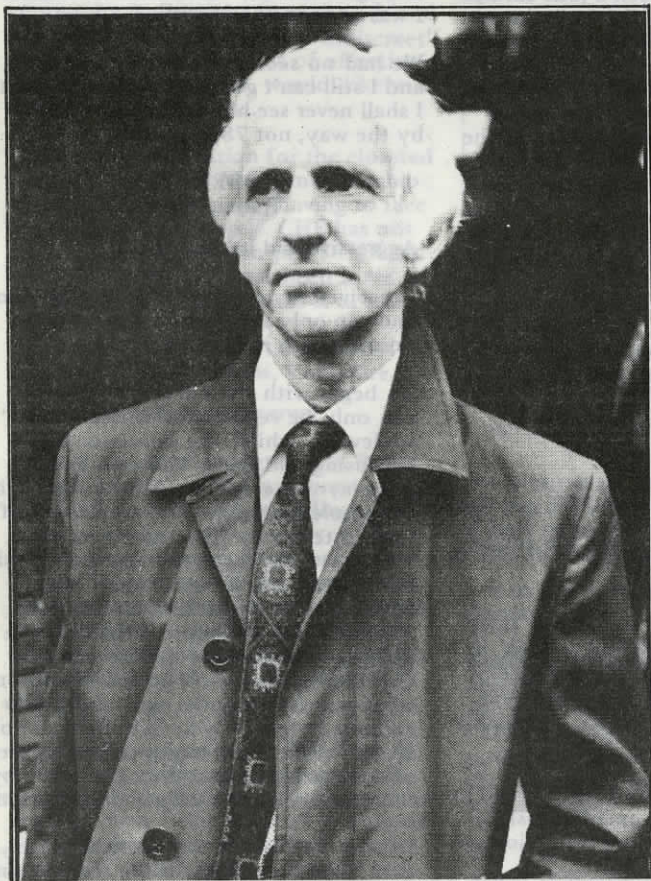


OUT

20p

For and about gay women and men



Tyme on our side

Paul Temperton

You are what you read

Alison Hennegan

INSIDE OUT

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- 7 A tale of two cities HEATHER COOK is convenor of Derby CHE
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- 10 CHE Executive column

OUTCAST

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are asked to type or write on one
side of the paper with double
spacing. The Editors reserve the
right to shorten contributions.

To obtain the next issue of OUT
send 20p (+ 10p p&p) or join CHE
and get it free.

OUTPOST

Keep it up

Congratulations on the first issue of
OUT. At last CHE has a publication to
be proud of. Keep it up.

There are two comments I would like to
make. The article by Michael Holt was
silly. If as I suspect it was meant to be
funny it failed miserably and if it was
serious he lives in a very different world
to me. It must have been a joke surely.
As OUT is replacing the bulletin on
alternative months, I suggest that there
should be some space for CHE news.
The Barry Jackson article was fairly
useless. There should not be a two
month gap for members to learn of the
activities of CHE at national level so I
ask that two pages be set aside for
national news and events. These pages
should be controlled by the executive
committee. After all if they don't
report regularly we will know even less
about what they are doing in our name.

JOHN BENNETT
Sprotborough, Doncaster.

Must try harder

I was looking forward immensely to
receiving my first copy of OUT and was,
therefore, very disappointed to find it
badly flawed by appalling lack of care in
the proof reading.

Typographical errors would not have
been too bad, although bad enough, if
there had not been further evidence of
complete illiteracy in the consistent
misspelling of certain words — orthodox
is a good example.

OUT must be more carefully checked in
future. At present the amateur fashion
of its production is a poor reflection on
us all.

ED SMITH
Richmond, Surrey.

*Point taken, we are trying to do better
— Editors.

Chartham remembers

I have just received my copy of OUT
and would like to congratulate you on
the first number. I offer you my best
wishes for an on-going success.

Denis Rake would have been thrilled to
know that he featured in your first
number, even though it was his obituary.
Denis had been my closest friend and
my confidential secretary for the last
ten years, and looked after my flat in
Sloane Gardens. Apart from my boy-

friends, he was one of a very small
number who knew I am AC/DC. He
understood very well why I can't come
out, and did everything possible to
protect me. When I told him I had been
invited to become a Vice-President of
CHE, he was most concerned when I
said I was going to accept. "Dearie, do
you think it's wise?" he said. "People
will think you are gay. Don't you
think it may hurt Barbara (my wife)
and the children?" But when he realised
I was adamant he approved.

We had no secrets from one another,
and I still can't get used to the idea that
I shall never see him again. (He was 75,
by the way, not 78).

ROBERT CHARTHAM
Rabat, Malta G.C.

Aggressive and irrelevant

I received my copy of OUT this morning
and can only say that I am most disap-
pointed with it.

To begin with the cover, the drawing
can only be regarded as obscene and
irrelevant, whilst the contents list is
confusing and badly laid out. Indeed,
poor layout seems to stand out through-
out the whole magazine. The articles are of
little interest to CHE members as a
whole: an unnecessarily aggressive and
bombastic article by Roger Baker
(quite out of character), an absurdly
esoteric and irrelevant article by Liz
Stanley (on obscene 'phone calls for
God's sake), an article on Southampton
(that was five months ago) and a two
column review of Mike Schofield's book
are not really what ought to be expected
of a magazine of that price produced by
this country's principal gay organisation.

If issue two is not a great deal better,
then I can only pray for the restoration
of the old monthly bulletin — at least
it's not such of an embarrassment when
visitors see it lying around.

GEORGE PURDY
London

Punch on the nose?

Michael Holt's excuse "Why I won't join
CHE" was deliberately provocative and
contradictory. He asserts that "self-
oppression" is somehow used as a
weapon by gay liberationists to batter
closet queens into a guilt-ridden coming
out. It simply isn't true. Self-oppression
is a very real phenomenon rife in the
gay world.

He says that talking about homosexual
relationships publicly is the same as

talking about wife-swapping or bizarre
sexual practices involving wet-lettuces,
i.e. irrelevant except to the participants.
Untrue. Wife-swapping or wet-lettuce
sex practices are freely chosen — homo-
sexuality isn't. Homosexuality does not
just involve a sex act, it is a whole way
of life. It is not just for fun or self-
gratification.

He says he thinks it reasonable that gays
should be asked to stop dancing with
each other at a straight party. "Of
course I am annoyed by petty prejudices
and grossly unequal laws", he says, and,
in the same breath: "I felt the dancing
nancies were guilty of gross indiscretion
and criminal exaggeration". Well, let me
tell you this, Michael Holt, if you
suggested to me that my wanting to
express my feelings about my boy-friend
(wherever we might be) was "indiscreet"
or that a spontaneous act of affection
was "exaggeration", I would likely
punch you on the nose.

There is no justification for the closeted
life anymore. You attack membership
of CHE because it means having to face
the truth about yourself. CHE has not
invented the oppression just so that it
can fight against it. It has been there all
the time — whether you like it or not.

TERRY SANDERSON
Rotherham, Yorkshire.

The Roger Baker we deserve?

I detect a note of sour grapes in Roger
Baker's article on the gay press. He
berates *Gay News* for including such
items as cookery articles — yet who
writes these articles? None other than
Roger Baker himself! He berates the
glossies, saying they 'anger and disgust
many people' — is that because he is
now no longer editing *Quorum*, and he
had trouble with his editorship of
Playguy?

Some years ago, with the first flush of
excitement as the gay press emerged,
Roger Baker's articles made interesting
reading. Now, "this sense of turbulence,
of excitement has diminished or dis-
appeared" and I find his articles are
becoming (for want of a better word)
boring.

If my memory serves me correctly,
didn't Roger write an article on the
gay press a few years ago in *Gay News* —
perhaps in another few years he'll be
able to trace the growth and decline of a
few more magazines and papers!

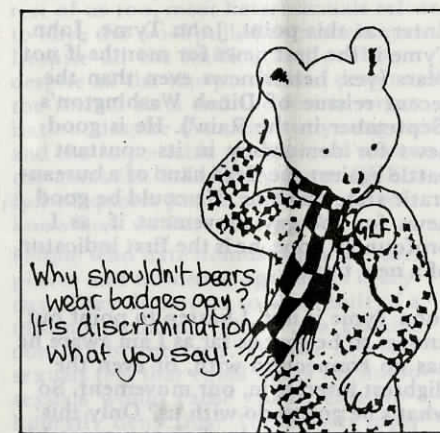
TONY BARKER
Nottingham.

So Roger Baker wants *Gay News* to be a
paper which doesn't appeal to straights?
(OUT, no 1). May I ask from what source
he would like them to obtain their
information about gays — from non-gay
writers in non-gay publications? Or
Quorum? Or are they to remain in
blissful ignorance and prejudice?

Come off it, and stop confusing "appeal
to" with "pander to". I deplore the latter
as much as you do. The former is essential
if you are not to suggest to the straight
world that gays are hysterical advocates
of sexual apartheid.

I write as a straight member of CHE
who feels offended on both counts: by
your implication that I am an enemy of
gays and must not expect to find
acceptable material written by and
about people whom I support with my
time and money; and by your suggestion
that my gay friends are somehow
betraying their identity and "letting the
side down" because they wish to achieve
mutual acceptance in our relationships
— as any people who are friends surely
do.

SUE PARKER
Leeds.



Boring old hat

I read the first edition of OUT, with
dismay.

First impressions are always important,
and the cover of edition No 1 was quite
the most distasteful thing I have seen
CHE produce. I thought that rather
pathetic cartoon image went out with
Oz? What ever next — Rupert Bear with
a GLF badge?

The articles were as old as the hills.
Roger Depledge has said his anti bumf
thing so many times, Liz Stanley
rehashed her information from some-
thing given out to the North-West
regional conference held at Manchester
about a year ago, and people get just a
little tired about hearing why someone
liked/disliked CHE Conference and will/
won't join CHE. Or perhaps I am not
typical and it was a good first edition? I
suppose we shall be able to judge that
by other comments that you get.

Although it was the best produced
from a technical point of view, I am not
expecting OUT to sell CHE as a partici-
pating, membership organisation. On
the contrary, its level of abstraction and
anti-CHE bias would make it more use-
ful in scaring off potential members and
as an ally for the anti CHE brigade.

As it stands, I doubt very much if OUT
would be bought more than once from a
newsagents. It is boring, old hat, and
appears irrelevant at present.

DAVID DANCER
14 Dollis Hill Lane,
London NW2.

London gay centre

Although a gay social centre for central
London has been talked about for many
years, no organisation has yet been able
to overcome the many obstacles, finan-
cial, technical and otherwise, which
have been expected, since the 1967 Act
the commercial gay scene in London
has shrunk, not expanded, due to local
residential opposition, licensing problems
and other difficulties.

The need for a central London gay
centre is obvious; the capital has a
permanent gay population of at least
500,000, and an enormous influx of
tourists, with very, very few gay places
to go during the day. The centre should
provide a wide variety of social services
for the benefit of the whole of the
London gay community, as well as gay
tourists, and should also house the
CHE London offices. The services,
which could include a licensed bar,
coffee and snack bar, bookstall, meeting
rooms, print unit and entertainments,
would additionally provide a steady
source of income for CHE.

It is obvious that a great deal of help
will be needed to carry the plans to
fruition. Assistance with finance, con-
version and redecorating, and staffing,
will all be required, so if anyone feels
that they can help in any way, or has
any suggestions to make, please contact
us as soon as possible c/o CHELO, 22
Great Windmill Street, London W1V
7PH, telephone 01-437 7363.

CHE London Social Centre
Planning Committee.

Points

As one of CHE's Vice-presidents I have
I think always been conscientious in
reading CHE's bulletins, feeling I ought
to keep up. I just want you to know
that reading the first issue of OUT was a
very positive pleasure.

JOSEPHINE KLEIN
London.

Bravo, I thoroughly enjoyed your new
magazine, great.

BARBARA DAVIES
Wrexham, Clwyd.

Roger Depledge writes most entertain-
ingly of the beaureaucratic beast and
makes very important points. But it
could be that we need extra organization
(not systems) — especially for rural gays.

GRAHAM FORD
Camborne, Cornwall.

Tyme on our side

Paul Temperton

As one or two readers might remember, I have in my time addressed CHE groups on many occasions, it feels like several million occasions. The topics ranged from "How we want to reform the law" through "Why law reform now?" and "Law Reform: the way forward" to "What you should be doing about law reform". As if this rich variety of fare were not enough, my latest excursion into the realms of public speaking was to talk about the need for CHE local groups to have a constitution (not, I may add, a topic of my own choosing). The group in question, at the end of the meeting, voted 13 to 2 *not* to have a constitution. So much for my powers of advocacy: it is well for defendants in courts across the land that I ignored my mother's suggestion that I become a barrister. But I digress.

These groups have, on the whole, been quite nice to me. They have nearly always been polite; they have often bought me a drink afterwards; sometimes they have even offered to pay my travelling expenses.

But I am bound to say that I have not in every instance been completely overwhelmed by a great desire on the part of the rank and file actually to do any campaigning. Or indeed anything at all beyond putting on the odd coffee evening. Any group convenor will tell the same desperate story of the many sitting around and grumbling while the few struggle valiantly to keep the show on the road. Not to put too fine a point on it, the lasting impression gained of CHE members *en masse* is one of apathy and spinelessness. Notable exceptions are of course hereby excepted.

And it's not just that these people are, generally speaking, bone idle. Most people are, most of the time. It's that even when a few of them can be persuaded to lift a little finger now and then, the resulting activity is hidebound by suffocating caution and conformity. Even so harmless and well-worn a technique as the Trafalgar Square rally, which could hardly be described as requiring an enormous effort by those participating, is still regarded with horror and suspicion by many in CHE. It will get us a bad name . . . it's not "respectable" . . . it's all right for trade unionists and students, but we have our positions to uphold . . . someone might see me . . .

These attitudes, revealing a conservative cast of mind which instinctively backs away from anything that smells like dissent, are not of course confined to CHE. They seem to be deeply rooted in the middle-class British psyche. Political work by the relatively well-heeled tends to be strictly conventional, strictly by the book, and hence strictly ineffective.

Enter, at this point, John Tyme. John Tyme is the best news for months if not years (yes, better news even than the recent reissue of Dinah Washington's 'September in the Rain'). He is good news for democracy in its constant battle against the dead hand of a bureaucratic state machine. He could be good news for the gay movement if, as I profoundly hope, he is the first indicator of a new trend.

John Tyme is not, I hasten to point out, known to be gay; as far as I am aware he has no connection with, or even the slightest interest in, our movement. So what's he got to do with us? Only this: he is helping to make dissent respectable — among the very sort of people who form the bulk of the membership of organisations like CHE.

For the benefit of those who have just got back from 12 months' holiday at the North Pole, he is a quietly spoken, sober-suited, middle-class, middle-aged college lecturer of middle-of-the-road political views who has been going round advising groups of local residents

on how to disrupt motorway enquiries. The enquiries' terms of reference are confined to what route the motorway should take. They afford no opportunity to question whether there need be any motorway. John Tyme and his followers believe there should not be and have made jolly sure everyone knows it.

And the important point is that they are not "long-haired students" or "leftwing layabouts" but office workers, shopkeepers, doctors, headmasters, and Tory-like female persons in twin-sets and flowered hats. People for whom "militancy" was surely a dirty word only the other day. It has been a tonic to behold.

They have told the enquiry inspectors where to get off, and assorted Mandarins in the Department of the Environment — most unaccustomed to not getting their own way — are now busily preparing to embark on the painful business of wondering what has hit them. A radical reappraisal of motorway enquiry procedures is confidently expected.

I don't for a moment see why similar demonstrations of outrage by gay people on some suitable occasion should not have the same effect on, say, the Home Office. More generally, is it too ridiculously optimistic to hope that some of the attitudes behind these techniques might begin to percolate through to the great supine mass of gay men and women, most of whom at the moment would readily obey an official order to lie down in front of an advancing steamroller?

In my view, the gay cause is never going to get very far until a lot more of us develop a bit of flair and oomph. That is to say, until we become decidedly more imaginative, rather more gutsy, somewhat more militant and perhaps even — dare I say it — just a weensy little bit subversive.

John Tyme points the way. ●

John Tyme



OUTSIDERS

Why I won't join CHE

2 Don Milligan

How to be queer and respectable all at the same time? That is the conundrum that the Campaign for Homosexual Equality has set itself. In a permanent flummox, the organisation has fumbled for years and years in an attempt to puzzle it out. Today, CHE is just as baffled as it ever was. In the struggle to unravel the riddle the campaign has become tangled in one misconception after another.

In accordance with its desire to get queerness and respectability sitting happily together the campaign has based its strategy upon the idea that prejudice and ignorance are synonymous. But the truth is they are not the same. It is really a question of sticks and stones — ignorance angers us, but it is prejudice which harms us. There are heterosexuals who are ignorant of us and of our world, but who bare no malice and express no prejudice. On the other hand, there are a great many people who are informed enough to avoid the charge of ignorance, but who exercise their prejudice against us every day. We are certainly not oppressed by ignorance — only the ignorant are.

The result of this muddle between ignorance and prejudice is the belief held throughout the gay movement that homophobia is simply a form of irrationality that is fuelled by a lack of information. This comforting nonsense has enabled CHE to promote the idea that education will solve all our problems and end our oppression. All we need do is educate heterosexuals, get them to know what we are really like and they will stop kicking us.

But if you are a sinner you cannot expect equal treatment with the virtuous. If you are dangerous you cannot demand the same protection as the harmless. If you are sick you cannot be considered as able as the healthy. If you are weak do not think that you can have the same rights as the strong.

Homosexuals are, of course, still regarded as sick, weak, and dangerous sinners. In all cases except one, CHE has confronted these attitudes with denials. In the name of education the campaign has denied that we are sick and denied that we are sinners. It has also denied that we are dangerous by asserting that we are weak. In a bold and thorough public relations exercise the organisation has committed itself to the business of reassuring

heterosexuals; we are simply a victimised minority appealing to the sense of justice and fair play that lie dormant in all heterosexual hearts. All the homosexual wants, so we are told, is to live quietly and decently and be allowed to make a constructive contribution to heterosexual society.

Unfortunately for CHE, and perhaps the rest of us too, most heterosexuals refuse to have the wool pulled over their eyes. Despite all the huffing and puffing; despite all the vice-presidents, despite all the formal suits and the formal organisation; despite the clean-cut young men and the respectable professional women, the con-trick fails. They know CHE is full of queers just as certainly as we know how we hate that word.

People who hate homosexuals use their power and influence against us every day. They do not do so as a result of a misunderstanding. There is a genuine conflict of interests. Hostile heterosexuals feel that equal rights for homosexuals would cause chaos. Can we honestly deny this? The answer must surely be no.

The granting of equality to homosexuals in all areas of social life would completely change all social relations between people. Children would be exposed to choices about their sexuality which would question the sexual assumptions of their parents. Family life as we know it would disappear and the heterosexual man would find his power being challenged on all sides. None of CHE's honeyed reassurances can conceal this truth from anti-gay heterosexuals. We do constitute a threat to their social and moral order. And they know it.

Whether the CHE national council likes it or not, the demand for equality by homosexuals bristles with revolutionary implications. And male heterosexual hegemony is too long in the tooth to be fooled by assurances that our programme is nothing more than an appeal for liberal reform. The tragedy is not simply that CHE's strategy is absurd, but that it is anti-gay.

In its desire to assure heterosexuals that it is safe to grant us reforms CHE has to present the image of the safe homosexual. Corrupt your children? Certainly not! . . . Do the shopping in drag? How ridiculous! . . . Threaten family life? God forbid! . . . Come now, you've got it all wrong. Homosexuals are just the

same as ordinary folk. Almost normal really. If only you knew. You'd realise that the last thing gay people want to do is upset the heterosexual apple cart . . . What was that about bad apples?

From the belief that ignorance and prejudice are synonymous flows the idea that the education of homophobics will end our oppression. But unfortunately, in order to set the anti-gay at their ease CHE must carefully avoid telling them the whole truth. Heterosexuals must be reassured by the image of bright young men in cheese-cloth shirts, by professional men in professional suits and by middle class lesbians with middle class jobs.

The butch dykes and the unsupported mothers, the lesbians on the game and the drag queens, the paedophiles and the transvestites, the rent boys and the cottage queens, the sado-masochists, the leather queens and the motorbike riders — all these gay things and all these gay people must be hidden from view. They are sacrificed in CHE's struggle for acceptance by straight society. CHE collaborates with the enemy. It is an organisation that participates in our oppression. ●

WE SPEAK FOR OURSELVES: experiences in homosexual counselling

JACK BABUSCIO

£2.95

Jack Babuscio, former Organizer of London Friend, writes of the very real problems experienced by homosexuals in society, providing sympathetic understanding and assistance in their particular sexual orientation.

SPCK

Holy Trinity Church
Marylebone Rd, London NW1

Do you remember 'Round the Horne'?

... THIRTY-FIVE YEARS ...
RODNEY & CHARLES... SPASM
... THE ANSWER LIES IN THE
SOIL... MANY TIMES... FIONA
& CHARLES... RAMBLING SYD
RUMPO... SEAMUS ANDROID
... DAPHNE WHITETHIGH...

REMEMBER THOSE SUNDAY
LUNCHTIME RADIO SHOWS OF
THE SIXTIES?

DID YOU LISTEN EVERY WEEK?

NOTHING TO COMPARE WITH
IT TODAY IS THERE?

WISH IT WAS STILL RUNNING?

WELL, WE CAN'T TURN THE
CLOCK BACK, BUT YOU CAN
ENJOY THOSE SHOWS AGAIN
BY JOINING BRITAINS ONLY
'ROUND THE HORNE' AND
'BEYOND OUR KEN'
APPRECIATION SOCIETY.

In 1969 after the death of Kenneth Horne, a number of keen 'Round the Horne' and 'Beyond Our Ken' fans got together, with the ambition of collecting a complete archive of these programmes. It's taken them seven years (not thirty five years!) to collect the archive — but at last, the collection is nearing completion — and ten years of programmes, that's almost two hundred editions, are the target.

Arrangements are now being made for group listening sessions, and lending arrangements from our archives. We cannot make copies available for sale, but lending of recordings for home replay can be arranged, for members.

For full details of membership of the society, send S.A.E. to 'The National Round the Horne Appreciation Society', 8 Fielden Square, TODMORDEN, Lancashire OL14 6LZ, or transfer 25p to National Giro Number 61 391 4007.

FANNY HADDOCK... ARTHUR FALLOWFIELD... STANLEY BIRKENSHAW... JULIAN & SANDY... DAME CELIA MOLESTRANGLER & AGEING JUVENILE BINKIE HUCKERBACK... JUDY COOLIBAH...

Second time around Anthony Peppiatt

I came out as gay in 1971 on a wave of self-respect inspired by a loving relationship with another student that lasted a couple of years. But you don't really come out all whole and perfectly gay, because there are always innumerable situations in which it's easier to do what you used to do, to pass for straight. It's like a bad habit you haven't shaken off or a mistaken instinct of survival, taking the heterosexual male option. Often it means simply allowing the assumption that I'm heterosexual or adopting the butch stereotypes, borrowing the walk of Clint Eastwood and the voice of Lee Marvin. A bit like foot-binding, really, as if I'm prepared to suffer any humiliation or deformity to avoid detection as a fairy, a nelly, a nancy boy, a poof, a cissy, a turd-burglar, a fucking queer.

Very early on I learned that, starting with the way you act, unless you behave like a "real man" there are some fierce penalties. Self-oppression is my obsession. On the other hand, these days when my self-respect is up, and I have some feeling of gay solidarity around me, it's possible to send up the entire paraphernalia of masculinity and occasionally show just how repressive and ridiculous it all is (with a little help from my gay friends). If taking a swipe at machismo is too difficult, then just explaining what my gay badge means to people who ask is worth a try.

But I'm really coming out again for another reason. The respectability of heterosexuality is no revelation, it can get me through the day free of snide remarks, anti-gay jokes or downright insults, and I won't face the likelihood of being attacked on my way home from the pub. For me there's another association of respectability. The earliest memories I can recall include homosexual feelings plus the almost instinctive knowledge that these were somehow unacceptable to everyone around me. Tied up inextricably with these early memories was the awareness that my family's downright poverty was similarly unacceptable. I think that experience must have come mostly from school, because we lived in Buckinghamshire where the green belt bourgeoisie reside amongst the leafy hills of the Chiltern Downs and the working classes lodge less luxuriously in council estates — ghettos by any other name.

Well, all through school I could see how different from me my friends were, from what they wore to how they thought and spoke, and I learned to deny my own proletarian family, I suppose in an effort to dodge the punishment of the class system. The other kids all seemed to have "ladylike" mums who were teachers and sang in the local operatic society, and dads who talked as if they were all Bernard Levins.

My mum looked after her four kids, smoked cigarettes non-stop instead of eating, and swore all day. She still adds "bugger me", "the little bugger", "I'm buggered", "bugger off" thoughtlessly to just about every remark. My dad was a motor mechanic and then he changed jobs to work in a factory making aircraft seats, but he had to work overtime whenever possible and would get pissed up with his mates in the local on Friday and Saturday nights.

School was torture because of my sexuality and because I didn't conform to the male role, boys being full-time anti-gay boys. But I developed skills that spared me from the worst atrocities at the bottom of the school heap. I played in the school hockey team, in the school orchestra, performed in plays, had an "academic ability", and was probably as precious as that sounds. By the time I reached university in 1969 I was well on the way with my plan of escape from the working class, determined to screw my bourgeois education for everything I could get — qualifications, a career, even a decent marriage.

So for me there was always a clear connection between the twin respectabilities of sex and class. I wasn't going to end up proletarian and queer, what could be worse, more degraded and despised? I concealed my homosexuality and my origin in the working class, elaborating all kinds of middle class images for my unsuspecting friends. I took on the privileges involved in being a heterosexual bourgeois man, regardless of the fact that they were all got in some crucial ways at the expense of the working class.

But since I came out as gay I was lumbered with an acquired middle class consciousness. I've reached a stage where it obviously has to be dumped if

I want really to tackle sexism in myself as a gay man. I still pass for middle class among my friends, and some of them have to be two-faced about it because they found out one way or another, which makes it even more like passing for straight. This situation has made it impossible to come clean about the class component of my sexism. Things like the way I use women as a retreat from the brutal male world, or the reasons why I cut my hair short to attract other men on the phoney basis of my "masculinity", the "hunting and shooting" of promiscuity — all of which are deeply self-defeating strategies that preclude caring and creative contact with others.

The links between class and masculinity are not easy to be rational about. I think that the relationship between being heterosexual and bourgeois has another parallel of some kind in being a gay man and sexist. A gay man is exploited by sexism but also in various ways still has a vested interest in sexism and is therefore sexist and exploitative.

All this shows to what extent sexual oppression and class oppression operate. It's why I'm angry when liberals talk about our society as being classless and free. In a particularly ugly way, I was both manipulated by repressive conditions and actively reinforcing them. And it's only recently and in writing this article that I can recognise for myself the significance of my experience, still guilty and ashamed. I think it's worthwhile to try to understand what happened to me and share the account with other gay people, to try to recover my history, the story of my sexuality and class. It's taken five more years since 1971 to have enough belief in me as homosexual and working class to come out again, and to acknowledge the writing on the wall in Holland Park — "Gay oppression is class oppression".

Blackburn and
Burnley/Pendle CHE

XMAS DISCO

The Underground,
Penny St, Blackburn
Monday 20 December,
8pm to 2am
Bar, food and fun!
Admission

CHE Members 35p
Non Members 50p

A tale of two cities Nottingham & Derby Heather Cook

November 1971 marked the gestation of CHE in the East Midlands. The first of many meetings was called by Ike Cowen in Nottingham and attended by 39 men and one woman, who I suspect was never seen again. After a lot of talk and quite a lot of hedging on how, why and wherefore of running a group, the first formal meeting took place in February 1972. A committee was elected and a constitution adopted. Men joined from Derby, Leicester, Lincolnshire and minor points all around the compass, but still no woman stayed. Meetings were held in Mario's club, (before the disco began), in the Cathedral library in Derby, in a Methodist hall in Nottingham and of course in a few of the members' homes.

Within a month or two changes began to take place; a woman joined CHE, came to the meetings and stayed. She's always been a stubborn person! Membership remained fairly constant at about 40, with a steady trickle of new members. It has always been difficult to sell CHE in Nottingham as the gay scene has long been established. A club in the city, another twelve miles away, and a wide selection of hotel bars and pubs made it easy to imagine we'd got it made. In May 1972 I became the second woman to join and stay.

The convenor was so desperately enthusiastic about it that I began to wonder what the catch was. I shall never forget the first group party I went to — the first really gay party I'd been to — when the other woman, Hilary, was ill and didn't go. Just me with all the men. They were kindness and charm personified but somehow I felt out of place.

Over the next few months social events alternated with serious speakers in Nottingham and Derby. Leicester set up its own group about this time. We got to know each other fairly well and began to feel quite content with being part of this nice social country-wide organisation, CHE. At this point, campaigning didn't enter our heads; few if any of us were "out" in any sense of the word. One or two of us had relatives who knew we were gay but that was the sum total of our daring.

Our annual general meeting in March 1973 changed things considerably. We became the Notts/Derby group, and Hilary and I joined the men on the committee. A newsletter, *Chimaera*, was

born in May of that year, probably the first CHE magazine-type newsletter although it rapidly had imitators. (For those who wonder about the name; a Chimaera was a fabulous fire-breathing monster, with the head of a lion, the body of a goat and the tail of a dragon. It is also a vain and foolish fancy, a creature of the imagination).

From here we began our campaigning, having found a dozen or so members willing to make the Supreme Sacrifice. Our first stab at campaigning was somewhat accidental, as we thought that we had asked Nottingham Samaritans to speak to us, while the 20 or 30 Samaritans who attended assumed that it was the other way round. Being too intimidated to argue, we were in and swimming for our lives.

We had gained another woman member from Bishop Lonsdale College of Education. This led to involvement with the students' union and a teach-in. Still being raw, inexperienced and cowardly, we promptly invited some "big names" to do the talking. October 1973 saw Glenys Parry, Barrie Kenyon and Al Steward of the National Union of Students, doing it in style.

In November we did our first local radio show — a 'phone-in' for a gay club opening — but a nerve-shattering event nonetheless. We were also asked to talk to a local comprehensive school sixth form, a mere 100 pupils which was quite an experience. We called for help again. Liz Stanley did most of the work that time. In a short time we were plunged into enthusiastic campaigning, although there were always the social events for those who couldn't face 'politicising'.

By now we were quite blasé about public speaking and some of us thoroughly enjoyed the captive unseen audience of local radio. Nottingham was also the venue for two CHE national women's conferences, which provided another handy list for us of all local hotels happy and willing to take gay guests. By 1975 the politically active part of the group was out and about talking to National Housewives' Register groups. We found this perhaps the most satisfying work we did; these women with young families are very useful people in our education campaign.

The group was by now self-sufficient

enough to run its own discos as a small protest against rip-off clubs.

Summer 1975 saw rising prices of petrol and public transport making belonging to CHE an even more expensive business. At our AGM in March 1976 we split into the three groups: Mansfield, Nottingham & Derby, maintaining *Chimaera* as our common newsletter.

What impact have we made on the area since 1971? Not as much as we had hoped, but more than we had thought possible at the beginning. Local members have found a way of expressing their personalities more fully; some of us have discovered a much happier life-style. Gay friendship has occurred where only sexual relationships existed before. Social activity has replaced solitary monotony. But not all is good – wider horizons have broken up some relationships; some people still fear that political activity will lead to police harassment and possible job loss. However in all three areas it is not uncommon to see an article or an advertisement in the press, and it has become relatively easy to get time on local radio. In 1972 a small ad with a phone number was an achievement; but today we have large notices in public libraries with our names and phone numbers and many branches of social and support services know where to refer gay people in need of befriending. Every week we advertise our presence. East Midlanders may still pretend we don't exist but they find it increasingly difficult to ignore us. ●

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You are what you read

Alison Hennegan reviews

Sexism in Children's Books

This little pamphlet contains four articles which suggest that children's books are, in the main, restricting and unrealistic in their portrayal of the options available to all young children and particularly small girls. The pamphlet consists of two studies by American sociologists of a number of award-winning American picture books for pre-school children, a British study of six reading schemes used in English schools, and a copy of the document which the American publishers, McGraw-Hill, gave to its editorial staff in an attempt to check sexist bias.

Much of the material will not surprise anyone who has taken even a perfunctory interest in the questions of sexist bias. I suspect the greatest value it will have will be, as a useful introductory work for those who try to deny the very existence of sexism: in that respect the articles included make their points strongly and persuasively.

The two studies of children's books which, were mainly written in the early 1970s, are perhaps particularly striking for their revelation of the completeness with which females are either denigrated or simply assumed not to exist. In the award winning books of 1970-1972 there were no leading female characters at all, even though the books were aimed at girls and boys.

In the 1950's just after a war in which the female work force had been vital and obvious, there was an appreciable increase in the number of books which took female characters seriously and gave them "star" roles. Women were depicted as doing more interesting jobs, as possessing and using initiative and being capable of leadership. That trend is now actually being reversed.

Moreover the situations described, the plots employed, and the pictures used frequently bear no relation to present reality. There is for example, no indication in these books that housework may be shared between mother and father. Only one book shows a woman driving, and then it is made clear that she is driving daddy's car. In one leading range of American children's books, no woman was shown having any occupation other than full-time housewife and mother, even though some ten million mothers of children under the age of ten are included in the American labour

force. There are innumerable other examples of an astonishing lack of realism.

This staggering disparity between the world presented to children through books and the realities of their own lives raises the question of whether the books are meant to be mirrors of society or fantasy: are they to portray and interpret the world in which their readers actually exist or is their function to reinforce an idea of the life which the authors wanted to exist? As one of the pamphlet's contributors points out, it is ironical that the small girl absorbing the desperately limited options presented to her by these books should be doubly betrayed: firstly by being assured that she has no future other than full time wife and mother, and, secondly, that she should be told this so often by women authors who have themselves escaped from so stifling an existence and who now enjoy the forbidden fruits of an independence they deny their child readers.

Things are always rosy in these books, and nothing may disturb the American dream. There are no slums, no broken homes, no unemployed parents, and no death. The seamier side of life is rigorously excluded. British reading schemes, by the way, are apparently altogether more willing to include such "dubious" material as single-parent families and unemployment, albeit temporary. But, on the whole, the books "deny the existence of the discontented, the poor, the ethnic minorities, and the urban slum dweller".

At this point I think longingly of those myriads of nineteenth century books for children, made (like the children who read them) of sterner stuff. You wouldn't find E. Nesbitt or the author of *Froggy's Little Brother* trying to pull that sort of shabby trick. But then – and here's the difference – they were writing before today's supposed glorification of children which pretends to cherish where really it abuses; they refused to afford children a degree of "protection" from harsh realities if that protection could be obtained only at the cost of deception.

From this mixture of misrepresentation, wrong-headedness and downright lies the pamphlet makes various important claims. It emphasises that whereas boys and girls begin their school careers pretty equally matched in reading and

writing skills, the girls fall back swiftly. It suggests that the reasons for this have nothing to do with differing innate abilities, but rather with the way in which girls are systematically discouraged from achieving in "male" areas. The contributors point out how the books discussed always relegate female characters to a passive, observing role and offer them only the figure of Mother with whom to identify. One particularly spine-chilling quotation is provided from two books called *What Boys Can Be* and *What Girls Can Be*. The verse devoted to boys' options ends: "I can be 'an astronomer who lives in a space station and someday grow up to be president of the nation'."

The corresponding climax of the girls' verse is: "a housewife, someday when I am grown, and a mother, with some children of my own".

In their attacks upon such destructive stereotyping, the authors include details of some new research in child psychology which supports their claims. They point out that whereas it always used to be claimed that children needed families in which male and female roles were clearly delineated in order for them to form a satisfactory sexual identity for themselves, recent work suggests precisely the opposite, and claims, instead, that "children find it easier to identify with less differentiated and less stereotyped parental role models". More research of that sort would provide useful data for lesbian mothers to produce in custody cases.

The authors are as concerned to point out the unnecessary suffering and confusion caused to male readers, who do not conform to the offered models, as well as the more immediately obvious harm inflicted upon girls accepting the values with which the books are imbued. They point out that the totally unrealistic expectations of marriage fostered in boys, encouraged by the books to believe that the home is a place in which no man need ever lift a finger, simply unfit him for what reality is likely to be. Moreover, they stress the violence done to children's faith in their own powers of interpretation and observation, since the gap between the world of the books and the world of everyday is so unbridgeable.

None of these observations, of course, is startlingly new and no dazzling new insights are provided by the work represented in the pamphlet. Its use, however, lies in the shock value of such value of such concentrated and depressing data and in the enticingly digestible format which means that it might actually have a chance of being read by those who most need to. ●

**Sexism in Children's Books. Writers and Readers Publishing Co-operative, 14 Talacre Road, London NW5 3PE. 65 pence.*

We speak for ourselves

Jane Martin reviews

Jack Babuscio's book

on gay counselling

SPCK £2.95

Three major aims are apparent in this book. Firstly, Babuscio tries to convince counsellors (defined as help-givers) working with homosexuals that they need to know "what it is like to be 'different', to bear a stigma, in a frequently hostile world". Secondly, he stresses the need to probe the creative possibilities of being gay in the present, rather than locating the causes of homosexuality in the past. Lastly, and the most revolutionary of all, he insists that counsellors should act as agents of social change in the way in which they offer help to gay people seeking understanding and assistance.

This is revolutionary simply because most of the help-givers work in statutory social work agencies such as Social Services Departments and Probation Offices which are concerned with maintaining the status quo in a heterosexual society. Like most other people, social workers assume their clients are heterosexuals unless there is strong evidence to the contrary. If confronted with an "obvious" homosexual, the tendency will be for the social worker to treat the client's sexual orientation as the "problem" rather than accommodation, relationships with parents, gaining self-confidence or a hundred and one other things which cause difficulties for people in life.

This attitude is, unfortunately, to be expected in a society which treats gay people as not only a problem but a threat. Consequently, many gay people themselves see their homosexuality as a problem, rather than society's attitude.

Training courses for social workers, youth leaders and other counsellors, while devoting teaching time to much smaller minority groups, persist in either ignoring homosexuality altogether or else covering it under "deviance", together with alcoholism, drug addiction, gambling and assorted crime (without of course mentioning the possibility of being gay, and an alcoholic, etc).

The logic of this excellent book is that the best people to counsel homosexuals are other homosexuals who are happy about being gay. This, of course, is the position taken by FRIEND. However, it isn't safe to assume that all befrienders working for FRIEND are aware of, and

can help with, the problems of all gay people. For example, some male befrienders find it difficult to understand gay women's needs, whilst other befrienders of either sex would find transsexuality or paedophilia puzzling. The problem faced by married gay people may be daunting to those who have never contemplated marriage.

Babuscio's book, then, would be useful to everyone working in FRIEND or Icebreakers. And it is nice to see a book dealing with the subject of homosexuality which treats women as being naturally included within its definition and does not see the problems solely in terms of the legal oppression of male homosexuals.

Apart from its obvious value to gay counselling services, this book should be on the shelves of every social work office and be recommended reading on every training course for "help-givers". The chapter concerned with the problems caused for gay people in "passing for straight" presents a vivid picture of the alienation from one's real self which this produces. Babuscio says: "It is difficult to maintain one's self-respect under such circumstances, and the voluminous research of sociologists like Laud Humphreys provides persuasive evidence to suggest that self-hatred is much stronger among covert, passing homosexuals than it is among overt gays".

There is a chapter devoted to the reasons why gay people marry and the conflicts which marriage can produce for them. This may help to dispel the assumption among social workers that, because someone is married, she or he is therefore heterosexual. Indeed, Babuscio estimates that approximately one-fifth of all gay people are married at some point in their lives but warns that this must, of necessity, be an underestimate since usually only publicly identified homosexuals are interviewed by researchers. Many married women with children, for instance, will be frightened to reveal that they are gay because of the danger of their husbands trying to take the children away from them. Also, although impossible to guess the numbers involved, it seems obvious that a significant proportion of men who "cottage" will be married. ►

The chapter concerned with coming out to families and friends will be especially valuable to social workers who may not realise the extent of the difficulties involved, particularly for young gay people who may still be financially and emotionally dependent on their parents. Sometimes they may be taking great risks in declaring themselves to parents because violent reactions are not uncommon.

The section which I found most useful was that concerned with helping counsellors to understand the problems of young gay people who experience conflict between their sexual orientation and their religious beliefs. Because I am an atheist it is not always easy to remember that some gay people hold deep religious convictions and this book indicates which sections of the Bible may pose particular problems for gay Christians.

We Speak for Ourselves is well written, using the findings of research where appropriate, and manages to sustain a high level of interest through use of extracts from tape recordings, letters and personal statements from gay people. The last chapter presents an honest discussion of the problems in evolving a new basis for relationships once gay people have come out. Criticisms of the "gay scene" are evaluated and acknowledgement is made that it is a ghetto but that it may be a crucial factor in enabling people to gain full acceptance of their homosexuality, much like an initiation rite.

Babuscio ends by reiterating his view that the role of the person counselling gay people should be a revolutionary one: "Counsellors must therefore encourage affirmation rather than apology, thus helping to ensure that gay people will no longer judge themselves according to heterosexual standards of what constitutes a 'socially healthy' pattern in their sex lives. The most important task for the counsellor, therefore, is to help gay people towards a new level of consciousness where self-pride and social concern are united, and where one's potential for love and human relationships can be fully realised".

CHE Youth News

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CHE Executive Column Friend & Foe

By temperament I take a rather gloomy pleasure in pessimism, and recently I have found myself a little threatened by the cheery way in which homosexuality seems to be becoming totally acceptable to many of the external organisations and agencies with which national FRIEND liaises: amicable chats with Marje Proops' squad of letter answerers, nice noises from probation officers and supporting actions from social services directors and so on.

So, being as I have said, a committed pessimist, it was heartening to spend a couple of hours recently with forty or more influential middle-class ladies, all representing key organisations in social services, health education, sex instruction: self-appointed moral arbiters who wield influence.

I had been asked to speak on the age of consent and homosexuality in the young and did so within the ten minutes allotted. Three other speakers, one in favour of lowering the age of consent, two against, were to follow. I made, as one delegate there was good enough to remark afterwards, the only lucid and cogent speech to be presented that day. And then it all began.

The second speaker was a member of the Responsible Society, who was assured (and responsible) enough to say that this was not a subject he had ever thought about before, because, basically, life was fleeting. He was not himself an expert (casting a nasty glance at me) but he was a student of South-East Asian history, and he reckoned that gave him as much right as anyone to comment. I found it a little difficult to follow the subsequent logic of his argument but I do not think I misrepresent him if I say that it was based on two hypotheses.

The first was that if homosexuality does not present any problems to villagers living in South Vietnam it can hardly be considered to present any difficulties in South Shields. The second was that since he had himself succeeded in living in his Scottish West-coast village until the age of eighteen without ever encountering homosexuality and had first been made traumatically aware of it at university, it followed, as does the night the day, that homosexuality must be an aberrant excrescence confined to the sewers of modern urban society. I did search

diligently for any other arguments in his exposition, but found none.

The third speaker was a Catholic priest, who was there to represent the official view of the Catholic Church. At the mention of his name many of the ladies (women they were not) smiled beatifically, and settled themselves more comfortably in their chairs in a vaguely indecent manner.

Well, he gave them the official view, quoting from this spring's "declaration on sexual ethics", published by the Vatican. The ladies' smiles widened. However, at the end, he quietly pointed out that the pamphlet had not been produced by priests working in pastoral care but by moral theologians, writing in a personal vacuum.

He went on to say that much of his pastoral experience, stretching over some thirty years, had involved the anguish and suffering caused to young homosexuals and their families. From this point, the man became positively revolutionary, suggesting that the Church must reconsider its whole assumptions of the innate sanctity of life-long monogamy and widen its frame of reference for assessing human relationships. He said things for which I would have been (and later was) shot down in flames. But not one of those benignly-smiling ladies twitched a muscle: their smiles remained firmly fixed. I don't think they actually heard what he was saying: the knowledge that he was Father X gave him a licence to say anything.

The final speaker gave a short summary of the work of one of the large counselling organisations, and was not inflammatory.

Then the whole thing was opened to the floor. First we heard from the author of a new book on sex education which has managed to act as a focus for all the respectable fears of enlightened opinion. She emphasised the "total humility" with which she had undertaken the work (always a bad sign in a speaker) and expressed how utterly she was appalled by everything I had said. For five minutes she was incoherent and hysterical and then, smiling with sweet timidity at the rest of the assembled women, begged to be excused for her inarticulation but said she was sure they'd realise that powerful emotion

forced her to respond thus. She implied that the obvious sincerity of her distress was somehow to be accepted as a valid substitute for any rational argument. Her confidence in her colleagues was presumably justified, since no-one challenged her or suggested that when she'd calmed down perhaps she'd like to try again, presenting a genuine case, this time.

To her rescue sprang a discreetly blue-rinsed, diamante-bespectacled elegantly accoutred woman in her fifties. She conceded that she might be prepared to think about the age of consent if I could adduce any real evidence of suffering caused by the present legal situation. (I had already cited many such examples in my opening talk). I gave her further examples and, with dazzling assurance she told me that that sort of thing — breakdown, suicide attempts, suicide — wasn't real suffering. I shouldn't let myself be deceived into thinking that some 20,000 case histories were an accurate indication of anything's being awry. People often think they're suffering and cause other, better people a great deal of inconvenience as a result. And anyway, I wasn't a mother.

This last point was clearly felt to be unanswerable by many of the women there, but I answered it, just the same. I was attacked for saying that parents were disgraceful. I pointed out that I had said some parents behaved dis-

gracefully, which was a rather different thing: pouts, sulks and rumblings from the relevant quarter.

I appealed to the bulk of the audience and asked if they really wanted me to believe that they apparently believed it was impossible for a parent to behave disgracefully. This was the only occasion on which some widespread response was made visible, as the majority agreed that even parents could sometimes behave less than perfectly. But did the original protester budge an inch? No.

A representative of the Scouts' Association was asked at this point if the organisation would countenance the employment of homosexuals as youth officers. He rather put the cat among the pigeons by saying that provided an officer was a person of moral integrity it wasn't really relevant what his orientation was, and he certainly had no intention of defining "moral integrity" in such a manner that it automatically excluded homosexuals. Given the number of homosexuals involved in voluntary youth organisations, this seemed to me to be the first bit of enlightened self-interest I'd seen all morning. But it was altogether too common-sensical for some members of the audience.

I watched the really rather alright Catholic priest squirm at the spectacle of his laity exuding moral arrogance and spiritual pride in appallingly sinful quantities. I also listened, fascinated, to

the way in which his interjecting soothed and calmed them even when he was really reinforcing something I had myself just said and been attacked for.

One lady, oozing caring unctuousness, asked me a question which was so loaded that what it really boiled down to was did I think it more or less likely that a homosexual would molest disabled children than perfectly healthy ones.

Finally I listened to the masterly summing up of an earnest young MP, who took such pains to alienate nobody that he annoyed everybody. Weary, amused, fascinated and furious, I made my way to the buffet after an acerbic word with the sex-education author who "did so hope we could still talk to each other". Once stationed by the cheese and pâté, I raised an expressive eyebrow at a woman who had seemed as irritated as I by much of the proceedings. She hastened across and said: "Oh, my dear, you should have been here for the earlier meetings on the heterosexual age of consent. At least today some of them kept their mouths shut because they know they know nothing, but at those earlier meetings, everybody was an expert". She paused and then, with quiet emphasis, slowly said: "It was truly horrific".

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