

MINUTES OF
Lesbian/Gay Activists Meeting
SFX Centre
Dublin 25.2.84.

- Agenda: 1. Introduction
2. Reports Back
3. Campaign for the Rights of Lesbians and Gay Men.

1. The opening session of the meeting was facilitated by Clodagh Boyd of Dublin Gay Collective. DGC called the meeting with the intention of setting up a communications network for gay activists. Also to discuss the Campaign for the rights of Lesbians and Gay Men the work of which has fallen entirely on to DGC. It was felt within DGC that feed back as to the usefulness of the campaign was necessary if the work was to continue. Clodagh then suggested that we start with reports back from all groups represented at the meeting.

2. REPORTS BACK: Dublin Gay Collective report by Christopher Robson.

The CRLGM was set up after the controversial judgement in the Declan Flynn murder case. The suggestion that a campaign be set up was supported by many individuals as well as all lesbian and gay groups. However after the Fairview Protest March interest subsided to the point that the only people attending the meetings were members of Dublin Gay Collective. Work for the campaign carried on under the jurisdiction of DGC and many political, social, civic, and womens groups were contacted about the campaign and given leaflets compiled by DGC for the campaign. A large public meeting was held in Liberty Hall where again the need for the campaign was again stressed and supported by those present. All the work was then set aside with the advent of the Anti Amendment Campaign. DGC became heavily involved in the AAC and undertook educationals on behalf of the CRLGM for Anti Amendment groups and political groups involved in the AAC. This work was closely followed by an attempt to set up a Campaign against the Criminal Justice Bill. We have been attending meetings for this campaign ever since it was set up. DGC activists have also been involved in poster and leafletting for the campaign and have also put in a submission.

Other activities include involvement in the Womens Right TO Choose Campaign, Brenda participated in the RTE Access programme, we are producing a pamphlet/booklet on lesbian and gay oppression, we have contacted the Employment Equality Agency with a view to setting up a meeting and we are meeting with NGF in an attempt to coordinate gay activism in Dublin.

Galway report by Paul O'Dwyer

Paul stressed the isolation felt by gays in Galway. There is a lack of interest by National groups in the Galway Gay community. (Eg The back page of the current issue of "Quare Times" contains a contact list with no reference to Galway. There are two groups in Galway IGRM Galway and Galway Gay Collective both of which are not active. Their sole function seems to be to provide a contact point for local gays. Paul is involved in trying to set up a Gay society at UCG. The biggest venture in Galway at the moment is an attempt to set up a Resource Centre. This will act as a meeting place for social and political activists. There is a large gay input into this venture and when established it will provide a space for gays in Galway to meet and socialise. A great area for concern is the growing level of anti gay violence in the city. Verbal and physical attacks on gays are a frequent occurrence.

Cork report by Annette

There is a Lesbian Collective and a Gay Mens Collective in Cork which is based around the Quay Cooperative. The lesbian collective also have considerable input into the Womens group at the Co-op. Activities include the production of the current issue of "Quare Times" (Spring '84), an attempt to set up an alternative disco to the one already in existence in Cork (IGRM Cork) which is felt to be male dominated. The Quay Co-op provides a very important contact centre for activism in the city. There is a high level of coordination between the Lesbian and the Gay Mens Collectives through the Co-op. Both groups were also heavily involved in the AAC, CACJB, Contraception Action Programme etc.

Keiran Rose added that there is a new sense of energy in Cork. There is a new friendly gay bar opened in the city. The connections with the trade unions is good with Connolly Hall easily available for Gay meetings. Sexually Transmitted Diseases Clinic is a problem with tests being poorly carried out and a high level of anti gay bias. But a meeting is being arranged between the clinics and gay activists. They have also been speaking on gay rights at UCC and other areas where the literature of the CRLGM has been found to be very useful in establishing contacts.

A womens social week end is also being organised in the Co-op on the 13th-15th April.

Kerry report by Mary Begley

Mary pointed to the isolation felt by gays in Kerry. Many gays in the area head to the larger cities at weekends for gay contacts. However there is an attempt to set up a womens group which is undergoing difficulty due to conflict over mens participation.

Belfast report by Sean McGouran

The "Kincora Affair" is still causing problems for gays in Belfast. Local papers continually raise the issue with damaging anti gay articles. There has been a move recently by Health Authorities to fire gay people on the basis of sexuality and also to limit work areas. Cara/Friend, the telephone counselling service received a grant of £3,600 through application to health authorities. Cara/Friend also run a clinic for STD with some contact with a social worker for educational purposes into problem areas. There was also a meeting held recently to discuss abortion which was well attended.

Clodagh added that Marie (a lesbian from Belfast not present) had said that a night for women at the Carpenters was also possible. Greg confirmed this and added that up to now drag shows and other sexist incidents had spoiled social areas for women.

In October last an NUS Gay student Conference was held in Belfast. Much publicity had been given to an anti gay picket but local activists had followed this with a very successful counter protest. Other activities included ; the banning of an anti gay and anti women song from the Prisoners Dependent Fund Social club, demonstration against the anti gay judgement in a murder case by Lord Lowrie. Finally Greg added that as all those who had previously been involved in the Queens College gay soc. had left college there was now no gay soc in Belfast.

Derry report by Greg Jackson

There is very little gay political activity in Derry. Difficluty in finding a pub that will accept gay clientele has meant that gays have little or no public social life. However a pub which had recently banned gays had a successful picket placed on it. There was also a gay disco held in the city last month which proved very successful and plans are under way to hold another.

L.I.L. (Dublin Women) report by Mary Kinnane

LIL are organising a new roon in the womens centre which will be used for socials as well as meetings. Discussion groups are held regularly and a growing area of work is a support group for lesbian mothers. The women have also organised their own entertainment (musical) for a benefit in aid of the forthcoming womens conference. Another session will be held in NGF on March 8th.

UCD Gay Soc. report by Tomas Campbell

The gay soc at UCD has been denied formal recognition by the academic council in November. A campaign against this decision is now under way which is drawing much support and also reactivating the gay soc. A petition is also being organised. A phone service for gay students is being set up in the college. The society hold political meetings every two weeks. Efforts are being made to alter male bias: lesbians are now actively involved in telephone line.

Lobbying for support has also been made to FWUI and IFUT on campus.

National Gay Federation report by Eamon Somers

A meeting between NGF members and activists in Limerick was held today to held set up a local group. Hence there were not as many activists from NGF persent at this meeting. Eamon pointed out that this was the second provincial meeting organised by NGF. NGF have also made a programme for RTE which was shown on 16.2.84. Contact with Euro MP's about gay rights has also been made in the run up to the Euro Elections. Identity an NGF publication may fold due to the individuals involved in its production leaving the editorial board. Other activities include: contact with Dr. Freedman about STD. There is results of a sponsored research project on STD in Gay Men which was carried out two years ago. This will be circulated by NGF. NGF also made a submission on gay rights to New Ireland Forum details of which will also be circulated.

General Discussion:

Discussion on Videos. Keiran suggested a lending library of available videos (owned by NGF) be set up so that local groups could draw from this resourse. Sean proposed that a discussion be scheduled for some future date on the possibility of making a joint video on gay rights/lifestyles.

Discussion on State Services; Gay groups should look into how best to use them. A general suggestion that application for grants by gay groups should be made as a matter of course to local authorities.

3. Campaign for the Rights of Lesbians and Gay Men

Proposed that discussion be held on the following points:

- A) Is there a need/support for the Campaign
- B) If not do we need just a network of contacts
- C) If yes to (a) a suggested programme of work

General Discussion:

Cork, Galway, Belfast, Derry, expressed interest in CRLGM. However NIGRA expressed reservations about law reform and National Basis. It was generally agreed that there was indeed a need for and a willingness to support CRLGM.

It was also agreed that a network of contacts was essential to the workings of CRLGM. A proposal that a newsletter be produced regularly to act as contact and communication between groups was agreed upon. The iniatal news letter should consist of minutes of this meeting and address list to be compiled by and and sent out by DGC. This together with the draft leaflet would act as a discussion document for all local groups. The groups would then respond to this with suggestions in the form of a letter, all of which would be collated by DGC and this would serve as the second issue of the newsletter.

Meetings to be held at two monthly intervals to discuss progress and any new areas of wor. The nextmeeting will be held in Cork in April (13th - 15th) to coincide with the womens social festival.

Galway agreed to consider the possibility of holding a Gay Pride march/conference in June in Galway. Details to be published in issue 2 of newsletter.

Finally melissa proposed that consideration be given by groups for next meeting of the issue of non gay participation in CRLGM.

Dublin Gay Collective.