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TOWARDS A PROGRAMMATIC NATIONAL ORIENTATION IN THE GAY LIBERATION MOVEMENT

by Jon Hillson, Denver Branch

The following ideas represent some initial and unfinished thinking on a national strategy for intervention in the gay liberation movement around a series of democratic demands. Involved in the presentation of these demands for action is the necessity for us, *where possible,* to construct broad united front coalitions around single issues where and when these arise, and similarly to construct gay liberation *organizations.* Where healthy organizations of these types already exist, we should enter them. Central areas for the construction of both forms are the campus, where the radicalization has its deepest roots, where gay organizations exist, where the social outlook is most progressive. At the same time the campus base offers the prerequisites for reaching out in citywide action coalitions and organizations where possible, involving elements of the nonstudent gay population ready for action. Our initial acitivity in these areas, coupled with gay work in the antiwar and abortion law repeal movements in the form of contingents, the work of our electoral campaigns, can form the practical basis for the discussion of the possibilities of helping to organize a national gay coalition around a specific demand(s) and/or a national gay liberation organization.

* * *

FOR THE DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS OF THE HOMOSEXUAL POPULATION

Abolish all laws regulating sexual activity between consenting persons (no age limitations)

For an end to all discrimination against gays in housing and employment

For the right of gays to marry and receive the legal benefits granted to heterosexual couples; for the right of adoption by gay couples or individuals

End the victimization of gays in the schools; for the right of gays to organize and be active in the high schools and colleges; for their right to funding, use of facilities, etc.

Abolish all impersonation laws

For the right of gays to be employed in civil service

For the right to enlistment and equal treatment in the armed forces; for the right to organize in the armed forces

End police harassment of gay establishments (for the right of free association)

End the treatment of gays as diseased; stop the shock and sexual reorientation treatments and institutional segregation of gays in the prisons; for the right to organize in the prisons

End sex-role stereotyping in education; for an end to anti-gay sex education; stop the portrayal of gays as sick in psychology and sociology courses in the high schools and colleges; read gays back into history; for courses controlled by gay organizations in the high schools and colleges on the truth about homosexuality, on gays in history, literature, etc.

For the right to control our own bodies; repeal all abortion laws, no forced sterilization, abolish all reactionary contraception laws; free abortion on demand

Release all gays in asylums; for an end to psychiatric butchery; stop the involuntary committment of gays to asylums

Stop the sexist war; US out of Southeast Asia now

For an independent gay movement; no support to the candidates of the twin parties of sexism; for the right of lesbians to organize separately and independently; for the right of Chicanos, Blacks and other oppressed nationalities to form separate groups

* * *

These demands vary in their ability to motivate and be motivated in struggle. Certain of them, however—involving the ending of police harassment, the ending of discrimination in jobs, the abolition of laws prohibiting homosexual activity—are prominent *now* in activity. These three could be the basis for coalition work, as well as the drafting of a gay equal rights amendment, around which struggle could be organized.

The party's intervention can be completed through an increased coverage in *The Militant,* the publication of articles, including debates on sexuality, strategy, etc., in the *International Socialist Review* and involving gay comrades in our electoral work as gay candidates. Finally, the determination of our intervention should be covered in our press as a major event.

The Present Period

The political outline just presented, while clearly unfinished, in my opinion represents a general goal which the party can and should accomplish. That accomplishment, however, should be realized by an approach fundamentally geared to it.

While Comrade Sheppard's tactical and organizational suggestions are, in my opinion, incomplete, I believe they could be expanded and appended to form a temporary guideline and orientation for serious political work in the gay movement, leading up to a decision to be reached at the party convention in 1973.

That is, previous to that convention, with a worked-out series of demands—the nucleus of a program—the appointment of a gay work director to aid in the coordination of branch activities—leaving the implementation of those demands to the branch, the party could have a firm, albeit temporary, policy the activity around which would facilitate the fullest literary, partywide and branch preconvention discussion, leading to the selection of delegates around a resolution(s) for our activity.

This intermediate step should also include sufficient mo-

tivation to inhibit as much as possible the problems that could occur without the affirmation by the party's national leadership of the correctness, importance and seriousness involved in gay liberation work.

These developments leading to a fully worked out, programmatic, national intervention in the gay liberation movement can only add to the growth of experience and hardening of comrades as the whole class struggle unfolds. The very "uniqueness" of this entire period in the death throes of property society is nothing more than the inevitable confirmation of the core of the predictions and analyses incorporated in the historical outlook and activity of Marxism.

The sinking of the party's roots into the gay liberation movement, its understanding of the sexual revolution, are then precedent-shattering only in the sense that the radicalization in which we are involved asks questions new to the ear, but the sound of which the science of Marxism is objectively attuned to, and is ready to provide answers for in action for the overthrow of the class which forces their being asked and demands they remain unanswered.

July 28, 1972

PARTY BUILDING AND GAY STRUGGLES

by Fred Feldman, Brooklyn Branch,
New York Local

I think a note is entering the gay movement discussion that could divert the discussion from its purpose—the development of a party-building approach to the movement. Some comrades feel that, in order to develop a line, the party must adopt a position on the "nature" of human sexuality and on the ultimate character of sexual behavior in the communist future. I don't think the party *can* adopt a position on either point nor do I think any opinions comrades may have about them lead logically to any tactical conclusions for the party now.

Since human sexuality, because it is *human* sexuality, is hopelessly intertwined in all societies with social and cultural factors, a party discussion of what types of sexual behavior are "natural" or "unnatural" is abstract and can lead to no important political conclusions. I don't challenge the value of scientific investigation in this field, but this is still in its infancy and incomplete.

The "ultimate" character of human sexuality in a communist society is a speculative question. There are many possible permutations. No decision that the party makes now will be regarded as binding by the inhabitants of that society. We can be confident of two things: (1) the irrational repression of sexuality and the compulsory restrictions that we experience will be things of the past; and (2) they will know a lot more about it than we do.

It is quite possible that those comrades who believe that some form of bisexuality will predominate will be proven correct. By the time all the returns are in, however, we who must build a party and make a revolution in the here and now will have been dead for a long time.

A discussion focusing on these topics will readily fall into metaphysics and subjectivism without increasing the understanding in our cadre of the living movement for gay liberation.

An additional point, which applies primarily to the contribution of Sudie and Geb: In all the movements of the radicalization we have met with utopian tendencies which believe that there is a lifestyle, mode of dress, culture, sexual orientation, or living arrangement that is an "alternative" to the alienation of class society. This has always proven to be a pipedream.

All personal relationships in this society are conservative, that is, they represent necessary adjustments and adaptations to life in a rotten society. There is no aspect of personal life in class society which can be yanked out of its social context and projected into the future as an image of communist humanity.

It follows that there is nothing inherently "progressive" about gayness, or any other sexual orientation. It is the gay liberation *movement* that is progressive, the struggle of many gay people against the concrete, material oppression which they meet at the hands of capitalist society. This movement should be the topic of discussion and not the "nature" of sex or how people will enjoy themselves under communism.

At this point, the gay movement appears to be a democratic struggle, challenging antigay laws, police repression, discrimination, and institutionalized slander against gays as human beings. It does not directly challenge capitalist property relations or the continuance of the capitalist state as such. It is not, in my opinion, a movement for generalized sexual freedom. It is not a movement to abolish the family or restructure sex roles, al-

though it deepens doubts about these in the minds of participants and observers. It is a movement for full democratic rights for gay people. Although limited in size now, we should not rule out the possibility that many more gays will join it or that nongays may eventually rally to it because of its democratic appeal.

This movement is an authentic component of the radicalization and the overall class struggle. Occurring as it does during the epoch of imperialist decay when long-term reformist solutions are impossible, it represents part of the forces gathering for the socialist revolution.

Comrade Nat Weinstein's article in Discussion Bulletin Vol. 30, No. 4, seems to oppose intervention in the gay movement on the ground that gays don't experience super-exploitation as workers. He also appears to feel that while it is important to explain to workers the importance of women's, Black, and Chicano liberation, it is not particularly important for workers to support the gay struggle or for the party to make a major point of defending it. Comrade Weinstein supports the gay movement but believes that the best party-building approach is not to pay much attention to it. I am interpreting Comrade Weinstein here and he may disagree with my interpretation.

I believe that Comrade Weinstein is in danger of falling into an economist error. I do not believe that active support of democratic struggles should be based on the degree of exploitation or on the importance for labor struggles of working-class unity with the oppressed group.

I prefer Lenin's approach in *What Is To Be Done*? He writes: "What does political education mean? Is it sufficient to confine oneself to the propaganda of working-class hostility to autocracy? Of course not. It is not enough to *explain* to the workers that they are politically oppressed (any more than it was to explain to them that their interests were antagonistic to the interests of the employers). Advantage must be taken of every concrete example of this oppression for the purpose of agitation. . . . And inasmuch as *political* oppression affects all sorts of classes in society, inasmuch as it manifests itself in various spheres of life and activity, in industrial life, in civil life, in personal and family life, in religious life, scientific life, etc., is it not evident that *we shall not be fulfilling our task* of developing the political consciousness of the workers if *we do not undertake* the organisation of the *political exposure of the autocracy in all its aspects*?" (italics in original)

I think Lenin's words represent a good guideline for party propaganda. It is important to remember the historic role of the party and the class as leader of the decisive struggle that will liberate *all* the oppressed from the fetters of capitalism.

In my opinion, the party press, campaigns, and forums should publicize our defense of gay struggles regardless of the tactical decision made about whether to deploy our forces in this movement.

The decision to deploy forces in a given arena of the class struggle is not determined by the decision that a given movement is progressive, significant, sizable, or contains some potential recruits. These are all considerations. The decision is a tactical one that flows from a strategic approach.

We must determine where our small forces should be concentrated in order most rapidly to increase our size, influence, and the general growth of the radicalization. There are many movements to which we relate through our propaganda institutions, with occasional assignments of small forces for specific events or struggles. These include the Irish movement, Asian movement, Native-American movement, welfare rights movement, marijuana repeal, and the ecology movement. Trade-union work, which is in a special category, also involves small numbers of our cadre. Many others can be named and many more will spring up between now and the revolution.

Comrade Sheppard's proposal does not therefore put gay liberation in a special second-class category, nor does his proposal indicate that the leadership has a secret view of the gay struggle different from that expressed in the 1971 Political Resolution. Comrade Sheppard's proposal allows us to evaluate specific local experiences and will enable us to rapidly shift our orientation should that prove desirable from a party-building viewpoint.

In general, I agree with the party's present distribution of forces. I believe our growth and social impact are greatest if members are concentrated in building party institutions and the antiwar, Chicano, Black, and women's movements.

Branches should be able to participate in specific struggles either in the party's name or through gay groups, in a manner consistent with our priorities. Reports to and collaboration with our national leadership should continue in this area as in others. Party propaganda institutions should be the foremost vehicle for putting forward the party's line in support of this movement.

It is these questions—the gains to be made by adoption of different tactical approaches, how best to build the party, how best to deploy our forces for maximum overall impact—that the gay discussion needs to center on if the party is to emerge with a clear conception of its course.

August 5, 1972

SOME COMMENTS ON GAY LIBERATION

by Wesley Weinhold, Seattle Branch

The understandable enthusiasm of comrades to undertake activity in a new area of struggle must not cause us to lose sight of the scientific nature of our analysis. We must take a view of work in the gay liberation movement which takes into account the amount of work our cadres already must perform in the antiwar struggle, the women's struggle and the struggles of oppressed nationalities, all of which take precedence in terms of impact and challenge to capitalism.

Gays do not form a social layer. The special oppression that gay people suffer has no relation to any particular economic or social role gay people fill, except that of "horrible example." Gays exist in all sectors of society and, unless they choose to make themselves known, cannot be separated from those sectors. The fight of gays against their oppression is part of the fight that all oppressed groups have begun in this period of radicalization. Because gays can pass in appearance in the dominant anti-gay society, the gay movement has a weakness other movements do not have, i.e., its members can disappear and even rid themselves of their economic oppression.

We are not out to proscribe what "free sexual behavior" should be. It is not for us, raised in this sexually restrictive society, to determine what sexual behaviors people in a post-revolutionary society will find satisfying. While we may speculate on the form of this coming society, we must also realize that we have all been warped and prejudiced. Certainly there are some forms of sexual interaction, such as rape and sadism, which we all believe will disappear in a free society. There may be other forms which future people will also find less than satisfactory. We cannot prejudge.

I mention this because many comrades seem to look for a large increase in the proportions of their particular form of sex behavior. Heterosexuals such as Reich looked for increased heterosexual monogamy. Homosexuals often look for more homosexual practice, backing up their contentions with examples drawn from the animal world. How applicable animal studies are to human behavior is questionable, because animals differ sexually from humans in two important characteristics: animals' sexual response capacity varies greatly in a cyclic fashion while humans' sexual response capacity is fairly constant; humans' sexual response is much more influenced by the imagination and thus by learned behavior.

However, for what it is worth, animal studies do not support either the heterosexual monogamy or the homosexual behavior theory. While sexual advances and sometimes sexual contact may occur between two males or two females, they will occur frequently only in the absence of the other sex.

Among those species that form pairing relationships, two animals of the same sex may form a pair and even perform courtship rituals with each other, but generally even these homosexual pairs turn to fellow animals of the opposite sex for actual copulatory activity. In the presence of the opposite sex, therefore, the sexual orientation of any animal is almost exclusively heterosexual. In the absence of the opposite sex, homosexual behavior is preferred to abstinence of cross-species eroticism. In the absence of any member of the same species, an animal in heat will seek out almost anything for sexual relief.

There are other nuances of animal behavior that might seem to be relevant to the present discussion, such as the practice among baboons of males demonstrating their subordination to the chief male by allowing him to copulate with them from behind (this is not a form of showing contempt by the chief male, incidentally, but is offered by the lesser males to prevent his attacking them), but I believe that the projection of animal behavior onto human behavior is of limited validity.

My comments above are based on fifteen years of observation of sexual activity in cows, dogs, cats and geese in a farm environment, as well as extensive reading in animal behavior. The only projection I would be willing to make from this data is that people will probably generally prefer heterosexual contacts, but will be open to homosexual activity, especially if nothing else is available.

Most contributions so far have linked the prejudice against homosexuality to the rise of the patriarchal family. This is over-hasty reasoning. Greece and Rome, for example, in their pagan days were not only tolerant of homosexuality, but lauded and encouraged love affairs between men. Male homosexuality, at least, was acclaimed because it permitted a man to get his sexual pleasure from an equal (another man) rather than from an inferior (a woman). If these represent merely remnants that not only degraded women, but lasted over 1000 years, as long, in fact, as consistent oppression of homosexuals has been a feature of Western life since.

The patriarchal family itself does not require the suppression of sexual impulses on the part of the patriarch. Indeed, especially in small organized societies such as the Greek cities, homosexual contacts between patriarchs could form a bond for alliance in competing with other patriarchates for land, slaves, cattle, etc. Certainly, powerful men in many forms of society, from Alexander the Great to Hitler, have used their power to make sexual liaisons of every type. The patriarchal family requires only that the women responsible for bearing the patriarch's heirs be prevented from intercourse with any other man.

The rise of homosexual oppression seems much more closely linked to the rise of the feudal system than to the great theocracies and slave societies that preceeded feudalism. Ideologically, it is linked to the general repression of sexual pleasures and the rise to dominance of the Catholic Church.

An explanation at this point is mostly speculative, but I would like to suggest that the repression against homosexuality was motivated by the necessity for the Church to have large bodies of fanatically dedicated men to control the Holy Roman Empire. With the fragmentation of secular authority and the loss of large, centrally directed mercenary armies due to the cultivation of the European frontier (which gave mercenaries the chance to settle and live instead of depending on supplies and salary from the agricultural areas of the Mediterranean), only the religious authority remained as a centralizing force. The establish-

ing of unisexual and ideologically committed societies in monasteries and cloisters gave the Church the large bodies of dedicated people it needed to exercise its authority. The restrictions on homosexuality forced the monks to sublimate their sexual energies (although not always) into expanding the influence of the Church and exercising power. These collections of men and women also became the central repositories of cultural and technological knowledge and formed the most efficient communications network in feudal times.

From this point of view, homosexual oppression under capitalism appears as an ideological remnant taken over and used by capitalism in order to buttress its dominance. Possibly, as part of the general sexual repression, it serves another purpose, that of causing sexual energies to be sublimated in the individual quest for dominance and of using the resulting sexual tensions to set people against one another. The real diabolic nature of this tactic becomes apparent when we see that the sexual attractions for each other which should be a bases for coming together are twisted into a means of separating us.

As in any democratic struggle, we must be in the front ranks in the struggle for gay liberation. We should not preclude involvement in any area of struggle. However, the gay movement is not in the center of the struggle for socialism, but is simply part of the larger struggle against sexist oppression led by the women's movement. Tactically, this means that in our allocation of limited resources and cadre, our ability to take major organizational responsibilities in the gay movement is restricted. Our main orientation must be to carry out propaganda work against the oppression of gays and to offer aid and encouragement to any organization of gays fighting against repression. If the gay liberation movement were to develop a national focus and a national organization, we should be prepared to take a stronger organizational role, since the level of a struggle is also important to our orientation to that struggle. We do not have the resources to initiate such a focus and organization nor are we likely to get much response if we were to try. Until then, our campaign and *The Militant* should by the main focuses for our national activity in the gay movement. Other activities should be decided by the branches as situations arise.

August 4, 1972

MORE THOUGHTS ON THE GAY LIBERATION MOVEMENT

by Eileen Gersh, Philadelphia Branch

Articles by Sheppard, Laurtisen and two Yellow Springs gay groups, published recently as Discussion Bulletin Vol. 30, No. 1, approach the gay liberation movement from different angles and cover different ground. Sheppard briefly compares and contrasts the prejudice against homosexuals with that against Blacks, and dwells on its relationship to traditional sexual morality and the nuclear family. Lauritsen develops this latter concept considering the homosexual as a nonconformist. These articles clearly establish a relationship between the gay movement and the women's movement. This is not a criticism of them, but an attempt to extend the discussion of how the gay liberation movement relations to other parts of the movement. I would like to explore two other relationships: that of the prisoners' revolt and that of the youth movement.

Before going further, however, I want to make clear my agreement with Lauritsen that there is a whole range of normality of sexual expression. Because most of it falls outside of the norm acceptable to capitalist society, it is threfore labeled "deviant." The Gay Revolutionaries of Yellow Springs hit the nail on the head when they say: "To perpetuate this system [the nuclear family and the reserve female work force] capitalism forces people into sex roles. Gay people do not fit into these roles." When I refer to homosexuals, or others, as "deviants," therefore, I am using, but not accepting, the designation given them by capitalist society.

The Prisoners' Movement

The "crimes" committed by the prison population fall largely into two groups: crimes against property and

deviations from society's accepted norms. People who cannot control their violent feelings, people who cop out from alienated lives (alcoholics and drug addicts), people who deviate from sexual norms, *and also political prisoners,* have all failed, in one way or another, to conform to the standards set by capitalist society. Thus the law is used not only to protect gross inequalities of private property, but also to deter nonconformists. An important point to be aware of is that free-thinking and deviant behavior in almost any area, even when it has no explicit revolutionary content, is a threat to the *status quo.* In the first place, the individual who sees through one of the myths propagated throughout society is liable to see through others. No example of this is more striking than that of the French writer Genet, a homosexual with a widely radical outlook. In the second place, if one type of deviation becomes acceptable to society, this can automatically change attitudes in other areas. For instance, when two Black psychiatrists declare that Black paranoia is a normal response to a racist society, and not the fantasy of a sick mind (Green and Cobbs, *Black Rage,* Bantam Books, Inc.), the way is opened for more Blacks to fight racism instead of accommodating to it. If society accepted prostitution for what it is, instead of seeing the prostitute as a deviant, there would be questioning of the adequacy of the institutions of marriage and the family, and more people would become aware that women, like Blacks, are forced into the most degrading kinds of work. Likewise, acceptance of homosexuality as a normal mode of behavior would undermine the popular conception of sex roles and raise further questions about the nuclear family and the rights of women.

During the period of the breakdown of capitalism, the urge to maintain conformity and penalize every kind of deviation is increasingly strong. There is witch-hunting and red-baiting. Universities tend to weed out radical intellectuals and reduce students and faculty to a pattern of conforming mediocrity. There are injunctions against an increasing range of actions. "Deviants" are jailed. The only way to stop this is by organized opposition. The gay liberation movement, the first organized stand taken by deviants other than political dissenters, symbolizes the general right to think and act independently so long as one does not thereby oppress others. The growth and radicalization of the gay liberation movement can serve to increase the solidarity between prisoners and those outside and to raise the consciousness and encourage further organization on the part of those in prison, for many of whom homosexuality is a part of their experience.

The Youth Movement

Today's youth is characterized by "the identity crisis," by the need to establish an individuality and be recognized as a person. As we know, this arises because youth —even middle-class college youth—find themselves going into jobs in which their initiative and creativity are not used and in which they are merely cogs in a machine. Even in school and college, "education" becomes increasingly a process of going through the mill. The hippie syndrome sprang in part from this alienated condition. The variety of haircuts, dress and ornament of hippie youth are part of an attempt to establish individual lifestyles as an antidote to alienation and dehumanization. While we know that these are superficial criteria (in Vietnam and China, people dress very much alike, yet doubtless retain their individuality), it must be admitted that the ingredients that go to make up a "life-style" constitute an important prop to the self-esteem of people who are treated as ciphers. Besides, the adoption of long hair and decorative dress by men, of slacks and simple hairstyles by women, and of the trend towards "unisex," are not only a small part of life-style, but also an implicit acknowledgment of the artificiality of the sex roles prescribed by society. Homosexuality is not only a more definite renunciation of those roles, but also an affirmation of a life-style. So, in supporting the gay liberation movement we are supporting an important tendency among youth and helping to make explicit and conscious the challenge to the roles, both sexual and economic, that capitalist society forces young people to fit into. It is important in this connection that some of the best organized and most thoughtful and radical gay groups are on college campuses.

Conclusions

Our reaction to the gay liberation movement and the extent of our support should depend, on the one hand, on our own resources, and at the same time on an evaluation of the following factors:

(a) the numerical strength of the gay liberation movement;

(b) its composition;

(c) its objective potentialities for radicalization;

(d) other factors such as its subjective stage of development and its relationship to other movements.

(A) In regard to numbers an estimate is difficult. It is certain that they exceed the present turnout considerably, because many gays have not yet "come out of the closet," and many who have do not march, just as many people who are against the war do not march. The movement has not yet peaked.

(B) Like the feminist movement, the gay liberation movement cuts across classes and includes all ages, minorities, etc., though young people predominate and the ruling class is not conspicuously represented!

(C) The current democratic and immediate demands of the gay liberation movement may be met in this society (in Great Britain the law permits homosexual relations between consenting adults). It is difficult to see what further demands the movement could make, *specifically for gays,* which really challenge the capitalist system.

(D) Lauritsen refers to the radical wing of the GLM, but it is only radical insofar as it sees beyond interests which are of strict concern to homosexuals to the relationships elaborated here and in other contributions to this discussion. Gay groups obviously do not go to Cuba because they are gay, but because they see socialism as fulfilling other needs shared with other sectors of the movement. Thus the radicalization of the gay liberation movement depends on increasing numbers of them seeing these relationships.

I think that we should support the gay liberation movement wherever this is feasible—that is, provided this does not involve us in building strictly gay liberation movement events when we are under pressure to petition, to build other mass actions, and so forth. In conjunction with our support, however, we must continually present

a perspective that relates the gay liberation movement to other sectors of the movement and leads to radical transitional demands. To summarize this perspective:

1) Capitalism establishes norms and institutions, such as sex roles and the nuclear family, which it uses to perpetuate the system of inherited wealth, the subordination of women, the persecution of gay people, the further degradation of Blacks and the fragmentation of the exploited working class.

2) Capitalism is a restrictive system which penalizes deviation from its norms and institutions, through the agency of the law, the prison system and the process of myth- and prejudice-building which is a function of the educational system and mass media.

3) Under capitalism, the range of permissible life-styles allows virtually no escape from the alienation and depersonalization of the labor/welfare system. Only socialism (a genuine people's democracy, not a bureaucracy) can provide a milieu in which a person's life-style can include the whole of his or her activities, in which one's work as well as one's leisure becomes an integral part of a fully developed personality.

It is only if gays adopt this perspective that they can move to more radical demands in conjunction with other groups with whom they recognize shared interests—with women, youth, prisoners, workers. In the period ahead we should continue to evaluate the factors mentioned above and determine our relationship to the gay liberation movement flexibly on this basis.

August 11, 1972

CONCERNING THE GAY LIBERATION MOVEMENT AND BARRY SHEPPARD'S PROPOSED ORIENTATION TO IT

by Roland Sheppard, San Francisco Branch

As socialists, we stand opposed to all forms of oppression which exist under capitalism. As principled revolutionists, we support the democratic rights and the struggle for the extension of the rights due all from the capitalist revolution. This, as far as I am concerned, is the starting point for discussion on gay liberation.

I agree with Comrade Barry Sheppard that, unlike workers, oppressed nationalities, and women, gays are not oppressed because of the social role they play in society—Barry Sheppard correctly states that gay people play no special social role.

The *special social roles* played by oppressed nationalities and women are the basis for the divisions within the working class on these questions. As the struggle unfolds and deepens, with the proper leadership of the party, these prejudices can and will be overcome because of the economic and political force of these special roles. Otherwise the unity of the class to the degree *necessary* for a successful revolution will not be achieved. It is, therefore, *necessary* that the party take these prejudices of the class head on and with absolutely no compromise. Any independent movement of these special forces within the class lays the basis for a more rapid development of this unity and our ability to educate the class on these questions. We can clearly show to the class that it *cannot win* unless it subordinates these prejudices, which emanate from capitalist society, to the general overall needs of the class.

With the prejudices against gays, since they play no special social role, there is *no basis* to convince the class that it *cannot win* unless it takes these prejudices head on. No special role means that there is no special obstacle requiring a subordination by the class of these prejudices.

The question, at the present time, is whether to actively intervene to take these prejudices head on. It must never be forgotton that we are a very small propaganda group-party with no mass base and isolated from the class in general. I have not yet seen anything written which would demonstrate that we would not be further isolated from the class if we take up this struggle, or that we would not have any needless barriers to the party when the class starts to radicalize. To me, this is a very important question, for it deals with our ability to compete with our opponents for the leadership of the class, and to effectively intervene at the moment when openings appear within the class.

Since there is no clarity within the party leadership and the party itself on the question of gay liberation or on the questions I've raised, the order of priorities of the party on this question is obscure. To leave this question to the individual branches to decide, as suggested by Comrade Barry Sheppard is indefensible. It sets an orientation as if we were a federation of branches with a possibility of a multiplicity of approaches to this question, if not in theory then in deeds, which are not guided by any orientation of the party as a whole. It is up to the national leadership to provide the leadership on this question; to set the guidelines nationally for the party; and to begin by writing a political explanation of where they stand on this question.

August 21, 1972

A CLARIFICATION

by Lee Smith, Upper West Side Branch,
New York Local

Conversations with a number of comrades at the Socialist Activists and Educational Conference have convinced me that the "Comment on Comrade Nat Weinstein's Contribution" I submitted to the discussion July 28 was too cryptic. This article will as briefly as possible attempt to clarify the points I tried (and evidently failed) to make in the earlier article.

On Weinstein

My earlier article was in no way intended as an endorsement of Comrade Weinstein's views on gay oppression and the potential of the gay movement. His views on these questions I believe to be absolutely wrong. My purpose, however, was not to answer his errors. I believe they must be answered, but I am confident they will be answered.

At the same time, as wrong as his answers are, Comrade Weinstein addressed himself to the right questions. And he called on the party to clear up the confusion revealed by the discussion so far.

On The Discussion

Without singling out specific articles, the character of most of the discussion so far has been appalling. It has generally approached the issue in a highly subjective fashion. Enormous emphasis has been placed on an issue that cannot be settled by the party, and, in my opinion, does not belong before the party in this discussion: that is, the issue of whether or not homosexuality is a natural and normal part of human sexuality.

Very little has appeared so far about the dynamic and direction of the gay liberation movement—around what demands does an action campaign seem likely to develop that will have a significant impact on the class struggle. (My own opinion is that when the movement's demands crystallize to the point where we can discern generalized movement toward an action campaign of national proportions, those demands will be for full civil and human rights, specifically for the repeal of all anti-gay laws.)

Very little attention has been given to the question of the resources the party has available to commit in an intervention, an important factor in weighing the gay movement's current stage of development, and what is required of the party at this stage.

Without making excuses for anyone who has written, since most comrades who have made contributions presumably stand by them, a share of the responsibility for the character of the discussion so far must rest with the national leadership. Comrades Sheppard and Weinstein are the only two National Committee members to have had any articles appear in the discussion so far.

Tremendous demands are placed on the party's national leadership's time and energy by responsibilities other than participation in the literary discussion. This is no doubt the reason for the lack of participation by national leaders in the discussion. Nevertheless, the discussion has unquestionably suffered from the lack of contributions by comrades in the leadership that could have helped orient the discussion in a more productive direction.

On The Question "Is Gay Good?"

Many of the comrades who have written so far argue that the party must take the position that gay is good. The slogan is not an extremely precise one, and some of those who have written have given it a content that makes it something impossible for the party to take a line on. The nature of human sexuality is a subject on which science is far from having said the last word. What constitutes a normal, healthy human sexuality is something we cannot know. It is certainly nothing to be found in this society among either heterosexuals or homosexuals. Comrades can certainly have opinions on such questions, but it would be absolutely wrong to adopt a line on a scientific question to which the answer is not known and which cannot be decided by vote.

I believe it is an error for comrades to maintain that without taking a position on whether homosexuality is a natural and normal part of human sexuality we cannot effectively participate in the gay movement. If that were true, it would say something about the gay movement. The main thrust of the movement will be, I think, against discrimination—against laws and the selective enforcement of laws, against forced therapy that often amounts to plain torture and is meted out to people who do not seek to be treated but have treatment thrust upon them by the state. It is also likely, of course, that struggles will develop around the teaching and preaching of theories that homosexuality is a sickness. But in order to support such a struggle, the party need not have a line on what is the origin of homosexuality or what sexuality will be like in a socialist society. We can oppose the idiotic notion that such a thing as healthy sexuality exists in a sex-repressive class society simply on the basis that all sexuality in class society is distorted. Opposing reactionary theories need not depend on putting forward any complete theory of our own.

On The Party's Orientation

I believe the gay movement will develop into an important and potentially massive campaign to get rid of anti-gay laws and other forms of anti-gay discrimination. However, I am not so confident of this that I would advocate the adoption of a line around which we could intervene based on what is still largely a speculation. To say that this will be the course of the movement's development is at this time too abstract to work out a line anyway. A line of intervention will have to be based on concrete developments that are not yet in the offing.

In the meantime, at the current stage of the movement's

development, which is uneven nationally, the party's current position allows participation to the extent the local situation warrants it and branch resources make it realistic. I believe most branches have failed to take maximum advantage of the available opportunities in the period since the last party convention because of widespread confusion and uncertainty in the party as a whole about what limits are placed on our participation in local struggles, conferences, and defense cases. This has not had any disastrous consequences, but it has caused dissatisfaction and it has meant some missed opportunities. If the discussion can clear up the confusion and the uncertainty, I think most comrades will agree that continuing the party's present course is what should be done at this time. If it appears to be necessary to extend the discussion beyond September 1 to achieve such clarity, I hope that will be done.

August 22, 1972

REVOLUTIONARY POTENTIAL OF GAY LIBERATION DEMANDS

by Kendall Green, Upper West Side Branch,
New York Local

The revolutionary socialist program for the labor movement, the struggles of oppressed nationalities, and the women's movement emphasizes the need to advance democratic and transitional demands in these movements. We have analyzed a number of slogans for these movements to determine their revolutionary potential. In the course of the discussion on the gay liberation movement, it is important to analyze the current and future demands of this movement. Comrade Weinstein, for example, considers gay liberation a struggle for democratic demands with limited potential. Sudie and Geb (Vol. 30, No. 4), on the other hand, consider that the gay movement goes beyond just a democratic struggle to a "gay power" struggle.

What Are Transitional Demands?

Transitional demands were initially raised by Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels in *The Communist Manifesto.* They were abandoned by most of the parties of the Second International in favor of a "minimum-maximum" program which concentrated all of the energy of these parties on obtaining minimum reforms of the capitalist system while using the maximum program of socialism only for ceremonial orations. The Bolshevik Party and the early Communist International revived the use of transitional demands which the Trotskyist movement carried on after the Stalinist bureaucratization of the Communist parties. Trotsky contributed much on the character of transitional demands and was responsible for the founding document of the Fourth International — *The Transitional Program.*

In Trotsky's discussion with leaders of the Socialist Workers Party in 1938 about the Transitional Program, and in the program itself, he outlined the criterion for transitional demands as simple slogans which could bridge the gap between the consciousness of the masses and the need for socialist revolution. The demands can only be fully implemented in a socialist society because they are directed at the base of the bourgeois society. Thus they preserve their revolutionary force through various efforts at compromise.

The classic example of transitional demands is the demand for a sliding scale of wages and a sliding scale of hours to solve the problems of unemployment and inflation. These demands strike at the "right" of capitalists to maintain a permanent army of unemployed to keep wages down and to decrease the standard of living through inflation of prices.

What Are Democratic Demands?

Democratic demands are those which were part of the bourgeois democratic revolutions of the previous centuries or those that flow directly from such demands. Based on Trotsky's analysis, in the *Permanent Revolution,* the struggle for such demands can take on a revolutionary potential in the twentieth century. The capitalist class is opposed to new struggles around these demands. For example, the demand for a nation-state which was part of the German and Italian bourgeois revolutions would logically justify a united Ireland, a separate Black nation and independent Aztlan in the United States. Of course, the capitalists are not going to follow this line of logic, which gives these demands their revolutionary significance.

The demand of women for the right to control their own bodies was not specifically advanced by any of the bourgeois revolutions, yet it is a logical extension of the demands for a laissez-faire state, the separation of church and state, the abolition of privileges based on social rank, and the freedom of individuals to pursue happiness. Thus this demand is a democratic one which cannot be fully realized under capitalist society because of the serious damage its realization would have on the nuclear family structure.

It is instructive to note that we also raise demands which are neither transitional nor democratic. The demand for a labor party is not transitional because it has been realized in the majority of bourgeois democracies. The bourgeois revolutions were fought around the demand for the right to form political associations but not specifically for the working class. The important point is that transitional and democratic demands as well as others will play important roles in the coming American revolution. We do not despise certain demands because they are just democratic demands. The struggle for many of these demands will not be consumated until after the socialist revolution.

Can Gay Oppression Be Ended Under Capitalism?

If gay oppression could be eliminated under capitalism, then the demands to end that oppression would have a more limited significance in the revolutionary struggle. David Thorstad in his contribution entitled "Gay Liberation and Class Struggle" outlines the arguments as to why gay oppression cannot be ended under capitalism. He says, "Homosexual behavior threatens the proper functioning of the patriarchal family." Since the patriarchal family is a necessary institution for capitalist society, a threat to it is a threat to the society.

Nat Weinstein in his contribution considers this threat to the family an idealistic, countercultural concept. He states that "the bourgeois family cannot be educated or abolished out of existence. It, like money, will wither and disappear when it is no longer necessary." Such an analysis would lead to declaring the demands for repeal of antiabortion laws, restrictive contraceptive laws, forced sterilization, and demands for free 24-hour childcare centers as equally idealistic and countercultural since they weaken the family structure which Weinstein believes is invincible until after the socialist revolution. The truth of the matter is that the family is already beginning to weaken and break up due to the fact that, unlike money, the family is no longer an important economic unit of capitalist society. This disintegration of the family can be hastened by agitation and mobilization of the masses around demands of the women's movement and the gay liberation struggle. Of course the final elimination of the family institution will only take place in a socialist society but this only makes the point that gay oppression, rooted in the family structure, will also only be finally eliminated in a socialist society.

Sociological Role of The Family

Had Nat Weinstein chosen to argue the opposite point—gay behavior is compatible with the family and therefore does not threaten capitalism—he would have gotten no further. We realize that capitalist society needs an institution which trains young people for the eventual roles as workers, housewives, parents, and consumers. The family provides such early training. It teaches young people to obey authority, to suppress their sexual desires, and to work at undesirable tasks for a later reward (delayed gratification). These attitudes are necessary for the capitalists to have a workforce at home and in the shop which can be controlled. Housewives and workers must obey authority, they must limit their heterosexual desires in time, place, and manner, and they must be willing to work for paychecks that come days and weeks later rather than demand desirable jobs that would give immediate satisfaction to the worker.

The family also trains young people to accept sex roles assigned to them by patriarchal society. Men are assigned to do dangerous, heavy work, to be sexually promiscuous with women, and to purchase certain consumer items, e.g., cars, because of the aura of sexual promiscuity associated with them. Women are assigned the role of childbearers, child raisers, faithful companion to one male, slave and manager of a household, and the purchaser of most consumer items which are often portrayed as having the power of keeping husbands and children at home.

Homosexual behavior is destructive to this sociological function of the family. It undermines authority because it is atypical behavior which has no place in the patriarchal family. While heterosexual behavior is justified by the church, tax laws, and official moralists by the child it can produce (delayed gratification), homosexual behavior allows no such rationalization. It can only be carried out for the immediate gratification it gives to the participants and thus its existence undermines the delayed gratification concept. Homosexual behavior is supposed to be limited to no place, at no time, and in no manner. Therefore, to act upon homosexual desires weakens the concept of limiting sexual desires and the family system that demands such limitations.

Homosexual behavior weakens the concept of sex roles. If men are only supposed to have sex with women and vice versa, and that part of the sex roles is challenged by homosexual behavior, then the whole role is challenged and weakened. As sex roles weaken, men cannot be motivated to do dangerous tasks—such as warfare—by appeals to their masculinity; nor women to drudgery by appeals to their maternal instincts. Consumer products would be more difficult to sell if men questioned their need for powerful cars or women for *House Beautiful* furnishing.

Reproductive Role of The Family

The family also exists to continue the reproduction of the species under certain conditions. First it is necessary to guarantee the capitalist that the child his wife bears is genetically related to him so that he can feel at ease in transferring the wealth he has obtained to that child at death. Secondly, it is necessary to saddle one worker, either male or female, with the responsibility for the sustenance of several other human beings; and one housewife, always female in this society, with the physical responsibility for care and well being of this household. In order to justify this forced altruism, the capitalist apologists point to a biological relationship between the members of this household.

To maintain these conditions for the reproductive role of the family requires not only the suppression of homosexual behavior, but also the suppression of all erotic behavior outside of procreative sex in marriage. Official morality of class society has fought against the hedonistic concept that erotic behavior is sufficiently justified by the pleasure it brings to the participants. Church and state moralists, by praising motherhood, taxing childless couples and individuals heavier, and passing laws against any other form of sexual activity, have enforced the idea that procreation is the only justification for erotic behavior. Homosexual activity is a direct challenge to this official morality as well as the delayed gratification concept discussed earlier because it is nonprocreative, in any and

all forms.

Since homosexual behavior is a threat to the family, and the family is both a necessary institution for capitalism and one which will continue up to and after the overthrow of capitalism, we can conclude that the attempt to suppress homosexual behavior — gay oppression — will continue until a socialist society is established. Thus gay liberation demands can have a very revolutionary potential in the overthrow of capitalism.

Civil Rights Demands

As David Thorstad points out, the immediate aim of gay liberation is to obtain civil rights for gay people (Vol. 30, No. 2). A number of demands have been raised in this regard including: repeal of "sodomy" laws, solicitation, lewd behavior, and impersonation laws which are used exclusively to victimize gay people. Civil rights demands also include the end to discrimination against gays in civil laws such as marriage laws, immigration laws and proceedings, and in adoption and child custody cases. Legislation to end discrimination in all phases of public life: employment, housing, public accommodations, insurance, loans, and other public services are included as civil rights demands. Demands for preferential treatment to make up for centuries of discrimination have been raised by women and national minorities and are usually included under civil rights type of demands.

A particularly disgusting example of discrimination in civil law recently occurred in California where for the first time in legal history a lesbian mother was given custody of her children, but only on the condition that she end her two-year relationship with her lover. The fact that this was the first time that a lesbian mother was even considered fit enough to care for her own children is disgusting enough, but the gall of the court in attempting to dictate to this woman whom she can love is beyond words.

A little-known federal statute passed in 1952 bars homosexuals from admittance to the United States. Although a federal court did grant a known gay person citizenship in 1971, the law still stands on the books to be kept as a threat and used when needed. The strength of that threat can be seen from the fact that Diego Vinales, an Argentine national arrested in a raid on a New York gay bar in 1970, leaped from the second story of the police precinct house onto the spiked fence below in a vain effort to escape.

History of Civil Rights Demands for Gays

The history of the struggle for repeal of antigay laws goes back to the French revolution. As Thorstad indicates in Vol. 30, No. 3 , the first step in bringing civil rights to gay people was the elimination of the sodomy statutes by the Constitutent Assembly in 1791. This revolutionary development was codified in 1810 and extended throughout most of Europe by the victorious French army. Although homosexuals have enjoyed the absence of sodomy laws for almost 200 years, they are still far from being accepted by French society. As David points out, the age of consent is higher for homosexual relationships than heterosexual throughout most of Europe. The French government considers gay people a social plague and is committed to trying to prevent the spread of homosexuality. There is an active gay liberation movement in France combatting this and other forms of gay oppression there.

In the United States, the repeal of sodomy laws in five states has come about through general legal reforms rather than specific agitation of gay groups. Illinois was the first state to drop its sodomy statute when it adopted the recomendations of the Model Penal Code of the American Bar Association. Gay people in Illinois are frequently entrapped by police and arrested for solicitation. It is a curious situation where homosexual activity is legal, but responding to a police officer who suggests it is a crime. It was also in the Chicago 7 trial where the government prosecutor called the peace movement a "freaking fag revolution." Little additional evidence is necessary to show comrades that gays have not gained their liberation in Illinois even eleven years after the removal of sodomy laws from the books.

Idaho adopted a reform penal code which did not mention sodomy on January 1, 1972. However, Representative Wayne Loveless and the Mormon Church quickly accused the new code of "encouraging immorality and drawing sexual deviates to the state." Major support for the new code came from sheriffs, judges, and prosecuting attorneys because of other provisions dealing with gun possession, bad check writing, and rustling. A hysteria was built up until the legislature three months later repealed the entire new code. State Senator William Roden, principal architect of the reformed code, stated, "I don't think there'll be another effort to change the code or do a re-study of it for six to ten years." Idaho is not new to this type of campaign — in 1955 a witchhunt was begun against a supposed ring of homosexuals who were seducing the young men of Boise. Before this mockery of justice was over, 1500 people were questioned and eight convicted for a total of 54 years for sexual activity between consenting adults.

Bills to end discrimination against gays in employment have recently been passed in San Francisco, Ann Arbor and East Lansing, Michigan. The East Lansing bill applies only to city jobs, and San Francisco extends coverage to employment with companies that contract with the city government. However, such legal efforts will not end job discrimination against gays as shown by the statement of Pacific Telephone and Telegraph, which said that it would ignore the ordinance until all of the "serious legal problems" in it were resolved. Pacific Telephone has previously stated that it will not knowingly hire or retain homosexuals.

In New York City, Intro 475 includes all employers, as well as forbidding discrimination against gays by landlords and owners of public accomodations. The bill has been introduced into committee twice. The first time it failed because Mayor Lindsay refused to bring any pressure to bear on the city council even though he had promised to do so. On the second try one of the councilmen who had promised to vote the bill out of committee changed his mind. Behind the failure of Intro 475 lies the reformist approach of Gay Activists Alliance, the largest gay group in NYC, in refusing to mobilize gays to demand its passage.

Revolutionary Potential of Civil Rights Demands

Sodomy, solicitation, lewd behavior, and impersonation laws are the major legal mechanism that is used by the state to suppress homosexual behavior. Of course, there are other mechanisms used by the state for this purpose

—quack psychiatrists, educational institutions, stereotyped images of gays in the media, etc. Many of these other methods have a more direct effect on gay people, but the laws serve as a back-up and justification for the other forms of gay oppression.

The capitalist state tries to maintain repressive laws because they can be used *directly when needed* against those who threaten the state. Since the capitalist state will continue to try to supress homosexual activity in order to strengthen the family, the struggle against these laws will be an important part of the struggle against capitalism in the coming period. This is not to say that these laws cannot be changes, for they have been partially changed in five states, and further victories are very likely. The state will be loath to abolish all of these laws, as they were to abolish the Jim Crow laws, and will do so only after a major struggle on the part of gay people.

Enactment and enforcement of laws to eliminate discrimination against gays in housing, employment, public accomodations, and civil laws and proceedings would eliminate the economic mechanisms of suppressing homosexual activity. Sexual orientation would then not be a bais for discrimination and exploitation as it is today. (See "Gay Economic Exploitation" Vol. 30, No. 4) Of course the difficulty—aside from getting such laws passed—is that the capitalist state is in charge of enforcing them. Thousands of cases pile up behind slow-moving bureaucracies and courts. The Civil Rights Commission bargains with the oppressive institution without any representation of the oppressed group and arrives at a "compromise" which may take years to implement. Also, action by one sector of the government increasing unemployment, may nullify the efforts of the Civil Rights Commission.

Thus, control of the enforcement apparatus for civil rights legislation, and eventually control of the entire state apparatus becomes important questions in the realization of civil equality. In this sense the demand of civil rights for gays is similar to the demands of civil rights for women, Blacks, or Chicanos.

Other Demands, Gay Bars and Institutions

Because of the discrimination against gays by most of capitalist society's institutions, gays are closely tied to those institutions which cater to them. Gay bars, baths, restaurants, cruising areas, etc., have a dual character Because of the distortion of sexuality which they present, they tend to isolate gays—making them feel that they are competing with each other for sexual partners. However, because these institutions bring large numbers of gays together, they have a potential for rapid politicalization and mobilization of gay people. Already many bars have been forced to allow posters and leaflets for Christopher Street demonstrations in their establishments. In New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chicago, gay bars have organized contingents and built floats for the marches. This activist role of gay social institutions can be expanded through pressure of gay groups. Gay liberation social events, like the weekly GAA Firehouse dances, can help in expanding this activist role by providing an alternative to oppressive bars. Establishing such control over these institutions would deprive the capitalists, especially the Mafia, of billions of dollars profit each year and be an important way of mobilizing the millions of gays who attend these institutions.

The existence of these few institutions which cater to gays does not provide the basis for the demand sometimes raised by ultralefts for a gay nation. Most "gay ghettos" are too dispersed, too intermingled with straights, and lack any group identification for the demand of gay control of the "gay community" to be raised aside from the nationalist implications of such a demand.

Police

Because homosexual activity is illegal and very often subject to police harassment, the role of the police is a crucial issue for gay people. In addition to demanding the repeal of all antigay laws, gay groups can demand the elimination of entrapment and the vice squad. Gays are often subject to physical attack by the police and hooligans, therefore the demands of removal of the police from cruising areas, bars, etc., and the organization of gay defense squads to protect these areas can be legitimately raised. Of course the capitalist state would not allow the police to be dismantled and another body of armed individuals to take their place, even in just a few areas of a city.

Media

The stereotyped presentations of gay people in radio, TV, movies, literature, theater, newspapers, etc., are perhaps the most frequent examples of gay oppression. There is hardly a stand-up comic in America without a repertory of faggot jokes. Some of these insults will be eliminated by the increasing militancy of gay people changing the public consciousness about homosexuality. However the examples of the Black, Chicano and women's movements against similar stereotypes indicate that direct action against the media will be necessary to force them to present homosexuals in positive self-affirming roles. Since the media is a tool of indoctrination and social control, the ruling class will resist any changes which hamper these two functions. We can expect that the media will attempt to mollify the anger of gay people through half-way measures and use the image of the "new homosexual" for a more sophisticated putdown.

Education

A crucial institution for young people during the years in which they acquire much of their knowledge and experience in sexual matters is the educational system—grade school, high school, and college. The educational system tries to suppress homosexual activity through elimination of obvious or suspected gay teachers, ignoring homosexuality or dismissing it as a sickness in so-called sex education classes, ignoring the homosexuality of important literary and historical persons, lectures on avoiding "strange men," rumors, gossip, and physical harassment and attacks on suspected gays. Thus gay people have a tremendous stake in changing the educational system which warps the sexuality of so many individuals. Demands that can be raised center around the concept that schools should present a positive view of homosexuality and sexuality in general in an atmosphere which allows young people to experiment and work out their own sexual orientation without interference by adults. Specific demands include:

Sexual education with a positive view of homosexuality and sexuality in general at all levels of education.

Open homosexuals teaching at all levels.

Inclusion of homosexuality as an important charac-

teristic of individuals in literature, the arts, history and science.

Courses specifically studying the sociology, psychology, historical, artistic, scientific contributions of gay people.

Coordination of such courses in a gay studies program.

Repeal of age of consent legislation—realization that young people have the right to make their own decisions regarding sexual matters.

Private quarters for young people away from adult supervision.

Of course, such demands would be admittedly opposed by the ruling class since their realization would destroy the educational system created to supply docile, specifically trained workers. The first gay studies program has already been started at California State College in Sacramento. Gay teachers' caucuses have been formed as well as high school gay groups. Repeal of age-of-consent legislation flies in the face of the capitalist notion of young people as children without any rights, intelligence, or human dignity—scarcely more than property. It is not accidental that the basis of the attack against the gay rights plank at the recent Democratic Party national convention was the need to protect children and women.

Sexual Rights for Young People

The Socialist Workers Party campaign has taken the correct, principled position of demanding the repeal of all laws restricting sexual behavior between consenting *persons,* not just consenting adults. However, there has been little discussion of sexual rights for young people. Clellan Ford and Frank Beach in *Patterns of Sexual Behavior* have documented that a large majority of "primitative peoples" allow young people full erotic freedom. The Lepcha of India even believe that young women will not mature without sexual intercourse and they regularly engage in it from age eleven on. The Lepcha consider it amusing that older men sometimes copulate with women as young as eight. Sex life for the Trobrianders begins at six for women and ten for men. Such activity is regularly observed in subhuman primates and among males of lower mammals. Ford and Beach go on to theorize that "if they [humans] are ever to derive maximal satisfaction from sexual relations, individuals who are reared under conditions that prevent or seriously reduce experimentation during childhood will be forced to go through the essential learning process after adulthood has been obtained. This type of adjustment may be exceedingly difficult for young adults of either sex particularly if they belong to a society which inculcates manifold sexual inhibitions in the developing individual."

Kinsey's studies indicate that pre-adolescent sexual behavior is more common in this society that commonly believed. 70 percent of males recall engaging in some sexual play prior to adolescence (40 percent heterosexual and 44 percent homosexual play). 22 percent actually attempted coitus during those years. 48 percent of females reported sex play (30 percent hetero and 30 percent homosexual play) and 24 percent reported being approached by an adult male during pre-adolescence. Less than one percent actually had coitus with an adult male. Kinsey theorizes, "If the child were not culturally conditioned, it is doubtful if it would be disturbed by the sexual approaches of the sort involved in these histories.

". . . the emotional reaction of the parents, police officers, and other adults who discover that the child has had such contact may disturb the child more seriously than the sexual contacts themselves."

Of course, demands such as repeal of age-of-consent legislation and private quarters for young people evoke strong emotional response in many adults due to their belief that sex is basically vile and that young people are incapable of rational decisions. Gay youth groups have organized around these and other questions affecting them and the Southwest Conference of the National Coalition of Gay Organizations backed the demands of the Los Angeles Gay Youth Group which were similar to these.

Demands of Other Movements

Other transitional and democratic demands formulated and raised by labor, women's, and national liberation movements are also relevant to the gay liberation movement because gays include women, members of oppressed nationalities, as well as in their overwhelming majority, workers. Gay groups have readily responded to the call for gay contingents in antiwar demonstrations, for they understand the discrimination against gays in the military and the sex-role stereotyping of the antiwar movement are issues that link the two struggles together. Likewise, the discrimination against lesbians both as women and as gay, both inside and outside the gay movement and women's movement link these struggles together. In the Black movement, writers like James Baldwin have been put down because of their homosexuality while prominent gays like Jean Genet have spoken out against police victimization of the Black Panther Party. The Black Panther Party was one of the first movement organizations to speak out on the oppression of homosexuals. In the labor movement, queer-baiting has often been used to discredit labor organizers. Since gays tend to occupy the lowest paying sectors of the economy, militant labor struggles would be of great importance to them and we could expect many militant labor organizers coming from these sectors. Thus, despite Nat Weinstein's assertion to the contrary, there are effective links between the gay movement and the other movements for social change. These links provide for united struggles between and among these movements.

Conclusion

With respect to the controversy about whether gay liberation demands were just democratic or more than democratic, we have seen that it is really unimportant. Both democratic and transitional demands have revolutionary implications. Most of the demands of the gay movement are democratic in that they logically flow from the demands of the bourgeois democratic revolutions of the previous centuries. However the demand to create gay defense squads has transitional characteristics, but this does not mean that it is more revolutionary than the other demands.

In answer to the rhetorical questions asked by Nat Weinstein about how can we compare the gay liberation struggle to those of women, Blacks, Chicanos and workers; we have shown that there are several ways in which they are comparable: they occupy the bottom rungs

of the economic ladder, they have independent movements which are raising demands which cannot be realized under capitalism, and there are definite links between these movements. The purpose of showing such similarities is to argue for a similar serious treatment of the gay movement by the revolutionary vanguard party.

August 24, 1972