes it a misdemeanor "to accost or solicit or invite another person in any public place to commit a lewd immoral act." The maximum penalty is three months in jail and a \$500 fine.

Fylstra was entrapped on Feb. 21, 1971, at about 4 AM as he walked by himself on Woodward Ave. near the Fisher Freeway. He was approached by two well-dressed men in a late-model car who offered him a ride. When he got in, one asked Fylstra a leading question and, before he could answer, Fylstra was arrested.

It has been learned that one of the Vice Squad officers involved in the bust was officer Charles Staples. The other officer involved was not in court and is on leave, so his name is not available.

Readers who have encountered this officer, or who have been entrapped by other Detroit Vice officers, should write: Michael Fylstra Defense Committee, c/o Detroit Gay Liberator, Box 631-A, Detroit 48232. Give a brief account of your experience and indicate whether you would be willing to testify in court.

While Fylstra's lawyer was arguing, about 20 gay people were demonstrating with signs in front of the court building and passing out leaflets. The leaflets protested the entrapment of Fylstra and police harassment of gays in the Detroit area. About 1000 leaflets were passed out and the demonstration in support of Fylstra came off without any trouble except for a few obscenities shouted by passersby.

Judge Kirwan decided to adjourn the case until December 2nd. Legal briefs are to be filed by the defense attorney by August 20, and by the Detroit Corp. Counsel's lawyer by September 17. Judge Kirwan will study the briefs and make a ruling December 2nd. Legal sources here say that it is rare for a traffic court judge to declare a city ordinance unconstitutional.

McMillan, who is associated with the National Lawyers Guild (a radical legal-aid organization) cited many instances where Supreme Court and lower court rulings overturned vague laws because people of common intelligence did not know exactly what the law meant by immoral. McMillan said, "The law is violative of the due process clause of the fifth and fourteenth amendments of the U.S. Constitution. A law that doesn't have clarity allows for discrimination. It violates due process because people are entitled to know what law they have broken. The word 'immoral' is too vague and ambiguous."

Judge Kirwan asked Corporation Counsel lawyer Stephens if he felt it would be a good law if it said no one shall commit an immoral act. Stephens said, "No". It seemed that the city attorney was not prepared to argue in defense of the law itself.

One of those who demonstrated termed the adjournment a mild success. However, the judge was probably not that well prepared for the case and did not want to make a hasty judgement on the challenging motion. His adjournment indicated a sense of judicial fairness. But that doesn't mean he will rule in favor of the motion on December 2nd.

By JOHN MORRIS

## N.Y. Gay Day

June 1971 was the second anniversary of the first gay uprising, on Christopher Street in Greenwich Village. Each year gay pride demonstrations are held to celebrate it. I went to Christopher Street this year, because I had only recently come out and was feeling very proud, and I knew I'd kick myself if I didn't go.

It was an inspiring experience.

When the march assembled on Christopher Street, there were several thousand of us, and by the time we reached Central Park we were 20,000 strong. Most of us were white; one quarter to one third were women.

Lesbians marched in the front, carrying all sorts of banners and posters: "I enjoy being a dyke!" "Women's Liberation is a lesbian plot," "Mothers of the World, come out."

Others marched with their organizations or geographical groups. There were groups from as far away as Houston and Iowa, and groups as varied as "The Church of the Beloved Disciple" and the "Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries."

We chanted and danced the entire sixty blocks. "Two, four, six, eight, Gay is twice as good as straight" became "Three, five, seven, nine, Lesbians are mighty fine" was the most popular chant, and when we passed a lot of spectators it was "Hey, hey, what do you say; try it once the other way!"

The reaction of the spectators, and there were thousands of them, was fantastic. (No doubt this is partly due to the uniqueness of New York City.) No one was hostile. Many people flashed us the V sign, and a lot joined us. Most people felt the same as we did: "Wow! Look at all those faggots!" Even the cops were smiling and friendly. It's spelled G-A-Y P-O-W-E-R.

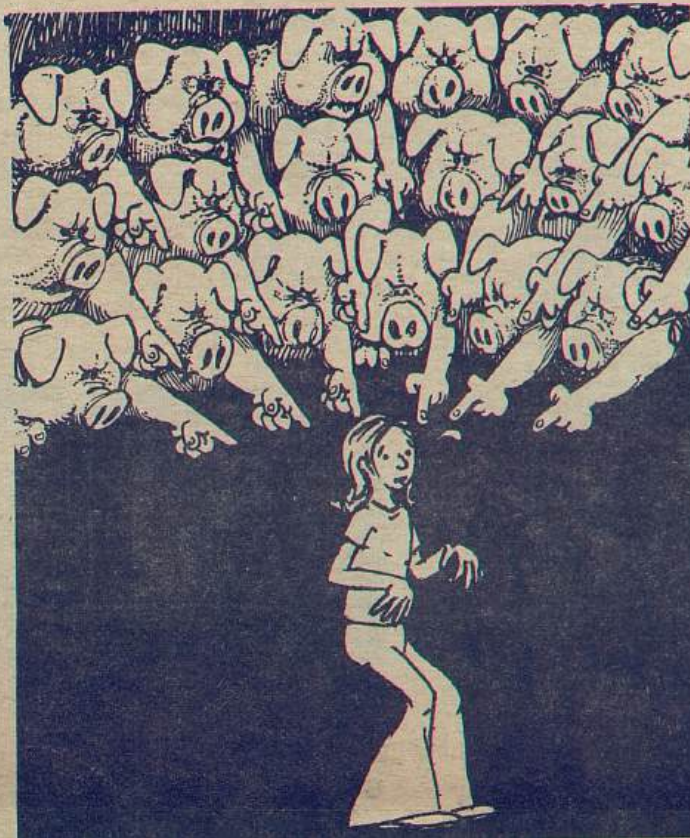
The demonstration had been publicized as a "march and rally," but there was no rally in Central Park. We poured into the Sheep's Meadow and then didn't know quite what to do. We did have an informal celebration: there was a little happy exhibitionism and a lot of necking. Folks paraded around in their finest, and the Good Fairy was even there, complete with tinfoil wings, giving out kisses.

Perhaps we shouldn't have been surprised when the straight sexist peeping-tom voyeurs showed up with their polaroids to take pictures of the Lesbians, but we were surprised. And angry. One sister broke a camera and we chased them off.

People drifted off gradually and the whole beautiful thing just dissipated, leaving a warm glow in a lot of hearts and a lot of parents' minds blown when they watched the evening news. Next time we'll have to get our shit more together, have some kind of focus for all that revolutionary pride and energy.

by HILDEGARDE WEISS

pride  
is  
POWER!



This is the first outright challenge of a law that has been used to harass gays in Detroit's history. But July 23rd was probably only the first step in what will be a long battle.

Although the battle will be fought in court, the courts must be made to know that Detroit's gay people are beginning to oppose their harassment through this law. The demonstration July 23rd should have been much larger. In coming issues the *Gay Liberator* will suggest further steps to combat the "accosting and soliciting" law.

The Detroit Gay Activists (DGA), a new militant gay organization in Detroit, was formed August 5.

The initial program of the new organization will include a campaign against Detroit's Accosting and Soliciting ordinance, and a project to fight for the right to employment for all gay people.

After first discussing the anti-A&S campaign, several people pointed out that such a campaign has little direct appeal to gay women, since they are seldom harassed under this law. Even though the repeal of the A&S law was felt to be helpful to women as well, there was then discussion of the employment project.

It was argued that the fear of losing a job was perhaps the most important fear in keeping all gay people in hiding. "This would be a project that would be relevant to both gay men and gay women, black and white," one member explained.

A small group has been meeting since late July to make plans for the new organization. The next step for DGA will be to find a place to hold public meetings. Anyone with information about available facilities, and anyone wanting more information about DGA, call 833-7527 (10 AM - 10 PM) or write P.O. Box 631-A, Detroit, MI 48232.



# THE GAY LIBERATOR

The *Gay Liberator* is published monthly by the Pansy Press, an independent gay media collective. Subscriptions: \$2.50 for 12 issues. Bundles of 10 copies or more: 15¢ per copy plus postage. Second class postage paid at Detroit, Michigan. Send notice of undelivered copies or change of address to: *Gay Liberator* P. O. Box 631-A, Detroit, Michigan, 48232.

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The *Gay Liberator* is a member of the Liberation News Service (LNS).

## we're back

With this issue, the *Gay Liberator* resumes publication after being absent since March. In the meantime, much has changed, including the dissolution of the Gay Liberation Front in Detroit.

What happened to GLF in Detroit is pretty much what has happened to GLF groups in other cities across the country. GLF's in several places have fallen apart either because of differences among caucuses or differences among the individuals themselves. There have been splits along political as well as personality lines.

Arguments have continued as to the degree or lack of organizational structure in these GLF groups. Also there has been a lack of agreement as to the type of, and even the desirability of, an activist program. The results of this have led to a gradual disintegration and finally the termination of any organized effort.

At the present time there is no gay organization in Detroit actively moving against the institutions and attitudes which oppress gays — physically, psychologically, socially and economically.

However, there are some people from the old GLF organization and some new people who feel the need for an organization that can bring gay people to see and act against the oppressive conditions of their lives.

The kind of organization to be formed, the direction it will take, and the methods it will use to oppose discrimination are now being discussed.

The new *Gay Liberator* exists to promote a certain kind of gay organization. The function of the *Gay Liberator* is to promote an organization of gays formed around the issues of social discrimination against gay people.

The focus of the paper will be on these issues — discrimination by the police, courts and laws, by employers and landlords.

There will also be analysis of various aspects of gay oppression, and discussions of political and social ideas relevant to gay liberation written from a variety of political viewpoints. There will be debates in our columns over these ideas, and finally, poetry and other cultural material to stimulate our pride in ourselves as gays.

From time to time we will suggest action around one or another project — for example, our staff has already been active in the defense of Michael Fylstra (see p. 1). And at all times we will promote discussion of what strategy the gay movement should follow.

We have no set answers; though most of us are politically radical, we disagree on a variety of issues. We do share a commitment to building a movement which involves the mass of gay people in struggling against the discrimination which makes their everyday lives a hell of hiding and lies. We see the *Gay Liberator* as a step in building such a movement.



### WHEN I HEARD AT THE CLOSE OF THE DAY

When I heard at the close of the day how my name had been receiv'd  
with plaudits in the capitol, still it was not a happy night for  
me that follow'd,  
And else when I carous'd, or when my plans were accomplish'd, still I  
was not happy,  
But the day when I rose at dawn from the bed of perfect health, refresh'd,  
singing, inhaling the ripe breath of autumn,  
When I saw the full moon in the west grow pale and disappear in the  
morning light,  
When I wander'd alone over the beach, and undressing bathed, laughing  
with the cool waters, and saw the sun rise,  
And when I thought how my dear friend my lover was on his way coming,  
O then I was happy,  
O then each breath tasted sweeter, and all that day my food nourish'd me  
more, and the beautiful day pass'd well,  
And the next came with equal joy, and with the next at evening came my  
friend,  
And that night while all was still I heard the waters roll slowly continu-  
ally up the shores,  
I heard the hissing rustle of the liquid and sands as directed to me whis-  
pering to congratulate me,  
For the one I love most lay sleeping by me under the same cover in the  
cool night,  
In the stillness in the autumn moonbeams his face was inclined toward me,  
And his arm lay lightly around my breast — and that night I was happy.

By WALT WHITMAN (1860)

# Ready, Detroit?

Recently there has been much discussion of forming a new gay militant organization in Detroit. We have talked about whether or not such an organization should be limited to "gay issues," and also about what issues, specifically, it should take up. We have also talked about whether to emphasize services, such as a community center, dances, "consciousness-raising," etc., or on the other hand, public campaigns around questions like job discrimination, housing, or mistreatment by the police.

Although the answers will have to take account of specific Detroit conditions, these questions are basically the same as those confronting gay activists across the nation. The method of answering the questions is also a matter of basic political approach, relevant not only in Detroit but also elsewhere.

Much of the discussion has revolved around the point of what the gay community in Detroit is "ready for" — the methods and ideas people are ready to accept.

This approach avoids one mistake — the self-defeating "radicalism" which recognizes the need to change society in a fundamental way, but refuses to talk to people who aren't already convinced of this. This "radicalism" rightly rejects the unfree way we live, only to fall into contempt for the unfree people who have not yet done the same. Since it can't explain its ideas to people not yet convinced, it becomes irrelevant, and organizations of this kind shrink away to nothing.

But the approach of asking "what the community is ready for" risks another fate, one shown by the history of dozens of reform movements of the past. This is that by limiting the movement to the goals or methods which people are initially ready for, on the theory that this is a "first step," the movement becomes unable to grow when experience shows that a second step is needed.

Rather than approaching the question this way, we should start from the point of asking what kind of gay organization is needed. This means asking what changes we need — and then, how to get them, whether people are ready to struggle for them, and if not, how to convince them of the need to do so.

One conception is that the kind of gay organization we need is primarily one which directly aids people to come out, helps make them conscious of gay pride, etc.

Unquestionably there is a need for this to happen. Yet, direct counselling reaches very few people. Social events such as dances reach many more — yet experience shows that the atmosphere at dances organized by the gay movement is as cruisy and "unliberated" as the atmosphere of the gay bar "meat racks" to which the dances and the prideful atmosphere of the gay movement is supposed to be an alternative.

Another version of the same approach — basically, an attempt directly to change gay people's life-styles — is communal living and liberated behavior in public. For one thing, communes can be as cruel and intolerant as straight society or "unliberated" gay society — for example, in applying social pressure to people who continue to maintain relationships with straights. But even if this life-style were truly free, it would offer little except irony to people who are not free to drop out, or for whom liberated behavior in public offers only the risk of losing their jobs. That is why this conception of gay liberation has found an audience only among students and ex-students, and not among gay people who have to work.

People's lives can be illuminated by the sight of a liberated alternative life-style. But most people's lives cannot be changed this way. This can occur only by a struggle for the right to live as they please, a right denied by this society. And, since it is this kind of struggle, for rights now denied, which actually changes society, this struggle is a hundred times more revolutionary than "living the revolutionary alternative."

The kind of gay organization we need, then, is an action organization which struggles for public rights. It must organize people to make demands, from the state and other powerful institutions, for the things to which they have right. But it must not limit itself to using methods of pressure or persuasion within the two-party system — any more than it should ask people to commit themselves in advance to rejecting the system. Rather, it should commit itself to be an independent movement which seeks its goals wherever this might lead.

If our goals can be achieved within the system, well and good. If not — as I believe — our loyalty should be to the goal of our liberation.

What issues, specifically, should we fight around? The answers follow from what has been said already. There should be no ban on taking up issues such as the fight against the war, or the fight against political repression. Indeed, I will argue in another article that it will be necessary, in the interests of the gay movement itself, to take up some of these issues.



But the focus should be on what can be called gay civil rights. The right to be gay, not just in private, but in public. The right to come out without fear. This includes the "traditional" civil rights — the right to employment, to housing, to freedom from harassment by police. It also includes more — it includes the right to freedom in dress and behavior in public, what the gay movement has called "the right to be gay anywhere, anytime."

Although gay civil rights includes all of this, the emphasis should be on the rights of employment, housing, freedom from harassment — because it is the direct harassment and threat of reprisal by powerful institutions like the police, the employer, the landlord, which keep most gay people hiding in fear.

Though other issues are not excluded, two types of discrimination are probably most important: legal discrimination (police, courts, etc.), and discrimination in employment.

**Police and courts.** There is some sentiment for a campaign for repeal of the sodomy laws. Traditionally, the reformers have advocated legalization of consenting acts by adults, sometimes with increased penalties for "corrupting the morals of a minor." This would leave sex between a 22-year-old person and his or her 17-year-old lover a criminal act.

Even repeal of all anti-sodomy laws, however, is a mistaken emphasis. No one believes this in itself would solve anything — the example of Illinois which swept these laws off the books in 1961 without affecting police harassment at all, is notorious. But it is argued that

this would be a demand around which large numbers could unite.

Such a campaign could win real gains, however, only if after the first fight was won, the movement continued to exist and began to fight for an end to police harassment in practice. But the great danger would be that with the first fight won, the movement would disintegrate. On the other hand, the real fight can be begun immediately.

We should fight for an end to police harassment. This means demanding the repeal, not of the sodomy law, but of the accosting and soliciting law. But it means much more. It means that now, at the same time that we demand the repeal of the A&S law, we demand an end to entrapment, an end to police patrolling of the parks and streets, etc.

The fight involves other issues too — for example, demanding a change in the liquor regulations to allow gay bars to operate without payoffs.

These demands can be pursued through petitions, demonstrations, etc. Further, we should consider establishing Defense Committees to patrol areas of police harassment. These committees must not seek battles with police but rather intervene when people are harassed, encourage the victims to fight for their rights, mobilize support for them — and show the cops and courts that our community will stand behind its victims.

**The right to employment.** Any gay organization should aggressively seek the right to employment for gay people. This should be done through two methods:

(1) The organization itself should plan a campaign of demanding from the government the repeal of laws against employment of homosexuals, and the enactment of civil-rights guarantees of the right of employment; this campaign should be pursued through mobilizing the gay community itself to demand the change in petitions, demonstrations, etc. (rather than seeking quietly to persuade the legislators to change their minds);

(2) Within certain job categories which are heavily gay, particularly teaching and government employment, we should seek contact with small groups of gay employees who could begin a fight to commit their unions to defend the right of employment for gays. This would mean both that the unions would defend gay employees whose jobs were threatened (or who were harassed on the job) and that the unions would join in the campaign for an end to discrimination.

Although initially efforts to raise this issue in the unions would meet with much prejudice, in unions representing teachers and government employees there is already a high gay membership. Many straight employees would support such a demand, either on the basis of civil rights or on the basis of the traditional trade-union opposition to dismissal except for job performance. The commitment of the unions could be obtained, at least on paper (how meaningful the commitment would depend on the union members).

This would not only strike a blow for the right to employment. It would also show a method of struggle for the whole gay movement.

Public demonstrations and demands by the movement are vital. We must demand, now, the rights we have been denied. But demonstrations alone cannot win many rights. Only social power can do this. And the greatest power in America or in the world is the power of labor, if it can be mobilized.

Most gay people cannot imagine workers defending their rights. Yet most gay people are workers. Isn't there a contradiction here?

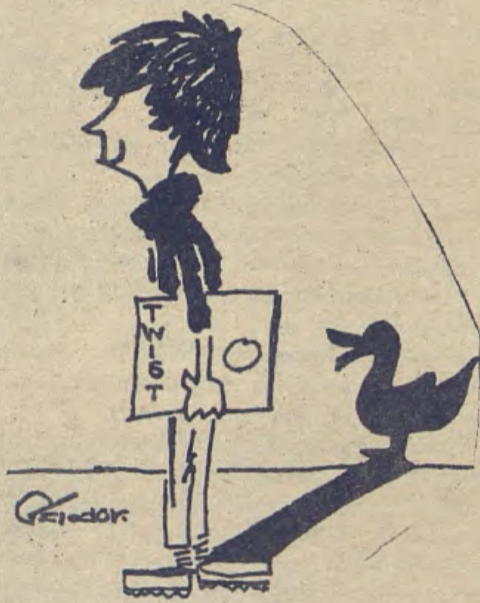
As the gay movement brings our oppression into the light of day, gay working people — sooner if we seek them out to persuade them — will begin to fight for their rights; and to demand, as is their right, support from their fellow working people and from their organizations, the unions. And these organizations have the power to back up their demands. In this direction lies an alternative to powerless sloganeering and to begging for favors from politicians. It is an alternative for the gay movement as a whole.

By JAMES COLEMAN

[This article is intended to start a discussion of the strategy and tactics for the gay movement, both in Detroit and elsewhere. Your comments are invited.]

# ¿cuba si?

[The anti-homosexual policies of the Castro regime in Cuba have been much discussed in the American gay movement. Last May, new, more severe anti-homosexual policies were adopted. Below is an anonymous letter from gay Cubans to the North American Gay Liberation movement.]



Cuban cartoon equating American music with homosexuality and bourgeois decadence. (The Spanish word for "duck," *pato*, is a slang term for homosexual; the Twist is used by Cuban cartoonists as a symbol for American music and culture in general.)

## Sisters and brothers —

By chance we got a copy of your publication with the Third World Gay Revolution Platform (Gay Flames, Pamphlet No. 7).

We believe — as people who are discriminated against in a country that is supposedly in revolution to create the new man and end traditional injustices inherent in class society — that it is our duty to inform you of our situation as homosexuals....

If in a consumer society, capitalistic and oligarchic like the one in which you live, the life of the homosexual is discriminated against and suffers limitations; in our society — called Marxist and revolutionary — it is much more so.

From the beginning of the Cuban revolutionary movement the homosexual has been persecuted. First it was in a veiled form without scruples or justification; then, by other methods from crude forms of physical aggression to attempts at psychic and moral disintegration of those individuals — incompatible, at least in theory, with the development of a society toward communism.

The homosexual here is hurt and attacked, obliged to conceal what the authorities consider an aberration or repudiable defect. This concealment varies from

forcing us to marry and appear to lead a "normal" life to confining us to farms where the treatment is brutal, as in the case of the concentration camps of the UMAP [Military Units to Help Production] .....

This situation, due to the international scandal which it provoked, was eliminated; but farms exclusively for homosexuals are still maintained.

On the street we suffer persecution, aggression and constant abuse by authorities, demanding I.D. cards, arresting us for our clothes, hair-styles, or simple group meetings, which are rights guaranteed by the Declaration of Human Rights. It is a contradiction yet true that these rights are more respected in some societies labelled fascist than in ours, which you often see or feel to be a solution to the problems of individual and collective liberty.

Methods of psychological repression — social isolation, control by neighborhoods, zones, and centers of work and study — with invariably negative aims, are a common thing in this regime.

It may be said that there are many homosexuals, intellectuals and others, that live outside of this situation. In the first place, they are few, and if people like this do exist they know they cannot cross the barriers drawn for them. Opposition means the risk of exile or confrontation with a dictatorial system, which can lead to the worst consequences.

Freedom, respect, and justice for homosexuals in the whole world cannot be advocated without knowledge of the situation of thousands of individuals in our country, and without protesting the treatment they are getting, searching for an effective — not a theoretical — solution to such problems.

# repression no!

In a Declaration by the first National Congress on Education and Culture, printed in the May 9 issue of *Granma*, Cuba's official Party newspaper, the Castro regime made some of its most reactionary statements to date on homosexuality. Said the Congress:

"It was resolved that all manifestations of homosexual deviations are to be firmly rejected, and prevented from spreading...."

"It was resolved that it is not to be tolerated for notorious homosexuals to have influence in the formation of our youth on the basis of their 'artistic merits.'"

"It was resolved that those whose morals do not correspond to the prestige of our Revolution should be barred from any group of performers representing our country abroad."

"Finally, it was agreed to demand that severe penalties be applied to those who corrupt the morals of minors, depraved repeat offenders, and irredeemable antisocial elements."

In addition to these libertarian sentiments, the Congress also took a firm stand against "extravagant" modes of dress:

"We find it necessary to take direct action to eliminate extravagant aberrations...."

After all, reasoned the Congress:

"...The necessity of maintaining the monolithic ideological unity of our people and the struggle against all forms of deviation among our young make it imperative to implement a series of measures for [the eradication of extravagant fashions]."

The Congress noted that some recent modes of dress were a symbol of rebellion in the capitalist countries. Such rebellion had no place among Cuban youth, "who have the possibility for self-fulfillment in building communism."

Gay activists in the United States have denounced these resolutions. The Gay Committee of Returned Brigadistas — a group of homosexuals who have taken part in the "Venceremos Brigades" of young Americans aiding in Cuban harvests — said that the new policy "does not simply fail to include gay people in the revolutionary process — it specifically excludes them from participation in that process and the right to self-determination."

Another statement charged that in effect the policy "encourages individual physical violence against homosexuals."

Genuine socialists stand for full personal freedom and oppose any repression of homosexuals. The Castro regime, on the contrary, at first followed a policy of putting homosexuals in labor camps. When this policy changed in the early 1960's, after protests by European intellectuals, the regime still restricted homosexuals in various ways — for example, known gays were not allowed to work as teachers. Now Cuba has moved back toward open repression, calling for increased penalties.

Supporters of Castro's regime often point out that Cuba, like other Latin countries, traditionally has been

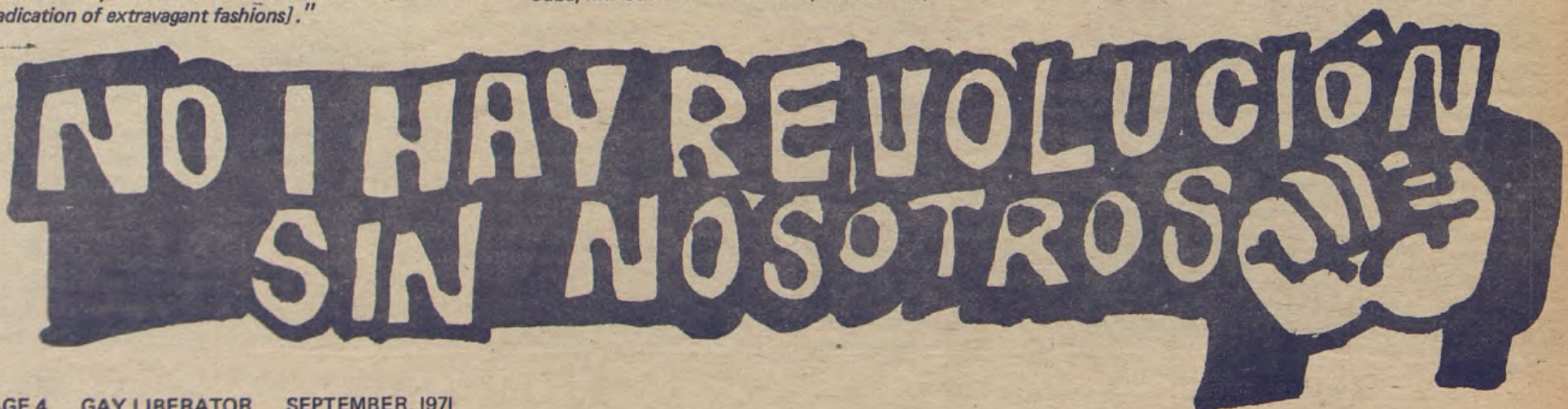
very prejudiced against homosexuality. Everything can't be changed overnight, they argue. True, but here is an example of the ruling party, which according to its propaganda is leading the struggle for a more humane society, demanding that persecution of homosexuals should become *more* extreme. Indeed, the Castro regime is leading — toward *less* freedom.

However, this is only one example of a general lessening of freedom in Cuba. The pronouncements against homosexuality had much to do with Castro's new attempts to intimidate creative artists, many of whom are gay.

In addition, the assurances in the resolutions quoted above, that in Cuba there is no need for youth rebellion, indicate only that the regime is in fact worried about dissatisfaction among youth. (As Trotsky once wrote, "Political decay expresses itself in a loss of ability to attract the youth under one's banner.") And the working class too has been placed under increasing restrictions, now including forced labor as punishment for absenteeism.

The American gay radicals who protested the new policy on homosexuals — and other American radicals as well — should also protest the restrictions on the rights of *all* Cubans.

[This article first appeared in *Workers' Power*, International Socialist bi-weekly, July, 1971. James Coleman is a member of the International Socialists.]



# \* reviews



**Death in Venice**  
Directed by Lucino Visconti  
With Dirk Bogarde; Bjorne Andresen

The tragic novella *Death in Venice* (1912) written by the great German Nobel Prize winner Thomas Mann has been made into a movie. Adapted by Lucino Visconti for the screen, *Death in Venice* has many themes how beauty is perceived, the conflict between an artist's preoccupation with art often opposed to practical considerations, and homosexuality. It is by no means an "action" film. There are no physically sexual scenes in the movie, but there are many sensual moments.

The leading role of Gustave von Aschenbach is played by Dirk Bogarde. This was the most challenging role of his career and to his credit, his greatest performance.

Von Aschenbach, a disciplined, accomplished, and famous composer and conductor of music all of his adult life, believes that one perceives beauty and art only through the mind, not the senses. However, while on vacation in Venice he becomes obsessed by the godlike beauty of a 14 year old Polish boy, Tazio.

Tazio is played by Bjorne Andresen in his first movie role. There is very little dialogue in the movie and Tazio always speaks in Polish or French. He and von Aschenbach do not say one word to each other in the whole movie.

Von Aschenbach stays in Venice during a cholera epidemic to hold on to his daily view of this embodiment of beauty, at the beach in front of their hotel or following him through the streets of Venice.

Never once does he approach Tazio, but throughout the film Tazio is aware of his admirer, and gives him a number of beguiling looks that recognize and reinforce von Aschenbach's adulation. After one of these looks, as they pass each other in the night, von Aschenbach reels to a park bench, visibly shaken, and rebukes Tazio to the night. "How dare you smile like that! No one is allowed to smile like that!... I love you."

So despite the pestilence filling the city hospitals and ravages, von Aschenbach satys on in Venice, literally obsessed by the curly long-haired beautiful boy from Poland.

In the last scene, the failing artist makes his way to the beach having discovered that the Polish family will be leaving Venice that afternoon. He barely makes it to his beach chair, as an old woman, one of only seven people on the beach that was crowded with people only a week before, finishes a mournful dirge song.

Von Aschenbach reclines to watch for Tazio. Tazio and a friend are wrestling — first playfully, then violently. Tazio is beaten. Von Aschenbach begins to rise but falls back in his chair in his weakness unable to help the one he loves. Tazio leaves his now contrite playmate in disdain and walks out into the glistening sea stopping on a sand bar. He looks back over his shoulder at von Aschenbach and in a graceful singular motion swings his left arm out and points far out at a vast empty sea and sky.

He looks godlike in pure beauty of form at that moment in one of the most beautiful moments the screen has ever seen. Von Aschenbach reaches out to him and collapses in death. A few moments later someone notices his death and he is carried away by two beach boys as *Death in Venice* ends.

If you intend to see *Death in Venice* I would strongly suggest reading the short novella first in order to help you understand a largely visual complex movie, and also to help you understand the many flashbacks and differences between the movie and what Mann was trying to say.

Many people left the theater confused. I heard one guy say, "All he needed was some pussy and he couldn't get any." The film and novella are not exclusively about homosexuality but it is threaded throughout both in the feelings of von Aschenbach. However, the attitude of his times and ours made von Aschenbach consider it repulsive behavior to confront Tazio with his feelings.

There are many differences between the Visconti version of *Death in Venice* and Thomas Mann's novella. Gustave von Achenbach is portrayed in the film as a musician, whereas, in the novella he is a literary master. This is tied to an attempt to portray von Achenbach as the composer-conductor Gustav Mahler. Mahler died in 1911 in Vienna. Visconti uses Mahler's music as the score for the movie. However, research shows that Mann saw all the major characters in *Death in Venice* in 1911 when he made a trip to Venice. Also, correspondence shows that *Death in Venice* was inspired by the 18th century German literary giant Goethe and his old-age admiration of a young girl. Mann merely changed the object of the affection to a young boy because Mann was fascinated with the subject of homosexuality.

Visconti omits the whole first part of the novella and uses a heart attack in Venice as the rationale for von Aschenbach's vacation. In contrast, Mann projects a sense of artistic fatigue and a longing for foreign and new places as the reason for his vacation. But Visconti adds a suggestion that von Aschenbach's art is worthless, which was not Mann's intention.

Critics of the novella say Mann buffered the homosexual theme, by making it tragic unrequited love, because of the atmosphere of extreme repression of homosexuality at the time.

In the movie von Aschenbach appears more as a lonely old man than the artist you read about in the book who watches Tazio on the beach and writes of his beauty as a model of art. Visconti differs with Mann when he has von Aschenbach flashback to an unsuccessful foray with a prostitute where he runs off in disgust. Visconti either couldn't or wouldn't show von Aschenbach as the artist he was described at length in the novella.

Like so many other works of art *Death in Venice* portrays the homosexual, or in this case homosexual feelings, as tragic and doomed. Both Mann and Visconti chose to give Gustave von Aschenbach the fate of death.

But there are other themes in the story: an artist's at times eccentric preoccupation with art rather than practical matters and also the search for beauty and how it is arrived at and perceived, sensually or spiritually. The portrayal of Venice in 1911 as a tourist trap without scruple is also part of the author's and Visconti's statement. I lament the tragic portrayal of von Aschenbach. But, I cannot say that it did not reflect many real human feelings and situations and that is why *Death in Venice* is still widely noted and now a popular film today.

The following is from a discussion of the novella *Death in Venice* by Ignace Feuerlicht: "An important theme in *Death in Venice* is: When a person fights against passions and denies them instead of recognizing them as the essence of life, they will become ugly and destroy him."

By JOHN MORRIS



**Is Gay Good? Ethics, Theology, and Homosexuality**  
Edited by W. Dwight Oberholtzer  
Westminster Press Paperback, \$3.50

"They shall be attended by boys graced with eternal youth, who to the beholder's eyes will seem like sprinkled pearls. When you gaze upon that scene you will behold a kingdom blissful and glorious." — Koran, LXXVI.

*Is Gay Good?* is a series of discussions written in response to a paper, "Toward a Theology of Homosexuality," by a professor of theology, John von Rohr. Its authors include noted theologians, jurists, and homophile leaders (gay activists and gay liberationists, notably absent).

The introduction, by the editor, W. Dwight Oberholtzer, is a superb review of arguments against anti-homosexual myths and attitudes. The remainder is a come-down.

The contributors to *Is Gay Good?* have a great deal of difficulty with the Sodom reference in Genesis, the laws of Leviticus, and the writings of Paul of Tarsus. Personally, seeing the Torah and the Gospel as a collection of writings chosen often with a view to what religious school held the ear of the secular rulers, I can dispense with the anti-homosexual passages.

It is amusing to watch how Bible literalists ignore the laws of Leviticus on everything but homosexuality. How the laws of primitive tribes, who punished practically everything with death, can be taken seriously is an insult to reason. When we arrive at the Second Hand Rose of the Gospel, Paul, who never met the man he spoke in the name of and so often about, the authenticity of the writings is undercut.

But the authors of *Is Gay Good?* try to rationalize the Biblical anti-homosexual passages, when they should be dismissed on the grounds of being contrary to reason and of poor scriptural authority. Saddest of all the authors is Rev. Troy Perry of Los Angeles's Metropolitan Community Church, who hasn't recovered from his Moody Bible Institute days. A gay fundamentalist Christian is an axiomatic contradiction.

In addition to theology there is some good discussion of ethics and legal reform on the gay question. It was suggested that homosexuality be legalized between consenting persons, a marked improvement from the usual suggestion that gays be subjected to legal harassment until the age of 21.

Some of the authors felt that the churches should take a leading role not only in legal reform but also in changing societal attitudes, a good idea inasmuch as the churches are the source of much of the gay discrimination practiced. The question of gay marriage was poorly handled because church blessings are not enough when it is considered that legally recognized heterosexual marriages enjoy a host of tax deductions, inheritance rights, and even cheaper auto insurance rates.

But the most significant discussions by some of the authors deal with how societal attitudes when coming into play with the nature of male sexuality produces unstable relationships and in some cases promiscuity. Gays often fail to recognize that having been raised in a heterosexual environment there are developed needs for enduring relationships.

Despite changing views on straight relationships this doesn't detract from the effects of an encounter that in its context of circumstances and attitudes is depersonalizing. The glory-hole attitudes of many gay males is something that our society has caused to occur, but the enrichment of sex with love in an enduring relationship is something to be valued. (This isn't just a gay problem — read any issue of *Playboy*).

I would suggest that gays set aside their often justified fears of religious and ethical discussions and read *Is Gay Good?* But, in another sense, I wish this book could be read by the 180 million hetero- and bisexual of America because they perhaps need it the most.

By RAYMOND WEST

# surviving psychotherapy

THROUGH SUCH ACTIONS as the disruption of last summer's American Psychiatric Association convention, the Gay Liberation movement has focussed attention on psychiatrists' treatment of homosexuality. Some writers have criticized Freudian and neo-Freudian theories of homosexuality; others have exposed barbaric clinical practices such as the use of electroshock "therapy." Little has been written, however, about the experience of psychotherapy itself.

My own experiences were not dramatic: I never had shock treatment, I never even encountered the gay analogue of the hair-raisingly male-chauvinist statements reported by some Women's Liberation activists who have had psychotherapy.

My therapists — there were three over the years — were all intelligent, somewhat sensitive men. I cannot even claim that they tried to convince me that homosexuality was an illness: product of an orthodox upbringing, I was convinced before I ever consulted them. All I can claim is that their treatment contributed nothing to my awareness of myself and even retarded it; that this was connected to their view of homosexuality as an illness; that my self-understanding eventually grew from quite different sources.

I first applied the term "homosexual" to myself when I was fourteen. If I wasn't then an irreversible homosexual, I was fast becoming one: almost all my sexual feelings were toward males, virtually none toward females. I sought psychotherapy when I was seventeen, basically because I desperately desired to be heterosexual. I was in therapy in my last year in high school and for four years in college. Nothing changed — though I did gain insight into various personal and especially family relationships. For two years after college I was a teacher — then I was fired for a homosexual affair with a student. Beginning graduate school, I also began therapy again, and continued for five years on a once- and twice-weekly basis.

In my teens I tried actively not to be homosexual. Even when I stopped trying, at 22, I didn't accept being gay — I merely decided to express it *until something changed*, because I realized that in trying not to love men, I was losing the ability to love at all.

Not until I was 25 did I begin to see homosexuality as something that shouldn't be despised, and not until I was 28 — less than two years ago — did I "come out" in the sense of beginning to live openly as a homosexual. Only then, moreover, did I actively step into gay life and begin to meet other gay people. During those fourteen years, from 14 to 28, I had almost no sexual contacts and was, naturally, unhappy, frustrated, and confused. If my entry into gay life seems unusually late, I am convinced this isn't so: while manning a Gay Liberation telephone earlier this year, I talked to many more like myself.

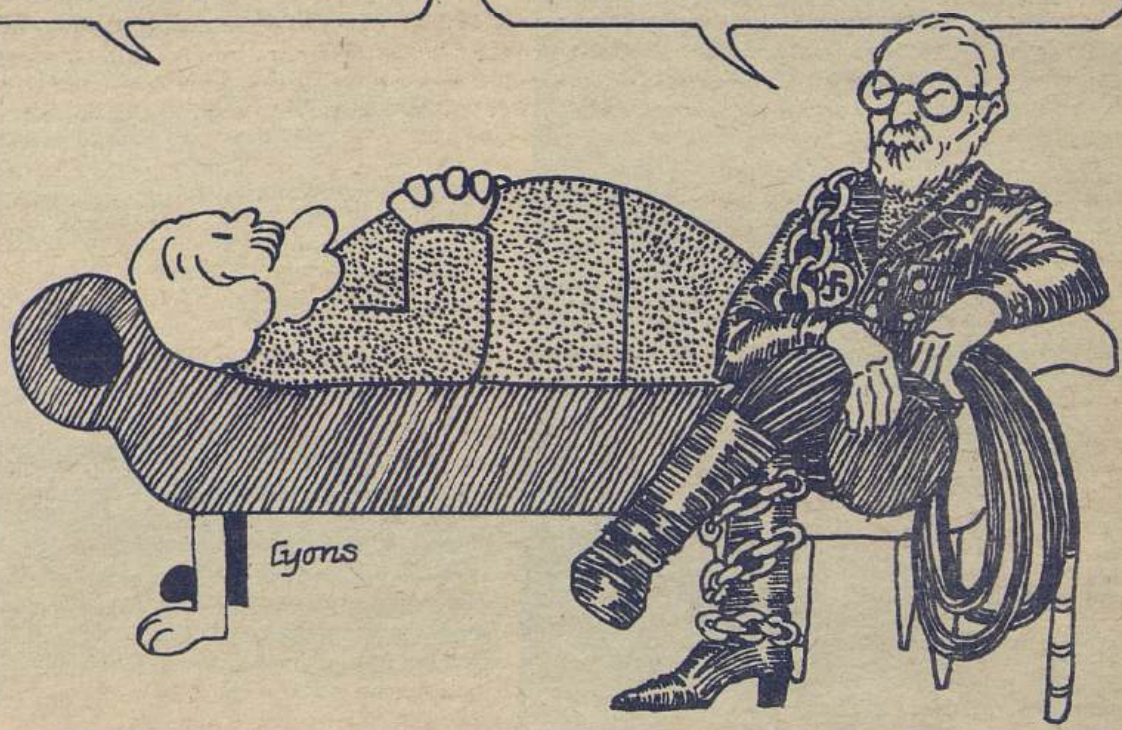
During those fourteen years of waste and unnecessary grief, my psychotherapists exposed none of what was really wrong. Please note: this means, what I now believe was really wrong. Biassed, yes — but true in my experience; I will stand on my judgment and on that standard so regularly invoked by psychotherapists themselves, success. In my opinion, I am healthier now.

I was not the happy homosexual who doesn't enter Dr. Socarides' office (and doesn't enter his statistics). There I was — in my teens, guilty about masturbation (my only form of sexual expression) and about homosexuality; occasionally thinking of suicide; drawn into passionate friendships with "straight" males and either guilty about the sexual element or blind to it; infrequently but persistently revealing the truth to certain friends (but only in conversation) and sometimes, very infrequently, making tentative sexual advances — usually rejected. In later years, fewer self-revelations (I had control of myself now, achieved with the aid of my psychotherapists: my new rule, the self-isolating rule of every "closet queen," was that I never told anyone unless it was necessary) and more frequent advances.

In therapy, I looked for the factors which had caused my homosexuality. It did not occur to me that no one asked what caused heterosexuality, or that the two questions stood on a par. None of my psychotherapists ever pointed this out. When discussing my urge to self-revelation, my therapists and I explored the dynamics of this "Dostoevskian" manifestation —

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF GAY LIBERATION, DR. FREUD?

IT'S NONSENSE, MR. MARX. THE INSTINCTS MUST BE DISCIPLINED.



guilt, eagerness for punishment combined with eagerness for acceptance, etc. All this, I must make clear, was true — I was guilty, eager for punishment, and eager for acceptance.

But while exploring this (and, as I mentioned, helping me master the urge) none of my therapists exposed to me the simple, blinding underlying truth that in a society which condemns homosexuality and hence forces it to be secret, the homosexual will wish to break out of secrecy by telling someone — and hence that what needed to be explored was not my urge to confide, but the question why I confided rather than making sexual advances, or seeking gay society where I could find company and sex with less risk. That this was the real question I had to figure out myself, at 28.

Similarly, my therapists spent much time trying to discover why my relationships with straight friends were so passionate — rather than asking me why I formed these passionate relationships *with straights*. Similarly, after the homosexual affair which lost me my teaching job — a very warm relationship which has continued, intermittently, to this day — I brought to my next therapist the datum that while in bed with my lover, I felt completely harmonious and "natural," not "sick" at all and not even guilty.

Although this contradicted the very basis of the feeling which led me to psychotherapy, my therapist never took the initiative in exploring the contradiction. It was left to me — because of this and because of other factors — to begin wondering exactly how sick I would feel if there were no stigma attached to being gay.

The failure to ask such questions might be thought to result from the "non-directive" quality which is supposed to characterize psychotherapy. But elsewhere, my therapists were "directive." Very late, actually while I was "coming out" through Gay Liberation, I had a sexual affair with a woman (also a warm one, interrupted only by circumstances). To this my therapist's response was positive: with a little smile, "Well — I see *something* has 'come out.'"

The therapist's cues revealed clearly enough the idea of a repressed heterosexuality which *should* be "brought out," and though Freudian theory assumes an inborn bisexuality (an assumption I don't share, not regarding *any* particular form of sexuality as inborn), this theory assumes that repressed *homosexuality* *shouldn't* be brought out, but should be sublimated. Thus psychotherapy, in my case, was directive indeed.

Rather than from "non-direction," the omissions of my therapists seem to me now, to have resulted from their own assumption that I was, by definition, sick — that homosexuality (but not heterosexuality) is a pathology. It did not occur to them to question my own

identical preconception. Questions which might have been suggested by a skeptical view on this point never occurred to them.

And so the therapists failed to help me understand my situation — to overcome my own lack of understanding. Even from a viewpoint assuming homosexuality to be a pathology, I would think, it would remain true *in fact* that my urge to self-revelation was related to my *social* isolation as a homosexual, and was self-preservative, although neurotically so — that what was self-destructive was my confiding in the wrong people.

But my therapists never helped me to understand this. To have done so would probably have "directed" me toward gay life. And, if I hadn't already been moving away from psychotherapy, after my heterosexual affair (if it had occurred at all) my therapist would have encouraged me to mull over that experience, to try to cultivate my heterosexual impulses...and to waste another 10 years on top of the 14 I had wasted already.

The therapists' theory made them incapable of viewing my situation as I now would view it. If I understand it, their view was that the conflicts in my mind about being homosexual indicated a very strong heterosexual impulse being checked subconsciously. In my view today, they indicated a very strong socially-conditioned dread of being gay, combined with certain patterns — such as the tendency to be attracted only to straight men — which were related to the inability to think of myself as gay and which created impossible (and, I would now add, unnecessary) conflicts between my sexual impulses and my need for ordinary friendship. (Only in the last year has this conflict become unnecessary: until now, gay people have either had to repress their gay nature while with straight friends, or to make their entire social life among gay people. I wonder how many psychotherapists, exploring this conflict with thousands of gay patients, have tried to expose the *socially-conditioned* nature of this conflict.) *In short, psychotherapy could not help me to understand my situation because it did not — and given its theoretical basis, could not — encourage me to think of my conflicts as resulting from being gay (and unsure about it) in particular social conditions.*

by JAMES COLEMAN

[The conclusion to this article, to be published next issue, deals with the understanding gained from social movements. A slightly different version of this article will be published in the journal *The Radical Therapist*.]

## GAY DEFENDANT ATTACKED

*Detroit* — Early on the morning of July 31, Michael Fylstra, who is defending himself in court against A&S charges stemming from a Vice Squad entrapment (see p. 1), was attacked as he walked homeward on Woodward Avenue near Sproat St.

Fylstra was approached by two well-dressed young men who spoke as if they knew him. After a few minutes' talk, one said that his friend had just gotten out of prison and needed a "job." When Fylstra said no, the man showed a knife and the two began walking Fylstra across the street.

At this point Fylstra bent over making retching sounds. As the two men backed off, Fylstra broke free and ran into an all-night restaurant. When a bus came by, Fylstra ran out and rode home.

Fylstra had no explanation for the attack. "Maybe they remembered me from selling the *Liberator* on the street downtown," he said. There was nothing to indicate whether the attackers were connected with the police.

## 1,000 N.Y. GAYS PROTEST SYNDICATE, POLICE

*New York* — On less than 24 hours' notice, more than 1,000 gay men and women marched through the streets of Greenwich Village here late Saturday night, July 24, in protest against both the police and the syndicate. The demonstration was called by the Gay Activists Alliance (GAA) and endorsed by several other gay organizations.

The aim of the demonstration was to protest "the monopolistic domination and exploitation of the gay community by the syndicate" and "the police corruption which has long profited and supported the syndicate's domination and exploitation of the gay community."

The demonstration came after several weeks of increased police harassment of gay people, the posting of an insulting sign referring to "weirdo sex" outside one gay bar, and threats and violence by thugs against an impromptu picket line outside the bar. An emergency meeting called the demonstration for the following night.

GAA representatives feel that the protest reflects a turning point in the consciousness of the gay community. [Condensed from *The Militant*, Aug. 6, 1971.]

The "homosexual tendencies" question has been quietly dropped from the Public Health Service medical history form used by Armed Forces examiners. The decision to drop this question and others dealing with family history, drug use, and drinking came after US Senator Sam Ervin expressed concern that they might be an invasion of privacy. Draft counsellors are advising gays who wish to avoid service to write in on the form that they have homosexual tendencies. [Advocate.]

## SPREADING THE GOOD WORD

New gay papers to appear in recent months include *Mother* (by Gay Women's News Service, California), *Spectre* (by Revolutionary Lesbians, Ann Arbor, Mich.), *The Effeminate* (by Christian Revolutionaries, Berkeley), *Sunflower* (by New Orleans GLF), *The Gay Voice* (Albany, N.Y.), *Fag Rag* (Boston), and *Come Together* (by GLF of London, England).

## WELFARE AND WORK IN REAGAN TERRITORY

*Los Angeles* — Ralph Schaffer, gay activist from Los Angeles, had his welfare check cut off after he refused a work-project job at the LA County Clerk's office. Schaffer claims that the job would not be open to him as a county employee at regular pay rates because he is openly gay. An early battle was won in May when the county Welfare Department ruled that informing a potential employer that you are gay cannot be construed as intent to avoid employment. [Advocate.]

## MUSICAL GENDER

School Board officials in Bernards Township, N.J., don't know what to do about their music teacher who recently underwent a sex-change operation and finished the semester as a woman in men's clothing. The teacher, Paula Grossman, says she wants to continue teaching and living nearby with her wife and daughters. The Board President says they are "just dumfounded by this and have no idea what the educational legalities are." [Detroit Free Press.]

## SAN FRANCISCO WORK-IN PROTEST

*San Francisco* — To protest Federal policy which denies employment to known homosexuals, gay activists here staged an all-day work-in at the Federal Building. Wearing badges that read "Homosexual Working for the Government," gays swept corridors and operated elevators. Their leaflet claimed that hundreds of gays already worked at the building, but dared not come out for fear of being fired. [Advocate.]

## SMALL VICTORY IN COLORADO

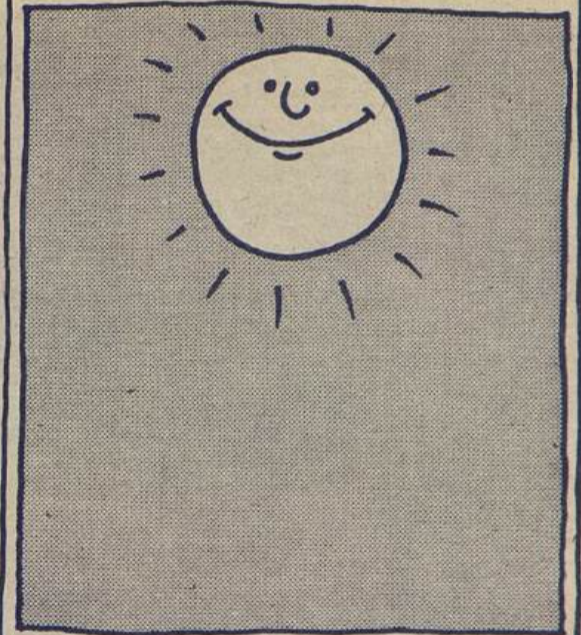
Colorado has become the fifth state to legalize gay relations between consenting adults. While the bill lowers the age of sexual consent to 16, it reasserts "public indecency" and prostitution provisions and forbids loitering for the purpose of soliciting "deviate sexual intercourse." [Advocate.]

## free at last



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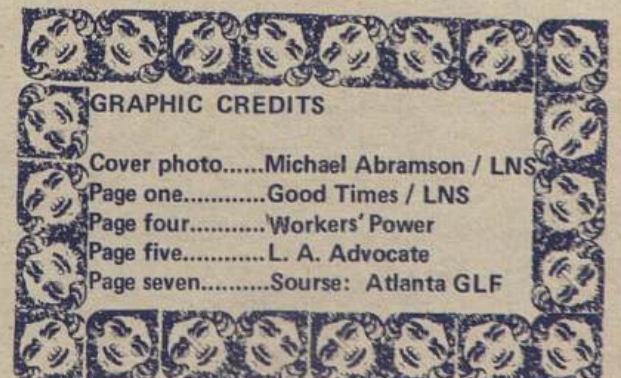
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**GAY YOUTH** — 3025 E. Grand Blvd., Apt. 209. Phone 874-4846.

**ONE** — P.O. Box 7926, Kercheval Sta., Detroit, MI 48215.

**METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH** — 3025 E. Grand Blvd., Apt. 209. Phone 874-4846.

**ORDER OF ST. GREGORY** — 2803 Tenth St., Wyandotte, MI 48192.

### *Throughout Michigan:*

**GLF PORT HURON** — P.O. Box 472, Port Huron, MI 48060. Phone 1-982-3023.

**GLF ANN ARBOR** — Jim Toy, 722 Arbor St., Ann Arbor, MI. Phone 1-665-6959.

**GLF EAST LANSING** — Student Services Bldg., Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48823.

**WESTERN MICHIGAN GAY ALLIANCE** — Georgia Kohlbeck, 454 Wealthy S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49503.

**KALAMAZOO GAY LIBERATION** — Box 291, Student Services Bldg., WMU, Kalamazoo, MI 49001.

## read this!

**GAY SWITCHBOARD** — information and rap line. Please call 10 AM — 10 PM. 833-7527.

A clinical social worker (Gay) has offered to lead a personal growth and encounter group. 15 people maximum. If interested, call the Switchboard for more information. 833-7527.

**PICNIC & GAY-IN.** Port Huron GLF invites everyone to meet Sunday, August 22, at 12 noon in Canatara Park, Sarnia, Ontario. Entertainment, overnight accommodations available. 1-982-3023 for information.

**AND ANOTHER PICNIC.** Sunday, August 29, in Detroit's Palmer Park, 1 PM. Meet north of the Duck Pond.

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED** to sell the *Gay Liberator*. Street corners, Hudson's, bars, anywhere. 833-7527.

**SOLICITING.** If you have news, reviews, articles, poetry, photos, suitable for publication, send a *copy* to *Gay Liberator*, P.O. Box 631-A, Detroit, MI 48232. Enclose self-addressed stamped envelope. News can also be phoned in to the Switchboard.

**COMPLAINTS.** If you arrested, harassed, or suffer any kind of discrimination because you are gay, let us know. Such information may be useful in planning future actions. 833-7527.

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