GAY TIMES

PUBLISHED BY THE DUBLIN GAY COLLECTIVE

PRICE 35

The March to Fairview Park

On a night in September 1982, Declan Flynn was walking in Fairview Park in Dublin, a place long known as a cruising area_ he was attacked,viciously beaten and left to die. Within 36 hours five of his attackers were arrested and charged, which seemed remarkable until it was learned that their names and addresses were already known to the police. They had received the names from a gay man who had himself been attacked and who had made it his lonely business to find out, and to report on the continuing assaults. A journalist with the Irish Press had also been attacked, had also told the police, who turned up hours late and showed no interest. The gang eventually admitted to more than twenty such attacks over several months_ there is no evidence that at any stage the police took the slightest notice. To effect that required a death.

The five were all charged with murder. Later, for four of them, the charge became manslaughter, which they admitted- only with the youngest 14 years old did the original charge stand. All the accused admitted from the start that they had been "queer-bashing". It was, after all, their excuse and the only concern they showed was that they might have made a "mistake" in beating up someone who wasn't gay. The defence stressed the gay aspect throughout_:evidence was taken from one witness that just before the murder he had given Declan "a peck on the cheed" while other people were watching. The implication being that such provoking behaviour explained the action. As this witness entered the box, the judge was heared to comment "we've a right Harry Worth here". All-purpose prejudice, mindless, inaccurate. Declan's death was described, hideously. He had almost succeeded in outrunning the gang, but was tripped, kicked brutally, and died slowly. The judge declared that this could not be regarded as murder, and the jury, at his direction, found the accused guilty also of manslaughter. The judge commented on the seriousness of the crime, said that the gang's behaviour was inexcusable, and then, without explanation, suspended the sentences. They walked free from the court, went home, and later that night the ringleader and possibly others lead a victory parade around Fairview Park shouting "We are the Champions". So it must have seemed.

The entire country errupted in comment, almost all of it against the judge. The law and order brigade called for the accused to get life, or perferably death. Liberals commented on the absurdity of sentencing policies that gave three years for bag-snatching and freedom for killing. Not very evident in all this, but still observable was a realisation that the death of a presumed gay was now judged to be less serious that other deaths: an earlier loathsome remark was recalled from another judge's comments "The victim was only a prostitute". Just as so many

of rape are presumed to contribute to their own assault, so Declan was judged accomplice to his own death.

The Dail, unprecedendently, called an entire debate on this single case. Most waffled on law and order, some commented on the need to give the full protection of the law to every minority. The hypocrisy of calling for legal protection for people they themselves define as criminals was not even noticed.

The Collective met the night after the judgement, unanimous that protest must be made. The problem was to disentangle the threads of opposition, to ensure that the protest was seen to oppose the violence against gay men and against all women, to expose the complicity of the police in the oppression of lesbians and gay men, to ensure that no-one mistook our anger as a call to "hang 'em high". It had to be a public protest, it had to have wide support, and it became clear that it had to be at Fairview Park, not at the Dail and certainly not at the Department of Justice. It was to be a protest against the violence,not against the sentences.

We chose the date, nine days on, and within two days leaflets were being handed out in the pubs and on the streets. Two problems emerged: many gays disliked or feared the choice of Fairview Park and many pepople in other radical groups felt that any protest would inevitably be seen as a law-and-order one. At the public meeting called by the N.G.F. to discuss the case, the first objection was thrashed out in a long debate. The Collective's point prevailed despite the real fears that the marchers might be attached. The route could only be to Fairview Park: it was not an act of "provocation" to protest at months of discrimination assaults. The meeting voted almost unanimously to support the march. More importantly, perhaps, the meeting committed itslef to a new campaign to rouse widespread support for rights now for lesbians and gay men. This was to be the second theme of the march .

The second, law-and-order, objection too was overcome. The Anti-Amendment Campaign, in which all members of the Collective are active workers, promised support as did several of its local action groups. Gradually, promises of support arrived from the student groups, U.S.I. T.C.D., U.C.D. , from People's Democracy, from the Socialist Worker's Movement, Sinn Fein, I.R.S.P., The Anarchist Collective, Democratic Socialists, The Rape Crisis Centre, The Grapevine Centre and others.

/more...

As the case continued to be discussed in the press, so did the march, with probably the most valuable support coming from Mary Maher in the Irish Times. She stressed that it was to be a march against all secual violence, that the Collective was calling for the support of everyone concerned with civil rights. She discussed the fears of gays who wished to march but could not bring themselves to come out. She urged her readers to join.

It was obvious by now that the march was not going to be a lonely single group walking along North Strand. It is also fair to say tht wer were apprehensive; it was horribly easy to imagine violent confrontation, to imagine showers of stones, to imagine also individual assaults as themarch dispersed.



Fears evaporated as we watched the crowds gather, as many as we could have hoped for. For most of us it was a new feeling of exhilaration, of sharing, to be part of such a crowd united on the issue of gay and lesbian rights, of opposition to sexual violence. The leading banner proclaimed this: "End Violence Against Women and Gays". Behind this the banners of gay and lesbian groups, The Dublin and Cork Collectives, Gays at Work and N.G.F., behind them the groups who had promised support and many more. Seven hundred people in all, women, men and children. Escorted by police, festooned with photographers, the march progressed. It was remarkable and moving, to look back along North Strand and as far as one could see, to watch the colours of the waving banners, to see the enthusiasm of the chanting marchers.

We rallied in Fairview Park with a crowd by now nearly a thousand strong (rather than the 400 reported later on T.V. and in the press) Eamonn Somers, of the N.G.F. spoke of the uniqueness of the event, by a huge margin the most impressive gay demonstration to be held in Ireland. He spoke of the politicians seeming concern, of their hypocritical legal stance, of their utter desregard of any action that might actually give autonomy to woemn or to gays. A speaker from the Rape Crisis Centre spoke of the law's fetish with property and its disregard of the person, of the ordeal of rape victims, of the bewildering and inconsistent judicial attitudes. Charles Kerrigan of the Collective stressed that the violence we had marched against was not restricted to one park for gays anymore than it was restricted to a few dark streets for women. Sexual violence was everywhere, an everyday occurence which this patriarchal capitalist society had not only managed to accommodate, but deliberately to tolerate as a form of social control. He spoke of the utter unconcern of the police, of their harrassment of the victims rather than the perpetrators, of the attitudes that foster the victim's silence. He stressed that this march was not an isolated event, but rather it was only the start of a new campaign for lesbian and gay rights. He formulated the three demands of this campaign, for equal rights, for protection at work for decriminalisation. A campaign which was outward-looking, demanding the widest possible support throughout trade unions, throughout progressive political groups, from those whose presence already showed their deeply welcome commitment.

As a hideous confirmation that the case which provoked the march was not an isolated event, it was reported soon afterwards that another gay murder merited a suspended sentence. The Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland declared that in defending himself from the perverted sexual advances of the deceased, the accused was largely justified in what he had done. A sexual advance is now an accepted excuse for murder. One wonders if the plea will be accepted if made by a woman next time round. The march to end sexual violence grows in importance rather than fades as a memory.

The Collective regards the very real success of this march as a complete vindication of their basic approach to join with other radical groups in fighting oppression this society. Of looking outwards rather than regarding gay rights as a simple issue, of expending energies on other causes in the trust that others will reply with theirs. The success or failure, of this new Campaign will depend on the continuance, or not, of this commitment to others. And of theirs to us.

GAA

GAYS AGAINST THE AMENDMENT - FEB. BENEFIT

RAISED £500 FOR THE CENTRAL CAMPAIGN !

FIGHTING BACK

PUBLIC MEETING

MAY 4th 8pm

LIBERTY HALL

The newly formed Campaign has prepared a draft resolution , which should be put forward to Trade Union branches, political groups etc. It reads :-

"Because of the severe repression against lesbians and gay men in Ireland, the widespread discrimination against them; the justified fears of dismissal from work ; the status of gay men as criminals before the law ; we demand that the Dail and Seanad act on the following :

1. The repeal of all laws that which criminalize people specifically because of their homosexual activities .
2. Enactment of laws, or changes to current laws, to ensure equal treatment for all , irrespective of sexual preferences .
3. An amendment to the Employment Equality Act to ensure that people can neither be refused employment , nor dismissed from it, on account of their sexual preference .

CAMPAIGN FOR THE RIGHTS OF LESBIANS AND GAY MEN

NUMBERS :

Homosexuals form at least 10% of all studied populations (Kinsey Institute and others) . This amounts to more than 200,000 Irish women and men, and that means that everyone knows gay people : they are friends, colleagues, close relations . Of the 200,000 , perhaps 10,000 have 'come out' ; that is have accepted themselves and have told others . The rest have told no one , and may deny their own identity even to themselves .

VIOLENCE :

"Queer-bashing" gangs know very well that their victims are outside the law. So indeed do the Gardai , who ignore the gangs and keep no records of their activities . People are beaten evrey day , frequently put in hospital , and often killed . The recent well-publicised death was one of many . Attacks occur everywhere , not just in one or two parks .

LEGAL CUSTODY :

In disputed cases over custody of children ,the mother is almost always given custody . The most obvious exception is when the mother is known to be lesbian. Children can, and have been taken away from mothers solely on this ground , even when there is no one else to care for them . Lesbian mothers have lost even visiting rights , and are fathers too have had these

SOCIAL PREJUDICES :

Many gay men are less afraid of lonely, dangerous parks than of living openly as homosexuals. Many lesbians endure great lonliness, or pointless unhappy marraiges rather than come out' . People fear the prejudice and ignorance of friends, families and colleagues . This prejudice is everywhere , in education gay epople are ignored, or mentioned briefly with contempt . The media sneer at ludicrous stereotypes , or wildy over-dramatise ordinary events. Churches stigmatise . Everyone who derides or belittles lesbians or gay men shares the responsibility for the fear that dominates so many lives .

EMPLOYMENT :

Nowhere are gays more afraid to 'come out' than at work . They are aware of their illegal status; they are aware that others have lost jobs , or failed to get them , or remain in the lowest grade . If trouble does occur , their coll--eagues must stand by them ; their unions must support them. It is impossible to give accurate figures of jobs lost : so few will speak out. But the true figure is in the hundreds , at very least.

The campaign for the rights of lesbians and gay men is organising to fight the discrimination outlined above . Anyone who wants to help in the campaign or get more information can contact us : c/o Hirschfeld centre,12 Fownes street, Dublin 2 . ph. 710939 .

THE SOUP Kitchen
10 FOWNES ST

The Soup Kitchen is a lunch time restaurant at the NGF. It is open every weekday from 12.00am to 3.00pm providing good quality home made food. The opening times are now extended to 6.30pm on film nights to cater for Biograph fans.

MENU

Fruit Juices	35p
Soup Bread, Butter	80p
Rolls	50p £1.00
Small Salad	£1.25
Large Salad	£1.75
Hot Dish of Day	£2.00
Dessert	50p
Coffee	35p
Tea per cup	20p
Pot of Tea	35p
Hot Chocolate	50p

Health Clubs ——

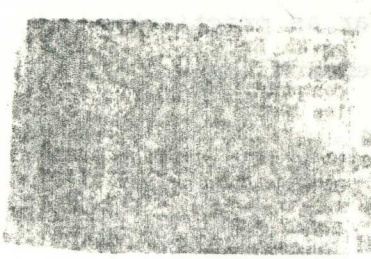
Having given up sports a few years ago I went along to a few Gymnasiums in Dublin for a trial session. I was going to join to get fit again but unfortunately they didn't see it that way!

The first gym I visited was CITY GYM off Aston Quay. I waited in a stifling little lounge for my instructor, along she came - like a whippet. She weighed me and told me I could lose 2 stone. I specifically told her I was not there to lose weight but she nearly went through the page circling the over-weightness. I did all the weight-training and then she drew up a contract. I said I wasn't going to sign anything without thinking about it, but she kept insisting and in the end she threw the biro in the air and told me I could have said that earlier. She hadn't asked me earlier if I was or wasn't joing - she assumed I was.

The next place was worse, again. GYMNASIUM INTERNATIONALE. I was stuck in a small, again stifling, office talking to a Mr. Universe who kept stretching his neck. He told me I was carrying all my weight on my lower back. I kept asking him the price but he kept saying "Dont worry about the price, we'll get to that eventually, but what you should worry about is your weight and fitness. By the way I see you have very oily skin, a sauna would do wonders for that". I was flabbergasted. I told him I'd think about it - answer "but you've been thinking about it for months why not do it now". Then he stood at the door and I couldn't get out. I said I had to go and he kept shouting all the way down the stairs about how I needed to join. I thought I'd never get out.

The last place was the RICHMOND LEISURE CENTRE - quite a different attitude there, no pressure at all on you to join and very pleasant people, everyone of course had a marvellous tan - due to the sunbeds!

The danger of these places is if you are not aware how pressurised you could be, you could end up, out of sheer embarrassment signing on the dotted line at a cost of £175. It's not easy to get out of them at all, and if you're overweight - God love you!



—— Women Beware

THE ANTI - AMENDMENT CAMPAIGN

In April of 1981 a group calling itself the Pro Life Amendment campaign held a launching meeting. The avowed aim of the campaign was constitutional protection "for the absolute right to life of every unborn child from conception". The campaign was led by obstetricians and gynaecologists such as Eamoon De Valera and Prof. Bonar from the Rotunda. Dr. Julia Vaughan - a woman was chosen as the public face of the campaign - how better to confuse the issue of womens rights and reaction. Within one month the leaders of both main right wing parties had given committments to hold a referendum on abortion and labour leader Frank Cluskey welcomed the move.

At first glance it all seems a very neat little job - no dissenting voices and any unhappy whispers were quickly drowned out by cries of "pro-abortion" and "you're a baby killer". The Pro Amendment campaign had a very respectable face however this facade hid an organisation made up of some of the most right wing elements in Irish society. Ultra right Catholic groups such as the Society to outlaw Pornography, the Irish Family League, Catholic Doctors Guild and the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child are prominent among the affiliated organisation of PLAC. It was S.P.U.C. in particular which revealed the real character of the campaign. Made up of people who have consistently opposed every reform of Irish social Legislation through contraception to the status of illigitimacy to Divorce to Anti gay laws, this group carried on a campaign in schools of showing horrifying photographs to very young children. As Mary Maher in the Irish Times of April 1982 said : - "traumatising schoolchildren is an ugly way of getting your way".

All the groups behind PLAC have made it very clear that they do not see the amendment as just a load of pious verbage but an actual concrete legal mechanism to erode and turn back the small advances which groups like the Irish Pregnancy counselling Service, the Well Woman Centres and the Irish Family Planning Centres have made on the road towards giving control of their own bodies to women. Far in fact from being nearly a statement that we all dislike abortion the constitutional amendment will if it goes through be a very potent instrument in the hands of the neo-facists of the PLAC and SPUC variety who would make all post coital contraceptive methods illegal together with other so called abortifacients such as the low dosage pill and progesterone only pill, the I.U.D. which is one of the most useful contraceptive methods for older women is also under threat from this legislation. Together with these medical implications there are various legal problems with the amendment. Could for instance an individual with no connection with a womn but suspecting her to be pregnant and going abroad for an abortion take out an injunction to prevent her leaving the country. Does the state in guaranteeing as far as practicable the right to life of the foetus take upon itself the job of preventing women from going abroad for an abortion.

Thus this amendment is not just a pious hope it is a very real infringement of the basic rights of women in an area where those rights are already very restricted. The amendment is designed to preempt debate or discussion on the topic of abortion and t herefore on the area of a womens right to control her own fertility. It is particularly revelant for gay people who demand control of their own bodies and what they do with them to oppose this amendment. The analogy is clear - if we demand the democratic right to control our own bodies then we must also demand that same right for others and our support must at this time be directed towards the gaining of that right for women.

Our fight on this issue is identical, our enemies are the same - Cardinal Ó Fiaich opposed the introduction of the 1967 Sexual Offences Act to N. Ireland while he called those opposed to the amendment "Anti Life", Loreto Brown of SPUC refers to* women who for whatever reason have abortions as murderers and in the same breath calls gay people deformed. Any woman with an unwanted pregnancy has the right to choose whether to facilitate the growth of that foetus with her lungs, her heart, her kidneys, and her liver or to terminate that pregnancy. Only she has the right to control her body - only she can make the decision. The call to "keep your dirty laws off my body" must be the same for all men and women. But in the context of anti abortion amendment gay people must see their own oppression mirrored in that of women.

The fight is the same and only in victory can we find our mutual liberation.

« **An open meeting at the Hirschfeld Centre voted unanimously to support NGF affiliation to the Women's Right to Choose Campaign. A postal ballot of NGF members voted by 58 to 52 to affiliate . The council appears reluctant to implement this democratic decision of the members. Why bother holding ballots when their results are ignored ?** »



* Loretto Browne was at a meeting in Trinity College in October 1980 when a gay rights group offered support to the Women's Right to Choose Group. She knows that all the people in Ireland who say they are gay could not really be so. 'Let's say that in the last couple of years in this country we have seen an unprecedented rise in the number of people who call themselves gay. By natural law we couldn't have that many misfits in society. And I don't mean misfits psychologically. They are – there's something wrong with people who think they are gay if they're not actually physically deformed. There couldn't be that many physically deformed people in society.'

NICKY KELLY



Nicky Kelly is currently serving a 12 year prison sentence for a crime he did not commit . He is alleged to have taken part in the Sallins Mail Train robbery in 1976 . Here are some of the main facts about his case :

1. His conviction was based solely on a confession made while held incommunicado for a prolonged period in police custody. In fact during his interrogation he was moved several times from one garda station to another.
2. During his trial garda witnesses stated that he had signed the statement vol--untarily , yet the medical officer at Mountjoy prison gave evidence of ext--ensive bruising and swelling on Nicky's body . Despite gardai's talk of cooperation and no ill treatment , the State presented no evidence whatsoever of money being found , no witnesses and no forensic evidence.
3. The case was heard first in the Dublin District Court , the men were released then re-arrested and charged in the special criminal court which has no jury.
4. Although the only evidence against Nicky was a signed statement , his two co-defendents were released when the appeal court found <u>their</u> statements were inadmissable .
5. Nicky Kelly left the country while awaiting sentencing . While in the U.S. he was diagonised as having anxiety neurosis .
6. The Provisional IRA claimed it was they who had carried out the robbery and that the three men were completely innocent .
7. Nicky returned from the US voluntarily , and was immediately rearrested and had his appeal against conviction refused on technical grounds.

His health is now completely undermined , but his despair at the prospect of spending several more years in prison is so great that he is determined to go on hungerstrike very soon . He will not survive a hungerstrike.

The Nicky Kelly Campaign needs support desperately . They meet on the first and third wednesday of every month . For details of venue , or other information on how you can help the campaign - phone 801438/331463 .

FREE NICKY KELLY

ANOTHER GROSS EXAMPLE OF IRISH INJUSTICE AT WORK .

Disabled Gays .....

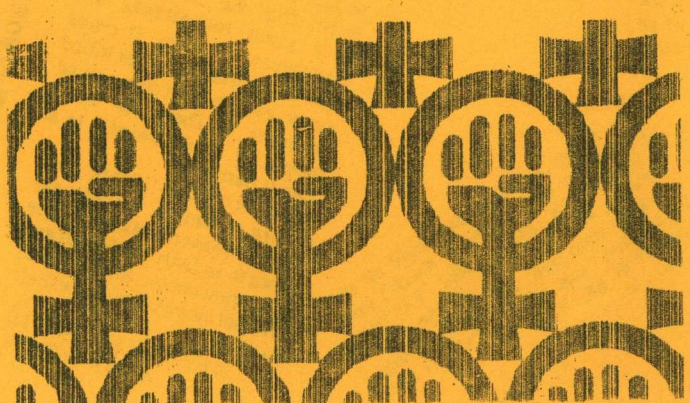
AT THE 81 NATIONAL GAY CONFERENCE , THERE WAS A WORKSHOP ON THE PROBLEMS FACED BY DISABLED GAYS , WITHIN THE GAY COMMUNITY. VERY FEW ABLE-BODIED PEOPLE ATTENDED IT . THE IDEA OF THE WORKSHOP WAS NOT TO TELL PEOPLE WHO ALREADY KNEW , WHAT THEIR PROBLEMS ARE . PREACHING TO THE CONVERTED IS A WOEFUL WASTE OF ENERGY . SO OF COURSE IS GUILT-TRIPPING . BUT IF WE ARE A COMMUNITY , THEN PERHAPS WE SHOULD START ACTING AS ONE .INSTEAD OF VIRTUALLY IGNORING THEIR EXISTENCE , WE SHOULD BECOME ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THE PROBLEMS OF THE DISABLED .

AND CERTAINLY , THOSE OF US WHO CLAIM TO HAVE A RADICAL POINT OF VIEW , NEED TO THINK HARD ABOUT OUR ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE DISABLED . VERBAL SOLIDARITY IS NOT ENOUGH . AMONG FEMINISTS THERE IS A MOVEMENT TO RECLAIM THE NIGHT . THE BASIC IDEA BEHIND THE RECLAIM THE NIGHT MOVEMENT IS THAT WOMEN MUST BE ABLE TO WALK ALONE , ANYWHERE , ANYTIME .

IF YOU THINK THAT'S A GOOD IDEA , THEN ASK YOURSELF WHY DISABLED PEOPLE SHOULD NEED A HELPER ANYWHERE THEY GO , FOR ANYTHING THEY DO . WHY SHOULD THE WHEELCHAIR BOUND HAVE TO WAIT FOR SOMEONE TO TURN UP WHO CAN REACH A DOORBELL, OR WHO CAN HELP THEM UP STEPS ? ALMOST ALL IRISH GAY LITERATURE IS INACCESSIBLE TO THE BLIND , AS IS MOST PUBLICITY FOR EVENTS AND MEETINGS . NONE OF OUR CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS CATER TO THE DEAF . NOT ALL DEAF PEOPLE CAN LIP-READ AND IF THE SPEAKER IS FURTHER AWAY THAN ABOUT THREE FEET AWAY, LIP READING BECOMES IMPOSSIBLE . IT'S A HUMILIATING AND DEGRADING SITUATION .

SO MANY PROBLEMS FOR DISABLED PEOPLE ARE AGGRAVATED BY THE IGNORANCE OF THE ABLE BODIED . SO MUCH IGNORANCE IS CAUSED BY FEAR . AN UGLY SORT OF FEAR AT THAT , THE FEAR OF DIFFERENCE , OF THE OTHER . WE'VE ALL STEREOTYPED IDEALS OF PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS . NO-ONE REALLY ESCAPES THIS INDOCTRINATION CAPITALISM AND THE MEDIA MAKES SURE OF THAT . AFTER ALL WHAT CLOTHING OR COSMETICS MANUFACTURER COULD SURVIVE IF WE DID ? BUT WHEN WE MEET SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T MEET THE IDEAL , WE FEEL UNCOMFORTABLY INSECURE . THE IDEAL IS UNDERMINED , AND THAT'S FRIGHTENING . PEOPLE'S REACTIONS TO SOMETHING THREATENING , VARY FROM HOSTILITY TO HEAD IN THE SAND , PRETEND IT'S NOT THERE AND MAYBE IT WILL GO AWAY ATTITUDES . I THINK ALL LESBIANS AND GAY MEN HAVE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF BOTH ATTITUDES . SO LETS NOT DO IT TO OTHER PEOPLE . LETS GET OUR HEADS OUT OF THE SAND AND START DOING THINGS . WHICH IS THE THI POSSIBLE , AND POSITIVE , ATTITUDE . THERE'S PLENTY TO BE DONE , EVEN WITH OUR LIMITED RESOURCES . IT IS CRUCIAL TO TAKE DISABLED GAYS INTO CONSIDERATION AND INTO THE COMMUNITY BY MAKING CONFERENCES , CENTRES AND SOCIAL EVENTS ACCESSIBLE .

AND IF YOU'RE THINKING - " WELL IT NEVER OCCURRED TO ME , YOU DON'T SEE THAT MANY DISABLED GAYS AROUND THE SCENE " - THEN THINK AGAIN , AND ASK YOURSELF WHY?



WAAA

WOMEN ARTISTS AGAINST THE AMENDMENT

IN THE WOMEN'WORKERS UNION HALL ,

SAT. 7th MAY 6-11pm

(£3 waged , £2 unwaged).

DISCRIMINATION

AT FAULT

JUDGEMENTS

BY DESCAREY

LAST Saturday, a picket was held outside Belfast Law Court in protest against the official approval by the courts of violence against gay people.

This resulted from the judgement in a recent court case in which Lord Chief Justice Lowry gave a Ballymena man a two-year suspended sentence after he admitted killing a gay man, Henry McLarnon. The organisers of the picket stressed that their protest was not a reactionary demand for stiffer sentencing but merely an attempt to highlight how the law refuses to provide any protection for people who are the victims of anti-gay violence.

The judgement in the McLarnon case was similar to that in the recent Fairview murder trial in Dublin, where youths admitted 'queer-bashing' at least 20 men, one of whom died as a result of his injuries. In this case too, the defendants were given suspended sentences and were allowed to walk free from the court.

Gay-bashing is not a new phenomenon. These cases serve only to highlight the violence which has been a frequent reality for gays when they have attempted to organise or meet.

Just last Saturday night two gay men, returning from a disco in Belfast city centre, were attacked in the New Lodge area by two men armed with claw-hammers. When they attempted to escape, their assailants jumped into their car and attempted to run them over. Had they succeeded in killing the two men, which was clearly their intention, it is likely that if brought to trial these thugs too would have been let off with a suspended sentence.

In October the British government were forced by the European Court to introduce law reform in the six counties in regard to homosexuals, but little has changed.

The only answer is to achieve a society where the democratic rights of all, no matter what their sexual orientation, are guaranteed.

Fortnight 14.4.83.

'Law of God'

IT IS not surprising that the Protestant denominations are opposed to the Pro-Life Amendment. They were, after all, in favour of the legalisation of contraceptives. We are aware, of course, that they do not speak for all their people. We have Protestant members in the Irish Family League, who share our opposition to the legalisation of contraceptives, divorce, homosexuality and abortion.

A significant aspect of all this is that the call is being made by people for the legal and social acceptance of practices, which were regarded by their predecessors as immoral and unlawful. Human nature has not changed. It is still prone to evil. What grounds are there now for removing the constraint of law on sexual behaviour?

MARY KENNEDY
(Hon. Sec.)
148 Bothar Chuain Larbh,
Baile Ath Cliath 3

S. HERALD 19.4.83

IN OUR last issue, the Phoenix Poets were invited to complete the Limerick, "A TV presenter called Gay . . ." Here's the best:

A TV presenter called Gay
After reading the verdict next day
Explained with a whine
"With a name such as mine
To Fairview Park I'm not stray."

(Nick Shortland, 130 Lee Court, Ballincoll

SAT. COLUMN, I. TIMES.

THE VALUE OF LIFE

Sir — Coming after the judgement in the Declan Flynn case in Dublin, the verdict of the case of Henry McLarnon, a gay man killed in Ballymena, must be viewed as an indictment on the legal systems both North and South. The defendant in the case, Richard McNicholl, received a two year suspended sentence for manslaughter. The Judge, Lord Lowry, in summing up virtually excused the killing of Mr. McLarnon by presenting the victim as a perverted fiend. We ask the Judge concerned what value he places on homosexual people's lives? It would seem that the go-ahead has been given for attacks and harassment of gays. It could also be put that if women killed every man who made sexual advances to them the male population would dwindle to a minute number.

The Derry Gay Rights Association wishes to register our strong condemnation at the verdicts in both the Flynn and McLarnon cases, and urges all who feel likewise to voice their concern.

DERRY GAY RIGHTS ASSOCIATION

DERRY JOURNAL MARCH '83

THE GAELIC Athletic Association are awaiting with trepidation the headline to appear saying "GAA to oppose anti-abortion amendment" — since the formation of a small pressure group in Dublin also known as the GAA — Gays Against the Amendment.

me assumed that he was nervous about marching in such a public demonstration and asked for anonymity. Many other people on the march, heterosexual supporters as well as gays, felt the same way. In this society it was a crime to be of the "wrong" sexual orientation they said. In this society it is apparently all right to attack and even kill gay people or those who are thought to be gay.

I. TIMES

Queer bashing, happened all the time, he said. "And it doesn't just happen in places like Fairview Park. It's been one of the silent crimes until now. One of the things gays don't talk about. It's part and parcel of gay life."

I. TIMES

all ireland lesbian and gay men's conference belfast june 4-5

On Saturday the 22nd January 1983 a meeting was held at the N.I.G.R.A. premises in University St, Belfast to plan the June 1983 Gay Conference. There were about 20 to 30 people present i.e. representatives from the Steering Committee of the Cork 1981 and Dublin 1982 Conferences as well as N.I.G.R.A., N.G.F, Cork and Dublin Gay Collectives and several independants from Derry and Belfast. Only one woman was present.

It was decided that the Conference would be held in Belfast from Friday the 3rd of June to Sunday the 5th of June (the June Holiday weekend in the 26 counties.) It is hoped that the venue will be a building called the Crescent Art centre on the Armagh Road. This is a fairly large building with enough small rooms for workshops and a large room for any plenary sessions. It was also stressed by some of the people present as of vital importance that whatever building the conference was held at be accessible to handicapped people. The Crescent also has a wholefood restaurant and Coffee Bar.

With regard to publicity it was decided that various peopl in Dublin, Cork and Belfast would be approached about doing a poster and that the newspapers would be contacted. After some discussion the title of the Conference was changed to "All Ireland Lesbian and Gay Men's Conference" There was also a lot of discussion about the theme proposed by those who attended the Interim Conference in Dublin in December i.e."Lesbians and Gay Men as a radical movement ".There were some who felt that by becoming too radical the Gay Movement was losing touch with the vast majority of gay people. It was eventually decided that the Conference should reflect the increasing involvement of many lesbians and gay men in other movements and working on issues which are affecting us at present i.e. The Amendment in the 26 Counties ,police harassment North and South, the right to employment, Kincora and the media coverage of same. The general topics which will have workshop space are Coming Out, Gays at Work and relationships with family etc. will also form part of the Conference.

A discussion was then held on the allocation of work between centres e.g. N.I.G.R.A. to be responsible for accomadation, N.G.F. for transport to Belfast etc. .A major discussion was then held on the formation of the Steering Committee and the participation of women on said committee. The only woman present was not too hopeful of women participating in this year's conference because (a) women are not well organised in Belfast. (b) There is a womens conference in Belfast in May which the women will be organising. (c) N.I.G.R.A. and Lesbians in Belfast do not work together because of disagreement over available facilities.

The type of conference envisaged for '83 was discussed for a consideranle time. Some spoke of the need to attract as many of the "Gays on the street" as possible and to make the conference general in nature i.e. main workshops on"Coming Out" to oneself and at work and discussion on past mistakes and future direction of the gay movement but to progress from this we must work with the womens movement and other movement supporting and working in conjunction with them and it is only in this way that we become part of a movement to bring about change. It was felt the Conference workshops should feflect the immediate areas affecting gays such as the media, unemployment, personal liberty and other relevant areas.

CONFERENCE THEME : 'GAYS AS A CAMPAIGNING MOVEMENT'

Sat. morning :

1. 2 seperate, women only and men only, workshops on :-

   "lesbians and the gay movement , sexism etc."

2. mixed workshop with report backs and discussion of the seperat workshops.

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A Womens Right to Choose ?

Affiliation to the Womens Right to Choose Campaign has been causing a lot of controversial debate in recent months. This debate takes place at all levels of Irish society, both within and outside the gay community. A negative reaction to this affiliation might be expected from within the ranks of an organisation like the Anti-Amendment Campaign. This is because that movement contains a lot of influential men who do not want to forfeit their control or power. They uphold the current patriarchial power system, which is to their advantage, and thereby oppress women directly and gay men by implication.

That this debate is also vehiementally carried on within the gay movement is less comprehendable. The whole question of gay rights has a direct parallel with the ideology of the Womens Right to Choose Campaign. Each group is oppressed by the same philosophy and social structure. That is:
1. What's considered the "natural supremacy" of the white heterosexual male above anyone else and the incorporation of this ideal into legislation.
2. The strict impositions of a fixed role on everymember of society on the basis of sex alone.

This principle is one that obviously excludes the gay male right to a lifestyle of his choice. The same principle also oppresses lesbians who are firstly not allowed any sexuality as women; and secondlynot entitled to have lesbian sexuality, because women are soley the sexual domain of heterosexual men. That women are denied the right to any sexuality is fundamental to their total oppression. The Womens Right to Choose Campaign is, therefore, fundamental to the eradication of this oppression.

Aside from this its also argued that nowadays women do have rights and are equal. This is simply not true. The role playing structures and educational systems are still operating on as high a pitch as ever. It is considered a major event if a boy is substituted for a girl in a male dominated work place, even in a childs school book. This again is an area that directly affects gays. There is no reason why we should sit casually by while being fed heterosexual role modles to imitate. Basically the point is that society says you're queer if you are a gay man, a lesbian woman or a woman choosing to control her own fertility.

What seems to be the controversial aspect of affiliation to the Womens Right to Choose Campaign is the "moral question". That is, current perception says that abortion is murder because it prevents the development of a human life. This has been debated (by men) for years and will probably go on being debated. However the simple and overriding answer to this debate is, if there is a "moral" question, if there are philosophical considerations, these can be and should be decided by women themselves.

Having said that it is perhaps worth noting that the arguement is about a potential life. >This same arguement outlaws masturbation and gay sex. These activities were deemed wasteful of lifes' seed , since procreation could never be the result. This philosophy is still upheld in Irish Law and by Catholic teachings.

The time has come for gays to come out of the political closet. Gay liberation is not nor ever has been a single issue. It can only be achieved by redefining a social code which is repressive to us all. The onlu way forward is for oppressed groups to come together in the struggle for liberation. A Right to Choose is something we all deserve.

Bill Foley

Sat. afternoon : 1. short plenary on the general conference theme.

2. series of 3 one hour workshops - open choice themes.

Sat. evening : Social

Sun. morning :

workshop : "gays as a campaigning movement"

GAYS AT WORK

Work dominates our lives and job discrimination is the most serious form of discrimination against us. A British study concluded that there was substantial overt and covert discrimination against gay workers and that this risk applied to all parts of the gay community and to all areas of work to a greater or lesser degree. The problem in Ireland is worse because any form of sexuality is seen as a danger to be controlled and the best way to control people is to threaten their jobs. Gays working in the many areas of employment controlled by the Catholic Church are, given its anti-gay position, particularly vulnerable. The same is true for jobs involving working with young people. The situation for gay people working in the Defense Forces or Gardai is the most serious.

This discrimination can mean not getting a job in the first place, losing promotion or being fired. Now with serious and increasing unemployment, gays, women and other "marginal" groups in the labour force have even less chance of finding and keeping a job as the relative strength of employers increases. Unlike Britain, discrimination in Ireland has rarely been challenged or got widespread publicity. This shows the severity of hetro-sexist pressures on gay people - in the family, at school, at work, through the media and Church etc. - which makes it difficult to develop a positive sense of being gay let alone to fight back. People whose sexuality is not known to colleagues, friends and family will usually feel unable to challenge an employers discrimination and choose instead to move on or even emigrate.

Experience in Britain has shown that existing employment protection legislation does not adequately safeguard gay people. Employment Appeals Tribunals have made decisions against gay people based solely on prejudice. In contrast theNational Association of Local Government Officers have gone on strike and secured the successful reinstatement of a social worked in his job. In other words our interests are best protected by the trade unions and every lesbian and gay man should join and be an active member of a Union.

Earning a living also presents problems because of the strong sense of isolation experienced at work. Concealing ones sexuality means the continous tension of leading a double-life. Sometimes there is the blatant prejudice of of anti-gay jokes and remarks. Even for those who are open about their sexuality the reaction sometimes is "we know you are gay but we prefer not to talk about it".

There is a repressively tolerant attitude which only accepts us as long as we do not disturb hetrosexual complacency.

While the overall position in Ireland is grim, remarkable progress has been made recently in getting the Trade Union movement to expressly support the demand for gay rights. In the Republic since 1981 both the Irish Federation of University Teachers and the Local Government and Public Services Union have overwhelmingly passed gay rights resolutions. The Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance have also passed an anti-discrimination policy in response to a witch-hunt of gays following the Kincora affair. It should be pointed out that the Executives of both I.F.U.T. and N.I.P.S.A. had to be pressurised by the rank-and-file into adopting these policies. According to a National Gay Federation survey the Executives of five other Unions (A.S.T.M.S., U.P.T.C.S., A.H.C.S., A.T.G.W.U.) would support gay rights policies.

The most significant development to date for the overall gay movement is that in 1982 the Irish Congress of Trade Unions overwhelmingly adopted a resolution calling for decriminalisation of homosexual relationships and urging all affiliated Unions to resits attempts to descriminate against gay workers. This is a considerable achievement when we realise that the T.U.C. in England has yet to adopt such a policy. The demands we make as gay workers are now beginning to be recognised as integral to the role of the labour movement in protecting the rights of all workers.

FUTURE WORK

These successes are the base on which we an build and develop. Congress should now be mandated to prepare a comprehensive policy document on discrimination as it affects gay workers in terms of employment, the law, social services, the media, education etc. with recommendations for reforms in these areas. At the same time resolutions concerned with particular aspects of gay appression should be put to the relevant Unions. It should, for example, be the policy of Unions in the health and welfare area to oppose the practice of "treating" homosexuality as a disorder. These motions should be phrased so as to produce action, e.g. instructing the Executive to report back within a specified period. It is also necessary that motions should be put to every Union demanding the removal of anti-gay laws and committing the Union to fight discrimination against gay workers. Any member of a Union can put down a motion at an A.G.M. so all it needs is one person to take the initiative. The critical point to stress in speaking on these motions is the Trade Union principle that all workers are entitled to equal opportunities regardless of sex, race, marital status or sexual orientation.

My experience in proposing a gay rights motion at local branch level was that it got the whole-hearted support of the rank-and-file and Union officers and it is now Union policy. Once a Union has adopted such a policy it will cause all those who have anti-gay prejudices (management as well as workers) to think twice before attempting to victimize a gay person.

Passing motions at annual meetings is valuable but ensuring that the interests of gay workers are not later overlooked requires involvement in decision-making at the grass-roots level. We should take more responsibility within our Unions and stand for election to Branch Committees. A network group should be organised to support these activists, to share information and experience and to co-ordinate activities in different areas. Such a network could not operate in isolation and would have to work closely with other groups such as the Trade Union Womens Forum. One major difficulty is the lack of public awareness of the issues of gay rights. More than half the Unions (including the I.T. & G.W.U.) did not respond to the N.G.F. survey so a basic objective must be to increase the awareness of trade unionists about anti-discrimination. There is little use in relying on the media (except the radical and trade union press) as they maintain a conspiracy of silence on the situation of gay people in Ireland. Our invisibility in the workplace and elsewhere also contributes to the position where anti-gay discrimination remains hidden. The basis then for a campaign in the trade union movement is that each gay person should seriously consider their need and right to live an open life in the workplace and elsewhere. If all the trade unionists who are gay identified with gay rights there would be little danger of the issue being marginalised. Of course it would be grossly irresponsible to underestimate the risks involved for gays working with, for example, young people. Discrimination in these areas will remain until homosexuality is accepted by the decision-makers as a form of sexuality just different to heterosexuality. Given Irelands inability to come to terms with any form of sexuality, other than for procreation and within marriage, this state of enlightenment will not rush upon us. However, especially in white-collar employment where trade unions are strong, our fears can be exaggerated and can be used as a means to control us. Furthermore, while areas suchas teaching present the greatest problems they also offer the greatest advantage in terms of givingyoung gay people a positive image for their sexuality. Eradicating discrimination in these most difficult areas is the objective but the initial groundwork will have to be done by those not vulnerable to victimisation.

To continue earning a living many of us understandably feel that they have to conceal their sexuality. Achieving equal job opportunities will demand the full commitment of the organised labour movement. While not underestimating the deep-rooted nature of anti-gay discrimination, the progress made so far gives us the clearest encouragement to campaign openly as gay people within the trade unions for our rights as workers

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Kieran Rose is on the Branch Committee of the Local Government and Public Services Union in Cork and is a member of the Cork Gay Collective.

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FURTHER INFORMATION

What About Gay Workers. Campaign for Homosexual Equality, 1981 (£1)

Grass Roots: A Campaign Manual for Gay People, Grass Roots Group, 1982 (1.30)

Both of these booklets are invaluable and cheap and should be available in radical bookshops or else from BM, CHE, London WCIV 3XX

There are many gay groups working in different British Trade Unions. See Gay News or else contact Gay Rights At Work Committee, 7, Pickwick Court, London SE9 4SA

The Cork Gay Collective is preparing a handbook on gay rights at work. Support and involvement is needed, contact CORK GAY COLLECTIVE
P.O. BOX 39
CORK.

REVIEWS .... REVIEWS .....

Identity emerged on Dublin newstands at the end of 1981 , rising phoenix-like from the ashes of the NGF's 'In Touch' . The new magazine , which went on sale to the public , proposed to act as ....." a forum in which gay women and men can communicate a sense of our identity ...and work for the building of a gay community defined by gay women and men . " It also promised to give coverage to a wide variety of topics of interest to gays . Certainly , the contents of the first issue were as diverse as the gay community itself ; gay poetry , politics , discos and identies were all there , ensconced in a confident if somewhat dull design .

Literary contributions form a major part of Identity's contents and the sheer volume of original works which have appeared is impressive (and indeed, a healthy balance between original and borrowed material has been a consistent feature of the magazine) Critical standards are high , but may i voice one general compl--aint about the fiction which has appeared to date - too many of the pieces are set in the narrowly-defined context of the pub and disco scene . Th end result can be stifling .
Not so the poetry section , which is marvellously refreshing - - 'Please , can we have some more ?.....'

Cont.

Analysis of gay politics has been a consistent feature of Identity and two articles deserve special mention . 'Friendship as a Life--style' is a marvellous interview with social anthropologist Michel Foucault , which challenges our concepts of age and relat--ionships . In "Inner City Steamer" , a courageous and valuable social mini-study the author challenges a group of young people to re-consider <u>their</u> concepts of gays .

If there is one major criticism to be made of Identity , it is the almost total lack of material of particular interest to lesbian women . The magazine as a whole is decidely male-orient--ated despite its claim that it is "for gay women and men ". Indeed they leave themselves open to a charge of sexism when they give an article on human sexuality the title "Irish Masculinity - a Study " !

Regular political and literary reviews are a vital element in the creation of a spirit of community among gays . With few exceptions we have had to be contented in the past with an alien image of ourselves in literature and the media : as a result we have absorbed a cultural spectrum which for the most part is not only irrelevant but often damaging .As a result our sense of being radically diff--erent from the mainstream of society has been dulled .

Identity can do much to solve this crisis of, well , identity . It has vigorously thrown off the awkward self-consciousness of the first issue and is communicating to us a whole range of perspectives on what being gay means in our society . However, without a radical editorial policy , it may fail to distinguish between those elements of our present identity which are essentially gay and those vicarious and ill-fitting norms of the very enviroment it wishes to supplant. In effect , the voices may be gay , but the words would remain decidely straight . Identity has created that voice - let us now put together a vocabulary that is really our own .

gay collective

WE MEET ON THE FIRST AND THIRD THURSDAY
OF EVERY MONTH .....IN THE TOP FLOOR ,
16 WESTLAND ROW , DUBLIN 2.....8PM
EVERYONE WELCOME.....

INTERLEWD !

'Interlude' ,the first Irish 'lesbian' novel , is a load of sensationalist , offensive , badly written drivel . The kindest thing one can say about it is that the author is a heterosexual woman totally lacking in sexual imagination. Indeed,if I didn't know that Maura Richards actually existed , I'd have assumed that a homophobic man was responsible for this dreadful book .

The novel opens with Martha , a very happily married woman, suddenly leaping on top of a mysterious shop assistent, Sheila , in a changing room at Brown Thomas (a new cruising area for lesbians ?!) . They instantly fall in love and spend the next 140 pages leaping on and off one another . They never seem to make love , rather they keep erupting in frenzies of lust , during which they take it in turns to ..."fling her on her back" , "force her to the floor" "throw her to the ground" , "crush her against the wall" etc. On the single occasion on which they actually made it to a bed ..."Sheila leapt on her with a cry .. rode her , yelling and crying out ...with such fury that the bed rocked up and down the room." They croak , pant , gasp and groan their way through - movies of incredibly violent sexual encounters , all the time .."thrusting grinding , crushing , kneading each others bodies ".

The whole sexual language of the book is enough to make one puke . Different parts of a woman's body are described in the the disembodied way one expects from particularly fucked-up male writers e.g. Sheila's cunt is referred to as a sort of independently minded "furry friend" , which she has to placate during a rare moment of self restraint .

Maura Richards drags in religion , political corruption , morality , feminism and even a final , touching plea for sexual tolerance , in a pathetic effort to give the book a 'message' . However the real reason for her writing, and Ward River Press publishing,this book is quite obvious - they simply hoped it would become a shocking bestseller .

All the lesbians that I know who have managed to plough through 'Interlude' have been torn between hysterical laughter and outraged fury . We can dismiss it as the nonsense we know it , from our own lives , to be . However it obv--iously wouldn't strike all heterosexual readers , especially men , as that . The Evening Herald reviewed it as a deeply sensitive study of one woman's traumatic experience !

This book has the dubious distinction of failing miserably on every level and of monstrously insulting the people it purports to have sympathy with . On no account waste £2 on it . It is a potentially dangerous , incredibly stupid effort , to which the only sane response would be a letter of complaint to the publishers . And you could spare a thought for the unfortunate women of Greenham Common , apparently the next subject Maura Richards intends to 'create' .

M.M.

BOOK REVIEW.
'GAYS AND THE LAW', by PAUL CRANE.
Published by Pluto Press, London, 1982.

Central to Paul Cranes 'Gays and the Law' is an academic or legalistic analysis of the laws affecting lesbians and gay men in Britain today, but, significantly, it goes beyond mere description of the law. Crane questions the very legitimacy of laws which reflect and reinforce popular prejudices about male homosexuality and lesbianism and attempt to place various limitations on our lives as open gays. He looks at the way in which the law affects sexual and emotional development, relationships, leisure, where we work, the custody rights of gay parents, and how it affects civil rights. In presenting his arguments for reform he not alone questions laws which are a reflection of the 'straight' worlds paranoia, but, he also challenges the legitimacy of legislative controls which we as gay men and lesbians might support in the suppression of other gay people. For instance, his presentation and arguments on such areas as, growing up gay, 'cottaging', 'crusing', and paedophilia critically challenge the legal codes which find support among many lesbians and gay men.

In presenting his analysis of the law as a means of regulating homosexual behaviour, and the attempts to secure gay rights through the law, Crane also recognises that the law is neither the only nor even the main source of oppression of gay people. He notes that attitudes which lead to social discrimination, ostracism, violence or even patronising tolerance, do not rely on the courts alone for enforcement. The law is only one and perhaps not even the most effective element in a number of anti-gay institutions. For instance, he notes that although there are no specific laws against lesbians, male society, by granting 'social privileges and responsibility' to women only if they are married, has uniformly punished lesbians without having to recognise their existance. However, he argues that, in disputes about the custody of children and employment, the intervention of legislation has be come increasingly explicit for those who refuse to hide their lesbian identity.

Based on an appreciation that discrimination and antipitathy towards gay men and lesbians does not rely on the law alone for its legitimacy Crane realises that our problems will not end automatically once the law is changed. "This will only come about when the notions of male supremacy that surround conventional hotrosexuality are swept aside." He argues that the need for a change in the social position of gays and lesbians cannot be reduced to a single issue of law reform since the absence of discriminatory laws is meaningless without positive acceptance and fundamental social change. Perhaps it is in this context that we must acknowledge that, "the struggle for gay rights through the British legal system has produced few positive gains". However, Crane argues that, the presence of openly gay men and lesbians, and the struggles around their cases, has and will continue to affect the law which is one source of the stigma that shapes the meaning of 'homosexual' in the publics mind.

Notwithstanding the positive value of 'Gays and the Law' the book has its limitations. Crane himself acknowledges that this book is mostly about the legal position of gay men, "not only because it is written by a gay man but also because it reflects the legal and social obsession with male homosexuality". He also admits that his subject matter is potentially vast...and centered on a legal code specific to Britain. Nonetheless the conclusions he arrives at, against a backdrop of information, case histories and personal experiences, might be a significant starting point for us to look at the legal and social status of lesbians and gay men in Ireland. It might also be of benefit to us in developing an appreciation of the paths towards both legal and social change which would radically improve our present status, and the pitfalls which must be avoided if we are to achieve the radical change which is necessary in Irish society.

Ed.

'Gays and the Law' is available from Books Upstairs, Price £6.35.

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