IRISH GAY NEWS No.1

INTRODUCTION.

JANUARY '82

The IGN news letter is put together by a group of people interested in informing gays throughout the country of the sort of things that gay people are involved in. In this issue we have articles not only on happenings within the gay movement but also campaigns that gay people are involved in which try to defend or extend democratic rights generally. B y publicizing whats going on we hope to draw in gays into active struggle for liberation. If there is something going on in your area that you think th other gay people wo uld be interested in, then send details to us at this address: c/o 28, Windsor Avenue, Fairview, Dublin, 3.

GAY LIB ERATION WORKSHOP-A REPORT.

In their quest for respectibility the established gay groups (NGF IGRM & NIGRA) refuse to get involved in the struggles of other oppressed groups in society. The provision of discos and cultural facilities are much needed and should not be sneered at. But this is not enough. We can never achieve self liberation if we come out of one closet only to;lock ourselves into gay ghettoes.Only by involving ourselves in the struggles of women, youth and workers, and the struggle for national liberation, will we achieve true liberation. The national groups are only interested in issues directly related to gay oppression, so there is a need for a progressive gay group, one that will be prepared to advance from the discos and bring politics into the gay movement.

Several people who had been involved in the Lesbians and Gays Against H-Block/Armagh Group realized that there was a need for a progressive gay group and consequently organized a Gay Liberation Workshop on Saturday 28 November I98I. The workshop was attended by abunt 40 people. It tended to deviate from the agenda and the debate was certainly sharp. The workshop opened with a contribution from Charles Kerrigan which traced the history of the Gay Movement internationally and its development in Ireland.

A general discussion followed and while some people felt that the state was not so oppressive towards gays, since the draconian laws are rarely used and the discos are allowed to operate without police interference, others disagreed with this. They argued that the central question was the state- that it had no right to interfere in anyones sexual affairs or to brand people as perverts because of their sexual preferences. Consequently it was put that there could be no achievement of liberation under capitalism and that gays could only win through by taking up the struggle workers power.

Disagreement was certainly recorded on that proposal but the debate at least opened peoples minds and made them more amenable to discussion.

Tony O'Hara, who was present as a delegate from the Irish Republican Socialist Party, brought greetings to the workshop from the political prisoners in Long Kesh (from where he had recently been released) and thanked all gay people fot the work they had done in defence of the hunger strikers. Tony gave a pledge of full support from the IRSP for activities that might come from the workshop, and stressed the need for gays to become involved in the struggles of others- thereby advancing their own struggle.

The workshop failed to produce a manifesto but it did produce plans for a workshop on 'Lesbians in a male-dominated gay movement' to be held in late February.

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GAYS AGAINST IMPERIALISM.

A meeting to set up an anti-imperialist gay group took place on I2 December in Dublin The aims of Gays Against Imperialism are twofold. Firstly we hope to show to gay people why they must take an active part in the struggle for national liberation. WE do not believe that it is possible to achieve full gay liberation while part of our country is occupied and the rest dominated by imperialism. For us, getting control of our country is a necessary part of getting control of our own lives.

Secondly we hope to address ourselves to republicans and socialists who are already organized in the anti-imperialist struggle. Gay people, denied basic democratic and civil rights, are part of the whole Irish people oppressed by partition and continued British rule. The fight against thatoppression must take into account the needs of all the oppressed- including women, workers,.. youth--and gays!

GAI can be contacted at 28, Windsor Avenue, Fairview, Dublin, 3 and in Belfast at c/o 85B Lower Falls Road Belfast.
A public meeting to launch GAI will take place in Dublin on April 2 at a venue still to be arranged. Bernadette McAliskey has agreed to speak and further details can be got from the addresses above.

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BLOODY SUNDAY, DERRY I972-I982.

January 30th, I972 is a day that Irish people everywhere will never forget. On that Sunday afternoon 20,000 people marched from the Creggan shops down William Street demanding an end to internment and the introduction of proportional representation, as well as an end to the Special Powers Act. The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association had been demandingthese political reforms since I968 and had been campaigning for an end to internment since the previous August.

At the Rossville Street Flats in the Bogside, members of the British Army Parachute Regiment opened fire on the marchers killing thirteen of them instantly and wounding several others. That day became known-nationally and internationally- as Bloody Sunday. The British Government was condemned for its actions from all corners of the globe, and the eyes and minds of people everywhere turned towards that city in the North of Ireland.

It is true to say that the Derry killings backfired on the British Government. The following Sunday over I00,000 people marched in protest in Newry. The Nationalist people ofthe Six Counties have struggled against the injustices of British rule for over I4 years now. On the last Sunday of January since I972 there have been commemoratiom marches in Derry for the victims of that massacre.

January I982 marks the tenth anniversary of Bloody Sunday. There will be a march and rally in Derry on that day and people are asked to assemble at the Creggan shops at 2pm. The march will follow the original route to the rally at Free Derry Corner. Details about buses from Dublin can be got from Sinn Fein 44, Parnell Square, Dublin I (726932) or from IGN (338542).
Gays against Imperialism will have a banner at the march and rally and all gay people will be welcome to march with us.

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EMBASSY DEFENCE CAMPAIGN.

Thousands of people marched to the British Embassy on July I8th last year to protest at the continuing presence of a British Government representative in the 26 Counties at a time when that Government, lead by Margaret Thatcher, was murdering hunger-strikers in the 6 Counties.

Gardai attacked the march with batons and left many people injured. Subsequently twenty people were arrested under the Offences Against the State Act and charged with "obstructing the Gardai in the course of their duty by violent means". Already one man, Patrick Kehoe is serving a three year prison sentence in Mountjoy. The march, which started out as a peaceful demonstration was turned into a bloody encounter byy the police.

The state is using the Offences Against the State Act and the Special Criminal Court to thwart any attempts at change by peaceful means. The implications for gay people are the same as for trade-unionists, women and youth. The machinary of repression will be used against anyone who organizes for change.

A campaign to defend the twenty victims of the Gardai's riot has begun. It is important that gay people, who have no rights, involve themselves in the campaign. We must ensure that no more of our democratic rights are taken away.

In Dublin the Embassy 20 Defence Committee meets every Wednesday at 8pm in the basement of 29 Mountjoy Square (747200).

If you live outside of Dublin and there is no committee in your area then try to organize one- especially in workplaces and colleges. Help and literature can be got from the above address.

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POLAND IRELAND SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN.

During the night of I2/I3 December, I98I the Polish bureaucratic regime declared war on all Polish workers. In doing this it used the same methods and followed the example of dictatorships which enjoy the hatred of working people throughout the world.

A state of siege was proclaimed in Poland- a military net came down over the country; SOLIDARNOSC was banned and its leaders arrested; a curfew was imposed and telecommunic-ations cut off; schools and universities were closed; the right to strike-indeed all civil rights were suspended; the working week was extended to a I2 hour, 6 day week.

One of the groups fighting for democratic rights in Poland was the young gay movement there. In defending Polish workers-in particular Solidarity-we defend ourselves and our gay Polish sisters and brothers.

The week following the seizure of power by the military junta, a meeting in Solidarity with Solidarnosc was held in Trinity College, Dublin and protst march organized the following Saturday through the centre of the city. The Poland Solidarity Committee hope to arrange aspeaking tour and bring out an information bulletin in the coming months. A benefit concert is being held in Liberty Hall on Friday 5th February- we urge all gay people to attend.

For further information about the campaign contact Alex White c/o Students Union, Trinity College, Dublin, 2.

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IRISH GAY NEWS COLLECTIVE.

This newsletter was produced by Pat, Charles, Padraig and Mairtin from our own resources and we would appreciate contributions (financial and literary) towards producing the next issue.

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FOLLOW UP TO THE NATIONAL GAY CONFERENCE

About 150 lasbian and gay men attended the first National Gay Conference held in Connolly Hall , Cork during the weekend 15/17th. May 1981. The theme of the conference was"Gays in the 80's- Which way Forward". Workshops were held on many areas affecting gays eg. the media, trade unions, partition, religion and the law. Workshops were also held on "Gays and the Womens Movement" and "Young Gays".

The major theme of the Conference was the urgent need to get the movement to attend to matters other than the immediate personal and social needs of gays inDublin and Cork and to establish structures to enable this to happen.

Conference at its concluding session, adopted a resolution asking the organising committee to remain in being for three months to draw up specific proposals for an umbrella structure that would allow ALL gay groups on the island to co-operate and work together.

This meeting, though a little delayed, is to take place on Saturday 13thth. February in Dublin. The provisional agenda is as follows-

i)Report on first National Gay Conference
ii)Proposals for umbrella structure
iii) Election of committeeto organise next conference

The way to achieve a united gay movement is to involve all gay activists in a democratic forum where all views are represented. Therefore we urge as many gays as possible to attend. The venue has yet to be finalized but information and a copy of the report on the first conference can be obtained from-

The Organizing Committee, National Gay Conference, P.O. Box 39, Cork City. Phone (021) 505394 (evenings)

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