

GAY NEWS

EUROPE'S LARGEST CIRCULATION NEWSPAPER FOR HOMOSEXUALS

NSG

FORTNIGHTLY

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Gays protest at TV's Ripper

LONDON: Mary Whitehouse and a militant gay organisation working towards the same end? Impossible, we hear you say. But that is just what happened a couple of weeks ago, when the *Sunday Times* reported that ITV were to screen an episode of 'Police Story' called 'The Ripper'.

The Gay Representation Action Group (GRAG) and Ms Whitehouse agreed that this programme, which was put out on Wednesday November 6, was likely to be objectionable—though undoubtedly for very different reasons.

The programme dealt with a series of murders in which all the victims were gay men.

Tom Robinson, of GRAG, rang Mary prior to the programme being screened and she agreed that this country could do without programmes of this kind and promised to do what she could.

Tom told us further: "We then phoned Thames on her behalf and were told that 'The point could be taken in a boomerang sort of way' (that the programme would be offensive to homosexual viewers) but that

'I don't think we need concern ourselves with that particularity'."

But the gay callers who bombarded Thames Television with complaints had some effect—IBA officials saw the programme in a hurry just to check it out, and decided it was OK.

It is interesting to note also that when Tom rang Ms Whitehouse she apparently said: "Good for you. More power to your elbow."

A press release from GRAG stated: "At risk of giving this odious programme a bigger audience than it might have had, we think it's worth bringing our objections to public attention. Gay people can do without this kind of unnecessary sensationalistic portrayal in the media."

And GRAG's objections were outlined in a letter to Mr J Weltman, the Head of IBA Programme Services. The letter pointed out that this episode of 'Police Story' had been deeply offensive to many homosexual viewers in the US, and was likely to be so in this country.

It explained that the group had been formed because its members felt nothing

good or positive was ever heard on the media about gay life. All that was known about homosexuality stemmed from camp comedians or, as in this case, psychopathic murderers. The letter went on: "Enough prejudice already exists against homosexual women and men; screening 'The Ripper' can do nothing but harm on this score."

But when it came to it, both the gay organisation and Ms Whitehouse decided to adopt a low profile—in case the publicity they received did more harm than good in giving the programme a larger audience than it would normally have received.

And the programme itself? It was patronising, yes; it was badly written in the American-cop series ilk, yes; but the comments we have heard from gays and hets alike point to the fact that it was not offensive. It did have a heterosexual subplot interwoven around the gay murders—presumably just to remind viewers that that sort of thing exists!

On the positive side, the hero/cop chief did bring up topics which the majority of ITV viewers have probably never heard about—such as homophobia—and he dealt

with them in a 'sympathetic' (OK, not to say condescending) way.

All in all though, from a dramatic aspect this film, produced especially for TV showing, deserved a screening. The characters were not all the stereotypes one might have expected—no more so, anyway, than the stereotype hets portrayed in 'Coronation Street'.

Our hero/cop did rather blow his 'liberal' attitudes at the conclusion of the episode when discussing whether he and his girlfriend ought to have a child. He was perturbed about what his offspring would grow into (homosexual, druggie, prostitute etc) but told his lover that he was willing to take that chance... without this finale, the film would have been a whole lot better.

So, what was all the fuss about? Well, GRAG's actions were very important from a political point of view. It made the IBA aware that a gay organisation is monitoring the media and, hopefully, will make them think twice when the next gay programme crops up.

'Cassidy' accepts CHE invitation

LONDON: An international telegram caused quite a ripple of excitement at *Gay News'* offices when it arrived on the weekend of the CHE Trafalgar Square rally.

It read simply "WOULD LOVE TO ACCEPT YOUR INVITATION—DAVID CASSIDY." As we reported last issue, a telegram had been sent to David asking him to speak at the rally.

The telegram might have caused even more excitement if it had been sent by David rather than, as it turned out, an anonymous wise guy from New York's Gay Switchboard!

Zapped where it hurts

MIAMI: Members of the Transsexual Action Organisation (TAO) in America have been campaigning for more freely available sex-change surgery at prices below the \$5,000 at present charged for some operations.

When TAO heard that 25,000 surgeons were to attend a congress in Miami organised by the American College of Surgeons, they thought it was too good a chance to miss.

"We decided to hit them where it would make the most impact," said TAO founder Angela Douglas. "In the bedroom."

So TAO pre-op male-to-female transsexuals cruised the bars of the main hotels where congress delegates were staying, picking up surgeons. It was only when the medics got their new-found girl friends back to their hotel rooms that they discovered the package came complete with male genitals.

One surgeon from Philadelphia, after spending over \$300 wining and dining a pre-op at one of the nicer restaurants, was reported to have gone into shock when he got the 'girl' back to his room at the Dorral Hotel. "I was completely amazed," he said, when he got over the surprise. "I was absolutely certain she was a woman."

TAO also reports that post-op male-to-female transsexuals were busy proving to surgeons that the results of the operation can be quite satisfactory for all concerned.

Photo-diary of a great day



Pictured is a group of gays who took part in the law reform rally held in London recently. Our exclusive photo special on the day appears on page 5. Photograph: Peter Harrap (Report, London)



Smiling gays from all over Britain



Marching down Whitehall



Glenys Parry welcoming the crowd

Demanding our rights

LONDON: A collage of photographs taken at the 2,500-strong CHE rally which took place in London on November 2. It shows gays gathering in Trafalgar Square and marching down Whitehall to Downing Street. The magnificent banners demand law reform, as did the jubilant, chanting demonstrators. (See full report of the rally in GN58).



GN editor Denis Lemon



Tom Bigelow, MCC minister



Derek Ogg of SMG



Joseph Leckey (left) of USFI



Malcolm Greatbanks of GLF (at microphone) and CHE Honorary President Alan Horsfall (extreme right)

Photographs: Peter Harrap (Report) and David Hart (Boy Studio)