

~~NATIONAL~~ GAY CONFERENCE - CORK 81

YOUR REF

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G.O.P.O. BOX 39

CORK CITY

IRELAND

Press Information

Venue Connolly Hall, Cork City.

Dates 15th, 16th & 17th May, 1981

Contacts Oliver Cogan. Tel 20360 Office Hours.
Tony O'Regan 811988 "

Conference Office (From 27th April) Tel 505394 5.00pm-7.00pm

Connolly Hall Tel 503183 (15th - 17th May)

Structure of Organising Committee

The gay movement in Ireland has made considerable progress over the last decade, since the first initiatives were taken to improve the lifestyle of gay people. Major organisations are actively campaigning for legal reform, and in addition to providing counselling and social facilities for the gay community, in devising an educational programme they are hoping to correct the varied misconceptions about homosexuality and consequently to alleviate prejudice. To fulfill an accepted need for a general assessment of our progress to date and to consider new initiatives for the future, a group of individual gay activists, based in Cork, have joined together, and with the enthusiastic support of the various organisations, this conference is being mounted.

List of Speakers includes

Delegate from the Irish Gay Rights Movement.

Delegate from the National Gay Federation.

Sean McGowen - Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association.

Nell McCafferty - Writer and Journalist.

Barry Prothero - National Council for Civil Liberties England.

Michael J. Johnson - Gay Christian Movement, England.

• Harry Cohen &

Mike Jarret - Campaign for Homosexual Equality, England.

Kathryn O'Driscoll - GEMMA (Handicapped Lesbians) England.

Keith Sylvester - Friends and Gays Housing Group.

JOHN MCKAY - GAYS AT WORK COMMITTEE

Issues

1. Since the central unresolved issue is still the question of legal discrimination, and in the light of the European Commissions decision denouncing these laws in Northern Ireland, the Conference will develop the following enquiry ;

What is the attitude to law reform of

- A. the major political parties.
- B. individual politicians.
- C. the Catholic Church.
- D. Trade Union organisations and associations.

In the light of the recent High Court judgement we would hope to break through the current conspiracy of silence by ensuring that the law reform issue becomes a matter of political debate before the General Election.

Did you know that out of a population of three and a half million people, at least 5% according to conservative statistical evidence, are gay. This means that, numerically, 165,000 males and females need to be represented as the largest minority in this country.

2. Speaking to and for gay women, Nell McCafferty and Kathy O'Driscoll and representatives of the Lesbian Movement will facilitate a series of workshops exploring and advancing situations for gay women in this country.
3. Ireland is a predominantly Christian country and many gay people find extreme difficulty reconciling Christian practice with the traditional Church teaching on Homosexuality. A delegate from the Gay Christian Movement will talk to the assembly and direct the Workshop.
4. Homosexuality and the Medical Profession . Did you know that until quite recently has been regarded as an illness, but that the American Medical Association has struck it from its register of illnesses. Did you know that, despite this decision, in some parts of Ireland psychiatrists are still administering aversion therapy? There will be a Workshop to discuss this issue of vital social concern.
5. Other Workshops will include discussions on;
 - A. The problems of "coming out" in a straight society.
 - B. The difficulties facing gay people at work and in securing housing facilities.
 - C. The married gay, the gay experience and a re-evaluation of education systems.

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In addition to the serious debate and discussion, a really exciting event will take place on the Saturday evening at Connolly Hall when a recently reformed "Gay Sweatshop" under their new name "New Heart" will launch a brand new theatre revue production on the first leg of their coming tour. This together with a gala supper social where everyone is welcome, on producing a previously purchased ticket, should set the scene for a really lively evening.

Needless to say the theme of the Conference "Gays in the Eighties, - which way forward", will be supported by a display of visual materials and literature throughout the weekend and there will be some cinema on the opening night at Connolly Hall. In addition, a group of people will operate creche facilities throughout the weekend for the benefit of needy parent(s).

Admission to the Conference will be restricted to those who have applied to the Organising Committee, at P.O. Box 39, Cork City. The Registration Fee is £5.00 with concessions for all non-earners.