

COME TOGETHER

GAY LIBERATION FRONT WOMEN'S ISSUE

No 7

We share the experiences of our gay brothers but as women we have endured them differently. Whereas the men in GLF partake of the privileges of the male - you have been allowed to learn to organise, talk and dominate -, we have been taught not to believe in ourselves, in our judgement, but to act dumb and wait for a man to make the decisions. As lesbians, "women without men", we have always been the lowest of the low. Only through acting collectively can we overcome our own passivity and your male chauvinism so that together we - the whole of GLF - can smash the sexist society which nerverts and imprisons us all

WE'RE WOMEN
WE'RE LESBIANS
WE'RE OPPRESSED
WE'RE ANGRY



where it's at

Up till now Gay-ins have always been West End occasions in parks situated in affluent areas - beautiful houses and well dressed people with nicely washed children. Yes, it was all very pleasing to the eye: the world was beautiful and we, the GLF, were busy liberating ourselves and the gay people of the West End. I am sure it is a good thing to stimulate other gay people to come out and thus to strengthen their belief in themselves.

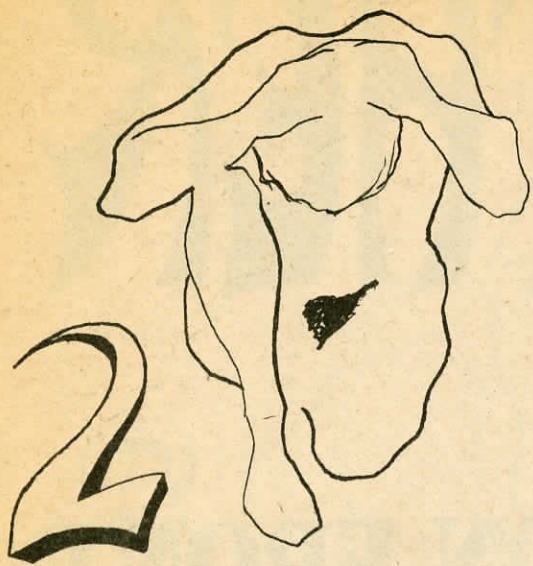
I am also sure that GLF is not just an organization which aims at making homosexuals happier through their "acceptance" of their specific sexual preferences. WE ARE A FRONT. Which should mean a militant organization, a growing group of people who can identify with other oppressed groups since our oppression springs from the same source: the capitalist state's economic

nomic necessity to exploit groups of people and its need for scape-goats (since the mass of people need to do more than just watch football to work off their aggression). In this way attention is not only shifted away from the main issues, but also oppressed groups are played off against each other while the money-grabbers at the top continue their moonlight garden parties. These are basically the people and the principles we have to attack. And I mean attack, in all kinds of ways: scruples are ridiculous in situations like this. It is about time we started calling them criminals instead of capitalists. There is no use pleading with criminals, especially when they have professional protectors (the police) and a publicity machine (the media).

To attack all this GLF must be militant and tough. And this brings me back to the Gay-ins. As I see it, West End Gay-ins can only be a preliminary stage in GLF's development. What we have

been doing so far has been nothing but harvesting some fruits which were going to fall anyway. Now we must go to the East End and the poorer areas of London, firstly to talk to people and convince them that we are fighting the same people who deny them decent housing, milk for their children at school, a share in the factory's wealth, etc., and secondly to encourage East End homosexuals to come out. They are the really oppressed ones because they have no opportunity—as richer gay people have—to lead a double life. Their work-mates are their friends. And it is a working class social necessity to act out to the full the stereotype sex roles—the male, hefty and virile—the female, incomplete without the male. If they do not adhere to these roles they are bound to be rejected. So everything is bubbling under the surface. Fear and insecurity stops the crater from erupting. We need them—their anger—because we need more drive and militancy in GLF.

DISCO
Kings Hums 1.00
18th August
THURS



Despite this openness about and acceptance of lesbian relationships on the recidivists' wing, I was amused on one occasion by the general reticence at one of the large 'group counselling' sessions. A girl was in trouble over having escaped from the wing one evening and got onto another wing where her girl-friend was living. For some time the group discussed this incident purely in terms of the ethics of the girl having got the screw in charge into trouble by managing to escape. No-one seemed able to bring themselves to mention the crucial matter: the lesbian relationship. This may have been because on this particular occasion the whole wing was assembled together, plus the Wing Governor. Eventually I stated that we were really discussing the rights and wrongs of homosexuality. Afterwards, one or two people marvelled at my temerity.

There was a considerable amount of artificiality about Holloway lesbianism. Some of it smacked of false, school-girl-like 'pashes' (not that all school-girl pashes are false, of course) - a way, probably, of relieving the tedium of prison life. People would break rules by writing notes to each other; sometimes even when they were on the same wing, able to meet and talk openly anyway. And it was not unusual for a woman to 'turn', or pretend to have 'turned' simply because she was in Holloway, where being butch could be

straight The Gay World of Holloway

by Pat
Aronsmith

AS A LESBIAN I FOUND IT QUITE LIBERATING TO BE IMPRISONED IN HOLLOWAY. FOR HERE ON SOME WINGS IT WAS IF NOT ACTUALLY 'QUEER' TO BE 'NORMAL' THEN AT LEAST PERFECTLY 'NORMAL' TO BE 'QUEER'.

It was in many ways a refreshing change from the straight world outside. For the first time I found it acceptable, indeed advantageous, to be homosexual. As soon as fellow prisoners realised you were a lesbian you were likely to be popular and sought after - that is, if you appeared to be butch. This unwonted popularity could in fact occasionally prove something of an embarrassment; you could not strike up a platonic friendship with anyone without it being construed as an affair.

Attitudes to lesbianism varied somewhat from wing to wing. It was the accepted way of life on the wing where I spent my last sentence - an open, 'therapeutic' wing for relatively long-term old lags. Here, the screws usually turned a blind eye to what went on. Couples made no attempt to hide their feelings for each other, but openly embraced and walked about arm in arm. Women could, if they wished, spend a fair amount of time alone together in pairs (or more) in their cells with the doors pulled to. It was unwise to march straight into someone else's cell if the door was not open - most people were tactful enough to knock first.

I remember an incident in which two women were caught 'having it off' together one Saturday afternoon when, according to the rules, they should have been either in the Television Room or locked up singly in their own cells. They were punished - but for breaking this minor; not for making love.

This quite permissive attitude on the part of the authorities was, probably, due to the fact that a number of them were undoubtedly lesbians themselves - as residential staff at most single-sex establishments frequently are. Some lesbian prisoners were apt to boast that actual screws had propositioned them, even offered them bribes for their favours. This may or may not occasionally have been true. The prison rules do not in fact mention homosexuality, as such, but merely forbid 'indecent behaviour'.

Lesbian relationships were the norm also on the 'Borstal Recall' wing. I worked in the garden with many of the inmates of this block. They openly discussed among themselves and with their officer all that went on. But on the 'Star' wing for First Offenders (where, albeit a recidivist, I once spent most of six months because I was a 'civil' prisoner) official attitudes were somewhat different - perhaps because the women here were considered redeemable and as yet uncorrupted. Here, cell doors could not be pulled to, and no less than three women at a time were supposed to be in a cell. Among the prisoners themselves on this wing, attitudes towards homosexuality were, on the whole, not quite so casually accepting as elsewhere in the prison.

quite rewarding; your girl-friend was apt to keep you in fags; people chased you with offers of small gifts bought with their meagre earnings. Even accepting that most people are more or less bisexual, still it seemed reasonable to conclude that many of the Holloway butch-chasers were simply women who outside were quite straight (often mothers with families - as indeed some of the butch types themselves were), but, while inside, were merely trying to make the best of a bad job and find themselves a mock cock.

This led on to another kind of artificiality; many Holloway lesbians were appallingly straight. Whether transvestite, partially transvestite or not, it was customary for the butch types to attempt to appear in every way as masculine as possible, strapping back their busts, contriving false penises with sanitary towels, only (if what they said was true) making love - never receiving it. All this was more difficult in years gone by when you could not wear your own clothes in Holloway. The only hope then for a butch to appear totally masculine was for her to get one of the prison jobs (gardening or painting) that entailed wearing shirt and dungarees. Otherwise, she had to do the best she could in her regulation cotton frock - roll up her cardigan sleeves to expose tattooed forearms, roll her stockings down to look like knee-socks (this was actually against the rules), cultivate pseudo-sideburns to embellish her eton crop. Now, however, it is possible for the undiscerning visitor to Holloway to wonder whether she has made a mistake and is actually in the Scrubs. For women prisoners can wear their own clothes these days, including, if they wish, masculine gear. So butch types, (phoney and genuine) can wear drag (bar belts and ties) and really go around looking like straight husbands - on open wings their femme partners may even offer to do their washing and ironing for them.

The problem now for butch and transsexual lesbians is that to appear both 'with it' and male, you should not have close cropped hair. Yet the moment the most masculine looking female face is framed in longish hair, it inevitably ceases to look quite so male. A very butch, more or less transvestite woman on my wing started to conform with fashion and lest her hair grow down her neck. At once she looked somewhat more feminine. Foolishly I suggested she cut her hair short again. She was unable however to accept that anything could ever make her remotely resemble her own sex - I merely got punched for my advice.

There is no doubt that gay women can have a sense of freedom in Holloway that as yet they can seldom or never experience outside. On the other hand homosexual roles there tended to be rigid and conventional, conducive to the male chauvinism that Women's Lib. and Gay Lib. so firmly oppose.

Letter to my sister and her husband

Dearest Nancy and Peter,

How are you my dear sister and brother? I hope that you are both well and happy, but am rather worried about you. All is not tea and roses for any of us I fear. Barbara and I are well and at least reasonably content - no great problems, traumas, or anything to speak of. I care for her very much.

Nan, you sounded quite disturbed in your last letter - mainly about the possibility of extra-marital affairs. I have learned a great deal about myself in this respect and would like to tell you what I know. I'll begin from the beginning. In the beginning Eve was taken from Adam's side for his helpmate. She was only a small part of him and her duty was to him - to see that he was happy, well-fed, well-loved, and pampered. Thus Eve's descendants, women, were valued for their ability to make men happy. Women were literally sold at carnivals, festivals and in the marketplace and their value was based upon how attractive and useful they were to men (other women's judgments were irrelevant). This is essentially what we have acquired in our Judeo-Christian heritage - and these are the sick values we have been taught from birth. We are incomplete without men - we must have men to be whole and fulfilled. Nancy, we have actually believed that. Well it's just not true. Some of us prefer men - others women - but no woman is incomplete without a man.

Feminine is submissive and submissive is ill within the context of our society. Homosexuals are insulted and beaten by the "virile males" of our society who consider them "fem" (even Peter's younger brother has gone "queer bashing"). Human beings who refuse to communicate in the active, aggressive terms that witchdoctors dictate, refuse to speak or respond in the precise manner the witchdoctor has decided upon are labelled catatonic, schizophrenic and subjected to electro-shock therapy. They who have never harmed another person in their lives are lobotomized by our eminent brain surgeons.

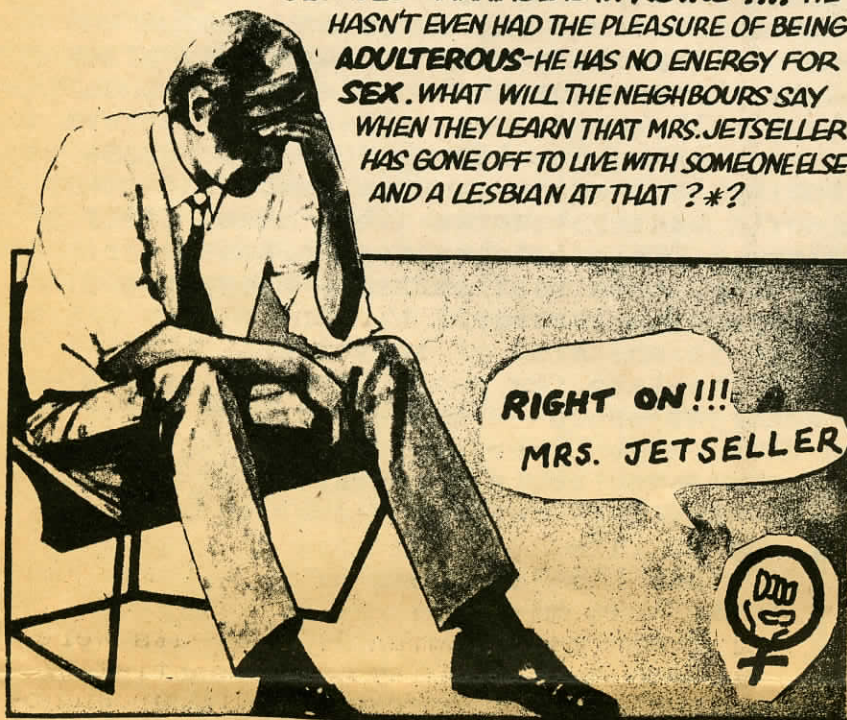
CONT.



"Homosexuality is corrupt and vicious and undermining the root core of our society." (Edinburgh Tory Councillor)

If I happen to sound full of hate, it's just because I am. I have seen through them and I hate their fucking guts. I want to blow Nixon, Agnew, Reagan, Johnson, Kennedy, Humphrey, General Motors, United Fruit, Los Angeles Police, Coast Guard, Army, Navy, Stock Exchange, all of the fucking pigs and institutions sky high. But seeing through them gives me a bit more patience with Peter's mother. No wonder she is a ball-cutter. Rah for the ballcutters of this world. A cock gives a man power - and she was damned jealous. Maybe she would have loved to do, to do something other than stay home all day with the shopping, cooking, cleaning, and babysitting. That a rotten bore for any human being with intelligence - and she had the intelligence to be bored and then to go for your father's balls with her shears.

GEORGE'S MARRIAGE IS IN RUINS !!!! HE HASN'T EVEN HAD THE PLEASURE OF BEING ADULTEROUS-HE HAS NO ENERGY FOR SEX. WHAT WILL THE NEIGHBOURS SAY WHEN THEY LEARN THAT MRS. JETSELLER HAS GONE OFF TO LIVE WITH SOMEONE ELSE AND A LESBIAN AT THAT ?*?



No, Pete, it's not the fault of your folks, nor of mine. It's this fucking system that has been perpetuated through thousands of years and the deaths of thousands of human beings. How many lives have been wasted because General Motors and United Fruit and all the other capitalist pigs have guarded their property and let the people starve?

And it's not the fault of Nancy Lawrence or Peter Allen: you are victimized and oppressed by the system in many of the ways I am. Peter was denied the right to simply be a sensitive human being - forced into a male-dominated, code-power profession. But you've got something out of being a man as well, Pete - the right to have a female mother-lover chaste to you till the end. No woman has the right to find a lover who cares for her no matter what she does. A woman's duty is to her husband - she must not question him or put him down in public. She must protect his ego and his potency. But women, what do they get? Well, that's something else. If Nancy sleeps with someone other than her husband she is a "nymphomaniac", a "whore", an "easy lay". If you, Peter, sleep with another woman you are a "ladies' man", a "stud", and very "virile". In Spain, Italy, South America, if a woman doesn't bleed between the legs on her wedding night then machoman has the right to kill her. That it seems to come down to everywhere is simply that if a woman recognizes and responds to her own sexuality and

sensuality rather than regarding her own body as a treasure of and for the use of her husband, "her man", then she is disparaged and socially ostracized.

And what about impotence and frigidity? A woman who complains that she is frigid will be told that it isn't at all uncommon. A man who has even the slightest trouble with his cock will find that every doctor west of the Ukraine will examine him. And why all the concern over the slightest infection in the penis and the common attitude of ignoring the vagina? I'm sorry but I simply will not accept the argument that the penis is much more delicate there's more to it than that. I had a yeast infection for three fucking years while I was on pills - you can damn well bet that no man would be treated like that. And why amidst all these man-made missiles and moon rockets haven't those cock-worshippers found an effective means of birth control?



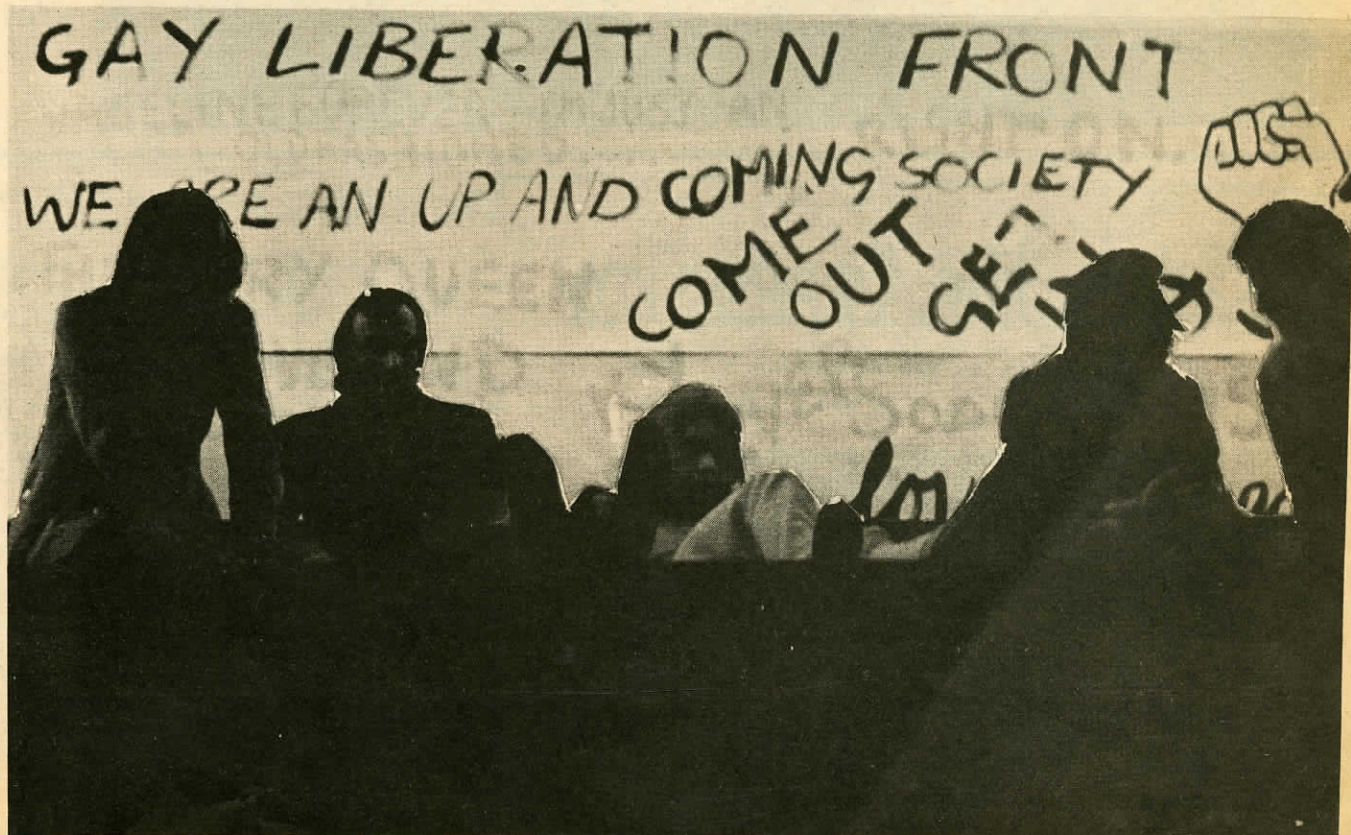
Freud was fixated on the cock - so all little girls have to have penis envy. Well, piss you, Freud. Women have more sense.

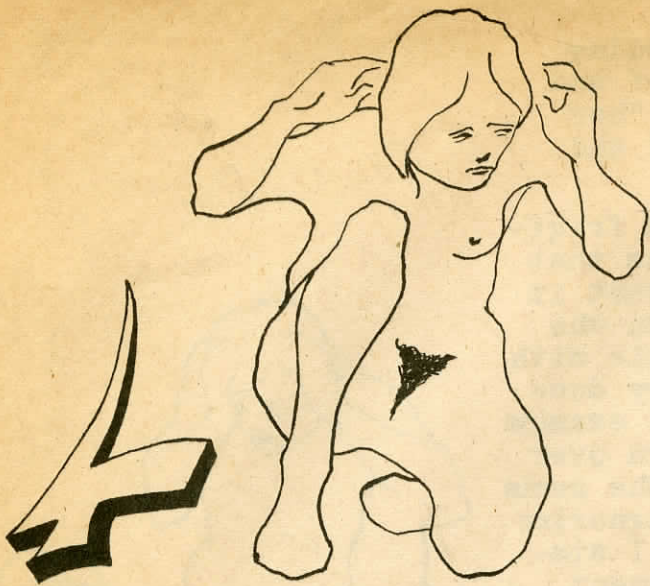
My Lesbianism is a personal choice. And now that I have made that choice I have become aware of the political significance of that action. I am protesting all those man-made missiles, those moon rockets, those objects of war molded in the shape of man's precious little tool, his cock. Yeah, I'm a cock hater. But that doesn't mean that I hate human beings. I hate the aggressiveness and manipulative-capitalistic methods and goals of those "active" men who think of women as sexual objects and life as a power game. I sympathize with women, homosexuals, and schizophrenics because I have something in common with these people. There is nothing to help you recognize the way a black woman or man feels in this society like finally recognising one's homosexuality. I'm not the right sex. I won't allow men to masturbate into to me and then later say that they've had a "good fuck", a "good lay", or even to feel that they are "good" lovers. No woman with whom I sleep will feel that love-making is something at which one can be "good". It's not a gratable thing and I'm sick of competition in all forms.

Let me clarify. I am not against heterosexuals. I simply feel that the homosexual relationship has a better chance of getting out of stereotyped roles than the heterosexual relationship. With a man, even with a man who is sensitive to and aware of women's liberation there is still the pressure to fit oneself into active-passive, doer-approver, sadist-masochist roles. There is no need to discover one's own individual responses entirely from the beginning because we have already been trained to expect and conform to our socially accepted roles. The woman who doesn't is either a "nymphomaniac" or a "ball-cutter".

Take care. Please give my love to the folks.

Ever your loving sister.





himself (national identity, creed identity, even family identity fade away into thin, abstract concepts), revolution changes from a time-limited incidence in one's life to a continuous way of living:

REVOL

every man has to start with himself, with his own everyday life and can no longer pin his hope on prophets or saints or leaders or masters or gurus or anybody else for his salvation.

Thus the idea of revolution becomes something concrete and gives freedom a possibility to enter the realm of reality.

The seed of freedom sleeps in every contemporary human being, but it does not grow out of its own nature -- it has to be planted in a conscience. If consciousness does not throw light and water and warmth on this seed, it is bound to die. And so within most people the seed of freedom is killed by absent-minded survival -- by things, careers, time-passing amusements or freaky, trendy, "spontaneous" conformity.

Within people who in one way or another are extraordinary -- the outsiders -- there is a more fertile condition for a revolutionary potential to become a real, alive quality, partly because society makes it painful and difficult for them to live and partly because they often have an inner need to think about their existence, since they don't fit into a well-known, too well-known, pattern that one learns by heart when one learns to walk. These people bear, by necessity, a longing towards something other than the existing world order, towards other laws, other habits, other imperatives. (This longing very often inverts itself quite paradoxically, into most extreme, exaggerated, "established" ways of behaviour!)

A gay person is one kind of outsider.

Only during the last few years have gay people -- as a more or less coherent group -- expressed some other social ambition than being gay. This social ambition -- in many

cases one could even say: this desire! -- brings gay people together to work for a new way of life. A life more in accordance with a wider kind of human being than the limited inhabitant of the world of today: a human being who realises life not mainly as a struggle to survive but as something joyful, something magnificently rich and affluent, full of different forms and modes of manifestations.

With this ambition GLF could (will?) develop into an organic member of a whole generation's movement aiming to create a world where not only the obscure parts of the erotic map are explored and mastered, but where every unborn and unpermitted gesture of the will find an open room in which to perform.

The dialectic is not through a majority to revolution but through revolutionary tactics to a majority.
Rosa Luxemburg

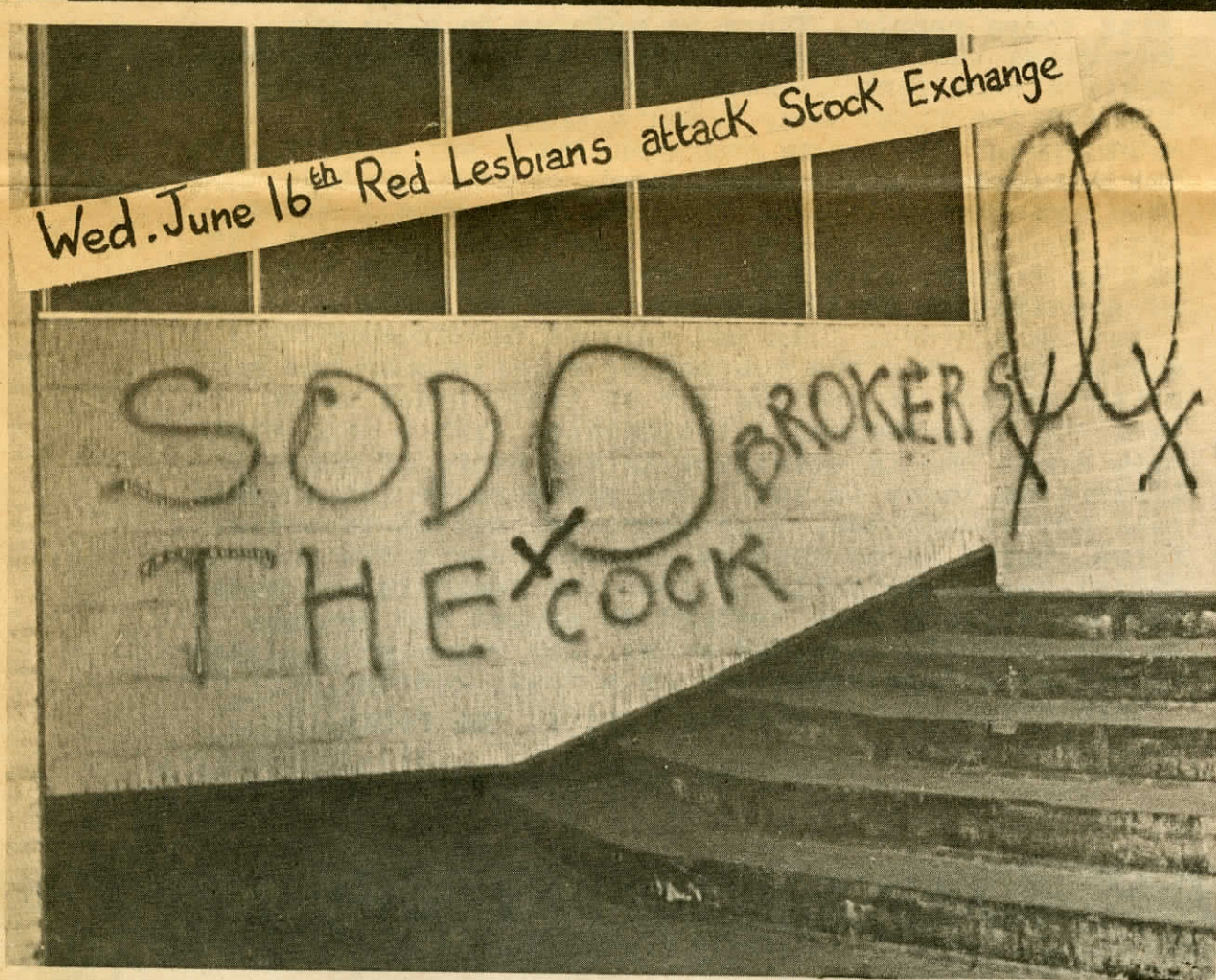
1. Revolution in the Head...

Revolution in the second part of the 20th Century is not an action.

Revolution today is a state of mind that manifests itself through its bearers' way of acting.

Revolution isn't something that happens on the 4th or 14th of July or in February or a specific year -- where it is real, it happens every minute of the day, and it starts every morning over and over again! This state of mind does not express itself particularly in so-called "revolutionary actions" such as demonstrations etc. It can be seen in every movement, it speaks through every word and commands every gesture of the "revolutionary".

As Western culture grows more and more chilly, more and more specific, i.e. as every man gradually tends to refer himself only to



3. Catch the Oppression

TO BE A WOMAN AND TO BE GAY SEEMS TO HAVE GAINED A CERTAIN REVERENCE NOWADAYS' LIKE WE'RE REALLY OPPRESSED. (IF YOU'RE BLACK, THIRD WORLD, WORKING CLASS YOU GET EXTRA POINTS).

Gay women have suddenly moved from a situation, particularly in the women's movement, where their existence was not even recognised, to one where liberal silences open up whenever a gay woman stands up to speak. Another category of oppression has been discovered and the paternalism - or perhaps I should say maternalism -- of the left, stretches to embrace us. This is not to say that there is not still considerable direct oppression of gay people on the left, but I do think that a simple 'Right on' to Gay

Liberation could be very harmful to left groups and to Gay Lib. itself.

It seems harmful to me because it judges revolutionary potential in terms of some criterion of oppression, and thus suggests that the way to be revolutionary is somehow or the other to get yourself in one of the officially oppressed groups. The other alternative is to get yourself clubbed or imprisoned or sacked and then to wear your wounds like revolutionary medals your certificate of entry to the movement. This is a particularly tempting trip for lots of white male political heavies.

To Gay Lib. it is harmful because on the one hand it encourages us to think simply that gay is where it's at, and on the other hand to think that we are less oppressed than other groups and so have a less vital part to play in the revolution. So either we're tempted to preach the 'Gay Way' -- 'Come and join us', or to act as a scrambling support group - desperately tagging along with expressions of solidarity for workers, black people and so on.

A lot of these difficulties become particularly

obvious in thinking out the relationship between gay women and women's liberation.

One of the great aims of women's liberation has been Sisterhood. All women are oppressed all women must join together. Given this view lesbianism can be seen as particularly important or attractive because it can be viewed as the epitome of sisterhood -- women completely together. It is important for women to learn to love and trust each other because like other oppressed people we have been divided against ourselves, taught to denigrate each other and so ourselves. However, sisterhood cannot be an end in itself. So more and more women come together, so there are more and more sisters -- so what?

There is also the temptation for straight and for gay women to think that by being or by becoming gay they achieve a more revolutionary position. But abandoning the privileges of the oppressors, in this case the straight world (in all senses) is of itself no more revolutionary than going into holy poverty, dying one's skin black, or putting on a donkey jacket and spitting on the floor to kid yourself you're a worker.

3....Or in the World

The revolution in our heads - i.e. our changed consciousness of what we are and of our position in society - is good as far as it goes. Changed consciousness, which is partly a psychological change, can help gay men and women. It can make us proud to be gay instead of apologetic and ashamed: i.e. it can increase our self respect.

But this increased self-respect will lead us to question and reject society's view of us as sick, perverse and inferior. If we say 'Gay is good' why does society say we are bad? There must be a reason for society to keep us down, to indoctrinate us with a belief that we are sick, and to perpetuate the myth that we are inferior, unnatural and unhappy. There must be something wrong with a society that tells lies about us.

Our new pride does not of itself make a revolution. On the contrary it could lead to greater oppression - and indeed this has already happened. When G.L.F. tried to organise socials and discos in ordinary pubs in order to come out of the gay ghetto, police pressure put an end to our efforts.

Individual self liberation may change our minds and those of a few of our friends, but it cannot change the law that oppresses our brothers. It cannot do away with oppression.

Consciousness raising is only a first step in the real revolution. Because part of consciousness raising involves a changed conception of the oppression and how it relates to that of other oppressed groups - ultimately how sexual oppression of all kinds relates to the economic organisation of society - this leads us away from the view that it's all in our heads and towards the realisation that society is unjust and that therefore we should demand and work for change. The individual cannot alone and unaided bring about social change and therefore the next step is for us to band together because if we unite we are strong.

To say that revolution takes place entirely inside the individual is itself a counter-revolutionary statement. It is part of the ideology of our present society that the individual is himself responsible for all that befalls him - if he gets in the shit it's his fault. We see this in the prevalent belief that a man on the dole is likely to be a scrounger - when it is far more likely that the current economic fuck up has made it impossible for him to get work.

One cannot 'become' gay or straight. That is to think in static ontological terms. I think one's relationships with other people, and the sexual response must be an integral part of all other responses, must spring out of one's relationship to society. And basically the question here is whether the relationship is one of attack or passive surrender. One is not attacking the system by hopping from one oppressed category to another.

Revolutionary gay people can liberate straight relationships by ceasing to make heterosexuality the only choice. But if Gay Lib. only makes gay 'respectable' then we have just created another product, expanded the market, suggested another false choice, another chain. We do not want to substitute the fetish of homosexuality for the fetish of heterosexuality.

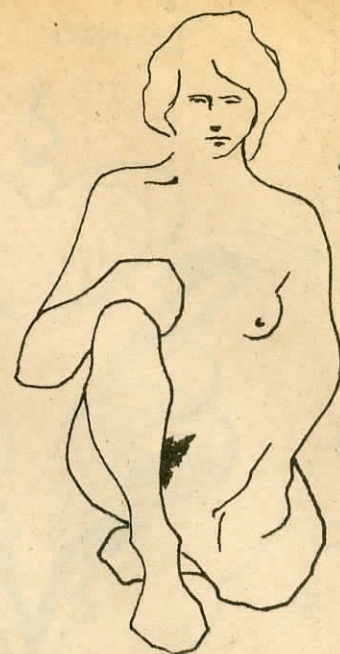
Of course, behind these more ideological considerations there may be a more genuine dilemma for many women in the movement. For some there may be a felt choice between sex with a chauvinist male or no sex at all. However, I don't think that it's very liberating for women to turn to each other as a stop-gap alternative, a second best in the men time. It implies that they still

see men as the primary source of sexual and of emotional gratification.

What then should be the strategy for any gay movement, or any specifically lesbian movement? I don't think that we should aim solely at bringing all lesbians together, although that is important, or that we should be trying to make all women gay, although that is tempting. We must first analyse the causes of our oppression and if we find an explanation in terms of the capitalist structure of our society, then the only liberating course is to attack that structure. To do this there seem to be two strategies we can adopt.

1) Challenging the dominance of the straight heterosexual roles wherever they exist, in the family, in the schools, in the streets, in the unions. Because the dominance is all pervasive I think that even a simple (though difficult) act like coming out is potentially revolutionary, provided it is not just a plea for acceptance, but a challenge to the oppressiveness of the heterosexual norm. Wearing a Gay Lib. button can be like a constant one woman/man demo.

With this goes the mounting of attacks on institutions that specifically oppress gay people.

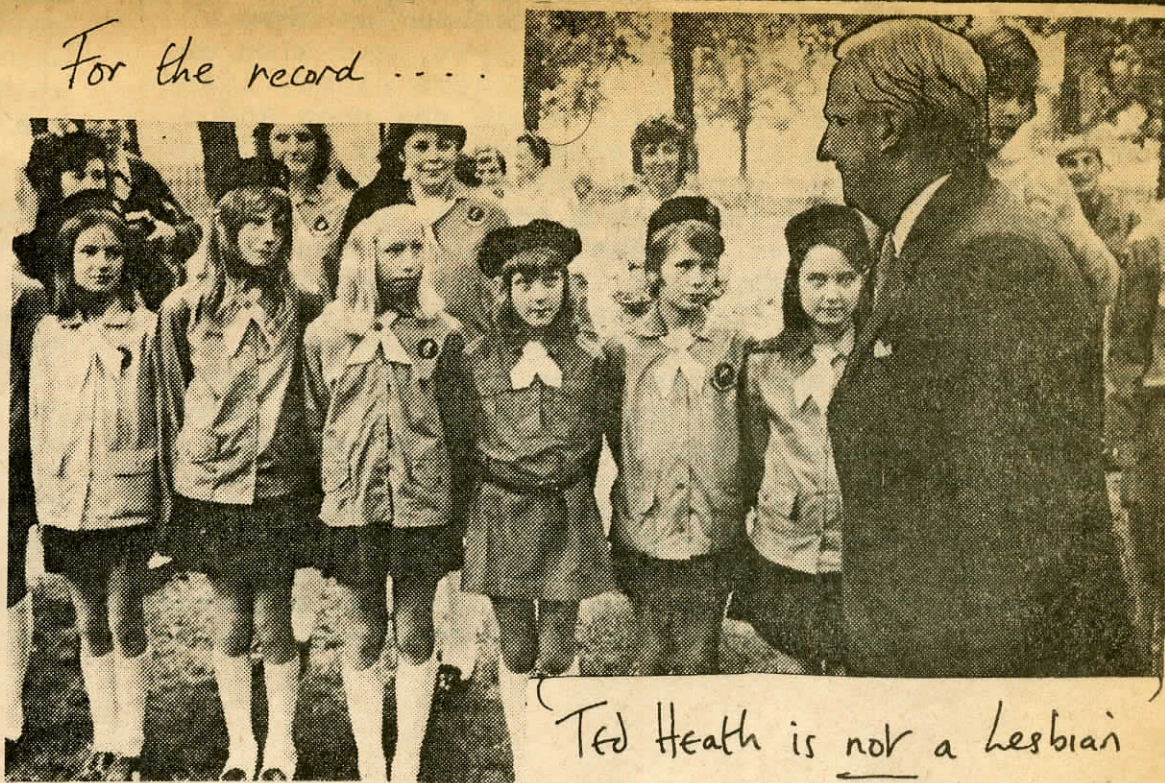


Participation in demonstrations whether violent or non-violent is also not an end nor a sufficient means. It does serve the function of bringing to the attention of society our changed consciousness and our determination

that we will no longer be oppressed and put down. Violence, physical and mental, has been meted out to homosexuals for centuries and if we were to resort to violence now it would not be without provocation.

To say that the revolution is in our heads would mean that the individual could be 'free' in prison, in the harem, in any situation of objective unfreedom. No. One might be inwardly at peace there - but to deny the outward reality of an oppressive life imposed from without is to be a quietist, a conservative and ultimately a theologian or psycho-analyst concerned only with the state of one's own spirit or psyche.

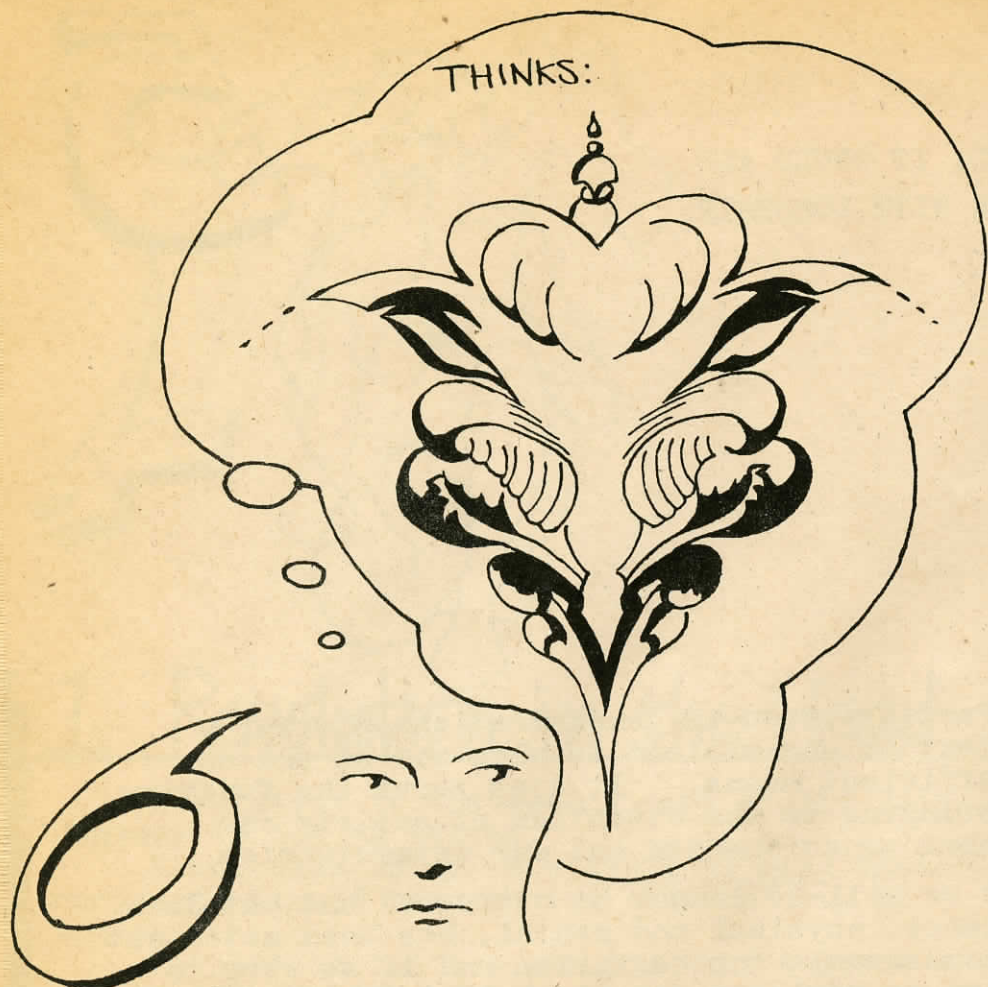
Revolution is not just about feelings. It's about power - who has power over us to direct our lives into distorted patterns and hidden paths, and how we ourselves can achieve the power to alter this.



If we are serious we should make it impossible for places like the Maudsley and the Portman Clinic to exist. Never mind leafletting the so-called doctors who are making money off our backs, we should burn the places down. Never mind criticising sex education we should go running into the schools and rip up their silly pamphlets and leaflets, and we might fire a few schools while we're at it.

2) We must attack the power structure in our society and its representation in all oppressive institutions. Fight with the Blacks against the pigs, fight with the Squatters against the Council. One way to effect this would be for G.L.F. groups to work in their own areas. But however it is done it will involve us in making criticisms of other revolutionary groups. Far from deferring to other groups who might score higher on the present 'oppression ratings', we must continually raise questions about the politics of sexuality, the repression and manipulation of sexual energies in the interests of the system. We must also look for and listen to the criticisms other groups make about us. It is not a question of who is the most oppressed, the revolution can only be made total if the specificity of all oppressions are challenged and overturned.

THINKS:



Hold your Head up High, Love

The first major disappointment in my life took place when Greta Garbo changed into woman's clothes towards the end of Queen Christina and took a fancy to John Gilbert. It was the first of a long line of betrayals, most of them inflicted by myself on myself in an age-long comedy of double-think which aimed to destroy the soul's integrity.

In the first Act one might deny to oneself one's emotions absolutely; this is easily done in the general confusion and flux of awakening sexuality, in the unnatural setting of single-sex schools where delightful crushes flourish in hot-house claustrophobia, and in the gloom of self-awareness' dawn. That is all just the prelude, however. The action proper only begins in the second Act when the protagonist awakens, rubs her eyes, and sits up. In a delicate romantic haze she wanders alone, idealising the tender and beautiful women she sees and then recreates, and all the time remaining blind to one thing - that her emotions are good and valid, that they can be expressed in a shared, loving life. My goodness no, I have to remain blind to that because that has a label, that is called Lesbianism: and who could accept for herself the image of a pathetic cold coarse unattractive creature who denies her nature and tries to be what she is not? the butch, the tweed suit and heavy shoes? the travesty of heterosexual domesticity? The situation catches me up in a vicious circle: if I had faith in my feelings I could use them as the standard by which I might measure the stereotype as the cowardly mockery that it is, and reject it; but the stereotype itself, reinforced by the conventional attitudes to sexuality which engendered it, destroys all poss-

ibility of faith. So our protagonist is unique, and cannot ever seek fulfilment for her emotions. Not recognising herself in any public image, she is thrown back into her private world. Isolation is forced upon her, and isolation she takes to herself, extolls self-sufficiency as an ideal, adopts the role of a solitary. At this point the play becomes rather boring, I admit: nothing happens; nothing happens. The promising dawn gives way to overcast skies. She shivers in the cold of arid introspection and the loss of all warmth from without, trembles in the inadequacy of fantasy which seems to offer so much yet finally cheats and frustrates. So total is her self-mistrust that all achievement becomes inaccessible as inhibitions descend

It might seem incredible that anyone could give up hope so easily, but perhaps few straight people realise that the labels they impose on us are not merely insulting, but also shattering in their effect on the way we look at ourselves. All labels are at best merely ill-fitting public clothes to our individuality, but those which carry with them a stigma can cause a barren loss of confidence if we reject them, thus depriving ourselves of an external description, or, if we accept them, an equally barren self-contempt since in accepting the label we also inevitably accept the values assigned to it, the stigma.

Therefore, after sampling methods of escape other than solitude - hilarious forays into heterosexual-ity (a humiliating failure for me, painful to him) and suicide (literally painful to me and distressing to family) - the realisation and acceptance of my homosexuality, which occurs in the next Act, brings little relief. I thought to dispel self-deception and find that, although some of the inner conflict and repression is resolved, concealment from others causes self-concealment, however strong the belief that one is facing up to oneself. Hence I still cannot live myself fully, and the dead weight of inhibition still flattens all creativity. Why do you conceal from others your...what shall we say, your propensities? Guilt. Guilt in the face of conventional values. Guilt destroys the last traces of self-respect and rampages through the unprotected soul: guilt resigns you to unhappiness, leads you to expect nothing else as your due: guilt puts you always in the wrong, always at a disadvantage: it draws its strength from the timidity it creates, it mocks and questions not itself...

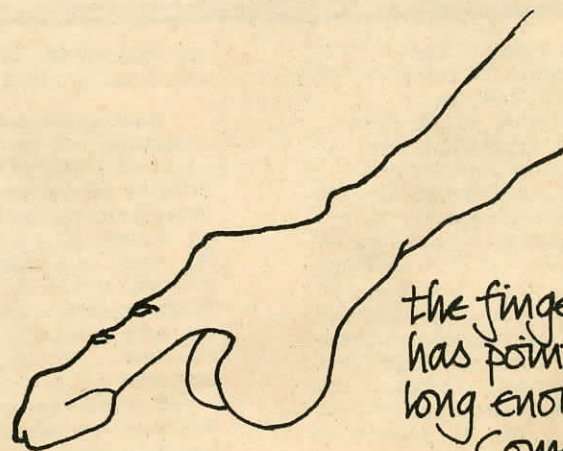
(The above was, of course, written after the annihilation of these horrors. For only then, in the freedom of self-respect,

could I see the pattern and unity of my past and thus recognise causes. Act 4 took place in the afternoon, with the sun trying hard, and sometimes succeeding, to break out and brighten Primrose Hill. Act 5 takes place in the clear evening, and the night.)

me you

GLF meets every Wednesday evening from 7.30, at 43 King Street, Covent Garden. We function in small action groups: Media Workshop, Youth group, Action group, Dance group, co-ordinating committee, office collective, counter-psychiatry, numerous awareness and consciousness-raising groups - and the WOMEN'S GROUP (Friday evenings, no fixed address). Come out, come along and meet your sisters and brothers.

Office at
5 Caledonian Road
N.1 01-837-7174



the finger of scorn
has pointed at us
long enough
Come out

Imaginary Oppression is Not Unreal

This can't be happening to me. Not to me.

I am my parents' child. I am my friends' friend. Of course they have queer friends, being tolerant people, one must not dismiss the mentally disturbed or immature who may well be interesting people, but one doesn't want to know too much about their goings-on; normal affairs are another matter, when they show signs of changing their ways one is delighted. And one always feels the nicest ones can't be really, they'll outgrow it, or did some trauma or other arrest them in it?

I don't want to be patronised, and so I am driving myself mad by pretending my feelings are not my feelings. I don't want to be part of a group of people who are different from "us" and who I was brought up to patronise. If I told her how I felt about her she would cease to care for me, even as a friend. I should be someone to laugh at and be kind to, not taken seriously. It isn't real, I must be normal, I must.

In the Middle Ages I'd have prayed to be delivered from whatever demons were suggesting such thoughts to me. Now I am rational and say, it is an illness, a psychiatrist can help. It can't be me who feels this. I can't accept myself as feeling this. I can't accept myself.

So into myself I retreat and hide, hiding the unacceptable self from everyone. There is a kind of safety in this impasse, no need for the poison in the gas fire or the aspirin bottle yet, which in my pride seems much the most dignified answer, which will silence

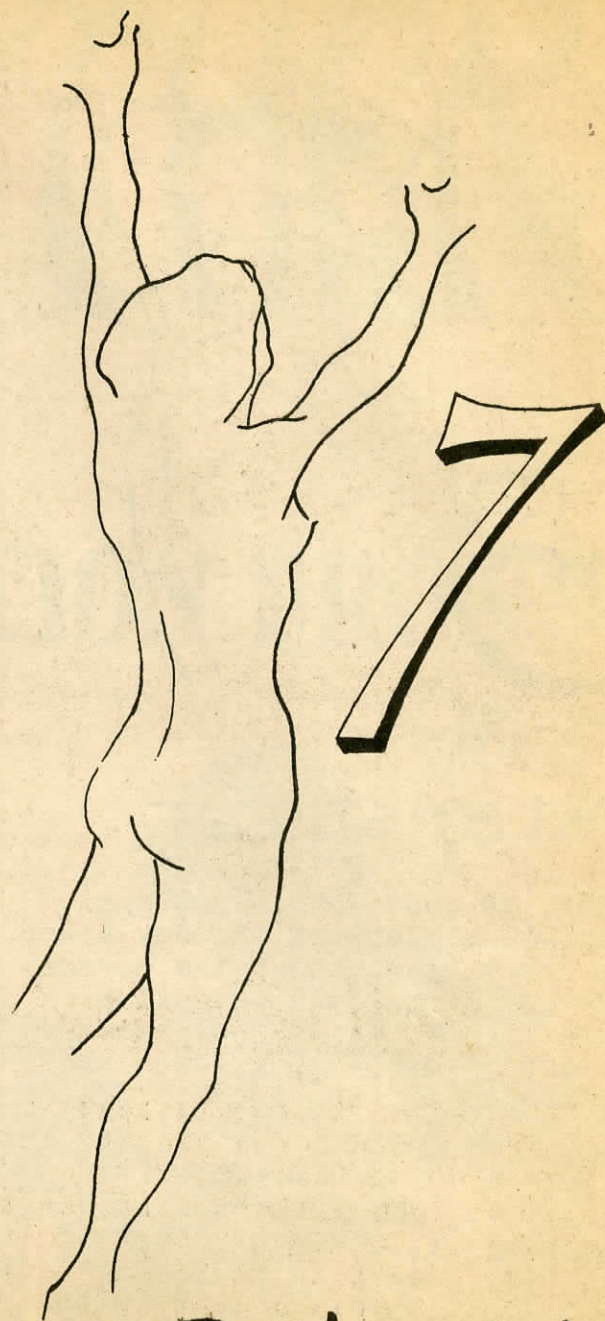
the voices which sneer at me, although the suicide causes far more pain than the lesbian, there is no morality in this, the voices are not moral. But it won't last, I can't accept myself as this hiding, lurking person either, I can't accept myself.

Speak. Come out, tell truth and shame the devil.

Speak parrot, act your part, learn a way of life you don't respect, act butch - what is truth?

It may be found at the bottom of a well, but it's not to be found where you're hiding, you will lose yourself and find nothing if you don't look out. You feel what you feel, your actions are your own, accept this, accept yourself, change what you can then, if you like, but till you've done this you can do nothing.

A human being is a social animal, suffering when unable to conform, echoing the rules he/she transgresses in his/her own mind. The court that condemns us at the back of our minds as an image (I don't say an accurate one) of real courts. Agreed: the above effusion is melodramatic, neurotic, what you will; agreed: it is a far cry from exterminatory persecution to patronising tolerance, "I have friends who are", the guy who likes to hear about his girlfriend's lesbian feelings since after all they don't really count, and so on, but a mild oppression is still oppression. When we face the tormenting voices in our own minds, we see they are echoing voices speaking in the real world. We should listen critically, know which is which, and silence both when they lie.



Breaking Out

I am beginning to explore a new way I can love. To break out of the heterosexual cage where the relationship was predatory, rigid and brutal for the man and an alienating performance for me. To break out of years of pornography - Hollywood-Lawrence-Mary Quant-I.T.-Supremes-Love Story...which has inculcated women with a negation of themselves - a negation for women in heterosexual relationships because they have masked themselves from themselves. Turning their anger at being shat upon in on themselves. To me "push it up" meant block me off. Block my identity away, choke it, diffuse it into millions of fragmented half thoughts where love

feelings existed out of fears, fears of losing...losing what? - a man - fears of walking straight through my own image because we women make men the personification of their concealed selves.

In loving with a woman we are tearing away the masks that hide us from each other, we are tearing away men's rotten conception of us. We feign ourselves beautiful, wild, funny, terrible. In loving we stretch out, we feel afraid, the land is new, the relationships uncharted. But to be afraid does not mean stop, withdraw. We explore, our bodies not miles from our heads, our feelings of friendship, warmth, touch, closeness, excitement fused - not compartmentalised into pigeon-holes labelled "emotion", "physical", "affection", "sexual", "spiritual" - and realise we are making a new language.

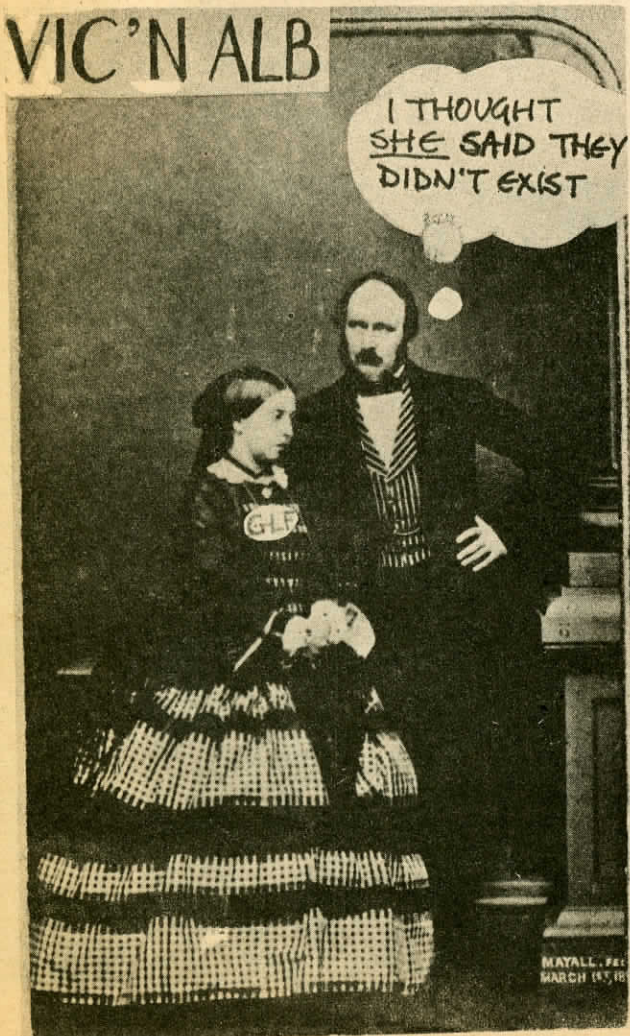
We can begin to see each other as separate but connecting beings, not as implements which become blunter as the relationship becomes a dead function. We can begin to question everything where power deforms the way we see one another, to end the practice of projecting our fears onto each other, but to talk about our fears.

Together we can retrace, retrace the steps of our oppression and by doing this exorcise the spectres that have ratified our oppression. The spectre of isolationism which has divided, dismantled our potential can be exorcised when we see that revealing what we are to one another is positive, the political essence of our strength.

The spectre of despair or impotence where women reach a point of consciousness through retracing their oppression together but use it as a catharsis and continue to live like a cat with nine lives - this can be broken by women coming together and realising that they can eat, sleep, shout with one another. Together we can make bonds which will strengthen through action, a bond which hurls us forward on together to future steps. Together we can make our realities explode this mad existence.

you and me

VIC'N ALB



HAPPENINGS

LEEDS CONFERENCE TRIAL IN EDINBURGH

ON SUNDAY 20th JUNE A PARTY OF LONDON GLF SET OUT FROM THE LEEDS GLF NATIONAL THINK-IN FOR THE TRAVERSE THEATRE IN EDINBURGH TO ATTEND THE 'TRIAL' THERE ORGANISED BY THE SCOTTISH MINORITIES GROUP ON THE SUBJECT OF HOMOSEXUAL OPPRESSION

(the audience is mainly liberal to trendy, cut with freaks.)

CHAIRMAN: Well, good evening. This is another Traverse 'trial'. It really divides into two sections. The first section is as much like a trial as we can manage. We must entreat you not to interrupt till afterwards. Each advocate will introduce three witnesses, after which each witness is cross-examined by the other advocate. Finally they sum up and we take a vote. It sharpens the issues. Then we throw it open to questions and discussion. The motion is that: 'All discrimination against homosexuals by law, by employers and by society at large, should end.' (The trial proceeds. The three witnesses for the motion are Ian Dunn of the Scottish Minorities Group, Tony Hughes of the Edinburgh GLF and Louisa Hunt of the London GLF. Things livened up with the first star of the evening Councillor Lestor, the first opposition witness.)

COUNCILLOR LESTER: Perhaps I can be accused of prejudice, but prejudice after all is a basic emotion given to civilised people who rise above the beast. And it is by this emotion that we enjoy a higher standard of civilisation. (The whole of his evidence was interrupted by loud burst of laughter and rounds of applause. He was followed by two psychiatrists, a Professor from Strathclyde University and a Consultant at the Edinburgh Hospital. They said that homosexuals tended to live miserable lives, and that therefore not all oppression should stop, or there might be more homosexuals being unhappy.)

PSYCHIATRIST: You saw in this play tonight. The longing of 'Why couldn't we have adopted a child'...

GLF: Why not?

PSYCHIATRIST: What a life that child would have had ...with a bumbling womanish old queer...and another...

GLF: SHIT

GLF: Right. Take that back.

GLF: Withdraw that remark.

CHAIRMAN: Gentlemen, gentlemen.

GLF: We'll listen to a certain amount, but we won't be insulted.

GLF: Come on. Do you think I give a shit if someone calls me a nigger? What does it mean?

(Laughter, more trial, and then the discussion is thrown open. Andrew is on his feet.)

ANDREW: We don't like this attitude of having a nice liberal little discussion, and going away thinking, it's all right, we voted in favour of it. Get on with it. Do something. Welcome homosexuality. It's not much in the population. Love it when it comes, look at it, have homosexual children. (There is not space to get down all the arguments and statements.)

COUNCILLOR LESTER: What is absolutely repugnant to me is this statement here that this man had intercourse with a small boy.

LALA: He did not say that. He did not say that he had intercourse with a small boy.

COUNCILLOR LESTER: He did.

LALA: He did not. I trust that man enough to leave my son with him. He said he had intercourse with a boy, not a small boy. How could he have intercourse with a small boy? Show him your prick, man. (Pandemonium breaks out.)

COUNCILLOR LESTER: It was still a boy that came under the influence of this so-called human being.

LALA: How dare you. How dare you call my friend a so-called human being. How dare you. I accuse you of not being a human being to say that. How can we be invited to an organisation that allows that man to say that?

(Pandemonium. Shouts. Laughter.)

GLF: Why are you laughing?

A VOICE: Because it's funny.

GLF: Is it funny that we're angry?

GLF: It's funny if you don't have to live with it. None of you have tasted bitterness.

(suddenly the shouting stops. In the silence:)

A VOICE: It's been a nice little liberal exercise.

(There had been a vote, of course. They had voted for the motion.)

GLF GROUPS FROM MANY PARTS OF THE COUNTRY MET IN LEEDS ON SATURDAY JUNE 19th AT THE FIRST NATIONAL THINK-IN. THE FOLLOWING USES EDITED TRANSCRIPTIONS FROM MORE THAN TWO HOURS OF TAPE RECORDINGS

Problems of Recruitment

GLF: It might be interesting to hear from someone in the Campaign for Homosexual Equality (CHE) how they get on with the problem.

CHE: CHE are recruiting by advertising in newspapers.

GLF: Are you ever banned?

CHE: Yes, frequently.

GLF: The way we get recruitment is through action.

CHE: When we started in London we only had a few people. But after the first demonstration we had lots of people coming along.

CHE: I'm not sure that we do get people through action because I think there are a lot of other people, mainly middle aged people, who are frightened away by action. It's not their fault that they're conventional.

GLF: There is action and action. When we joined the TUC march in London it was more or less a neutral action.

CHE: It was not positive violence. We were not on our own. We were demonstrating that we had an identity and character. And we got the message over.

GLF: That GLF is there, and it is representing something. Some action can frighten people off, but this action brought people to us.

CHE: You seem to think that the only way to come out is badges and militancy. Frankly it's down to us

— each one of us. From the age of sixteen it was important to me not to hide it. I have told the people I live with, my parents, my friends, the people at university. If everyone did this there would be no need to come out.

GLF: If you can do that why don't you wear a badge?

CHE: I don't want to wear a badge.

GLF: There are basic fallacies here. To start with, the people you have told are all those with whom you had a prior relationship. The issue is not whether your friends like you but whether you have an acceptable position in the context of society.

GLF: I would like to say something about badges. There are two reasons to wear them. Firstly, the majority of the population will say that they don't know any homosexuals. The point is that we don't have black faces like coloured people. Straight society is not forced to recognise our existence. The other reason is an internal one. If you don't think that you are being oppressed, ask yourself why you don't wear a badge. If your only answer is that it is politically ineffective, I suggest you are lying to yourself. No, you are embarrassed and maybe just a little bit afraid.

CHE: Most homosexuals are very, very conventional, and you seem to say 'Forget all about them.'

GLF: Conventionality that is typified by blue collar, white collar, dog collar...what have you. They are exactly the life styles that are reinforcing a limited form of sexuality that does not recognise, and has no place for, homosexuals. I would say that we, the whole homosexual community, desperately needs a new life style of our own instead of being forced into a caricature of theirs. The answer is not to fall back on the life styles which represent our oppression, which have strengthened and reinforced it for generations. Let's break the old moulds. For God's sake let's find an alternative.

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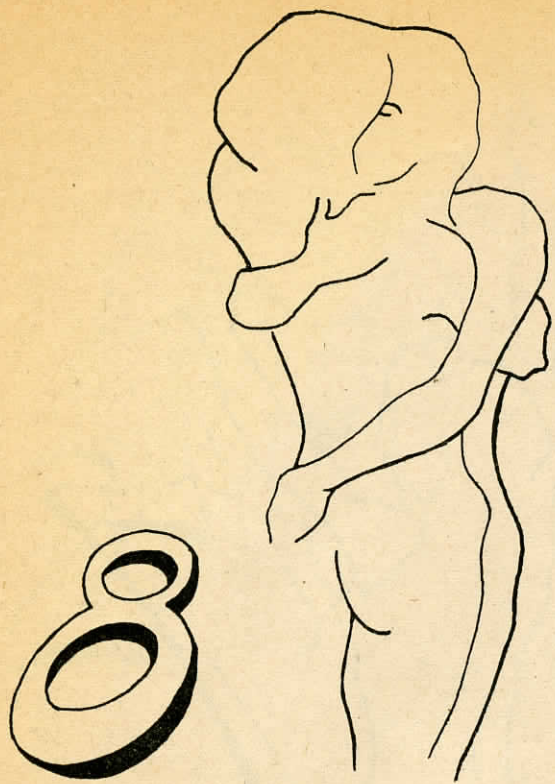
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HARLEY STREET

Friday, 25 June 1971, 1.00 p.m. About 100 members of the Gay Liberation Front gathered at the corner of Harley Street and Cavendish Square to protest the psychiatric practice of subjecting homosexuals to aversion therapy (consisting of electric shock and/or emetic drugs - drugs which induce vomiting).

Reactions were varied. "My god, these people are homosexuals!", "Well, so am I". "Charming"..... "I'm homosexual. I've heard about Gay Liberation Front, but I've never known till now what you were about. I'm pleased"..... "Look at that paint on my doorstep! You did that. I would have given you my sympathy, but I won't tolerate the destruction of private property. Pigs!"

Yes, reactions were quite varied. We received little or no press coverage. But here and now we would like to make one thing clear. We are homosexuals. We are proud. And we are angry. We will continue to protest at Harley Street and other places where people responsible for aversion therapy live and work. We will not stop till all subjection of homosexuals to medical cures of witchdoctors ceases. We will not stop till people stop condescendingly offering us their sympathy as if this should be meaningful to us when they have denied us even selfrespect.

STREET THEATRE AT BATH

Over the weekend of the 4th, 5th and 6th of June, GLF Street Theatre participated in the Bath Civic Festival.

Two actions were performed; a heavily symbolic liberation involving the ultimate rejection of conditioning and oppression by the liberated homosexual, and a rip-off of the Trial Scene from Alice in Wonderland, relative to us. Both were extremely effective; visually as entertainment, and propaganda. Our audience was stereo-typed bourgeoisie, so it was to our surprise that the majority of reaction was warm and positive.

A Bath GLF Group is getting it together right now!

People's Dance

Hammersmith Town Hall,
King Street, W. 6.

23 July - 8p.m - midnight
tickets: 50p. from GLF

