

GAY NEWS

WITH 4-PAGE GAY GUIDE & ENTERTAINMENT DIARY

NUMBER 101
August 26 -
September 8,
1976

THE WORLD'S
LARGEST
CIRCULATION
NEWSPAPER
FOR
HOMOSEXUALS

UK/EIRE 25p
US/CANADA \$1
FORTNIGHTLY

GAY CINEMA 1960-1976



A 4-page supplement with Alexander Walker and Robin Wood—p15-18

'IN THE PURELY PAGAN SENSE'

—extracts from John Lehmann's candid new novel—p19



Photograph: Bob Workman (Gay News)

IAN OUT, ALL OUT

LONDON: An entire social services office in East London is out on strike because its employers, Tower Hamlets Borough Council, refuses to reinstate one of its principal workers, following his appearance in court on a 'gross indecency' charge.

This is in spite of a ruling by a local Industrial Tribunal that Ian Davies (28)—until his dismissal Principal Area Officer for Area One—should be given back his job. And considerable pressure from the local government officers' union, in support of the gay man.

In October last year, Ian (with 12 years service to the Borough) appeared on a cottaging charge and was fined £25. He reported the matter to the Director of Social Services at Tower Hamlets and in November a disciplinary panel met to discuss his case. It was decided that the senior social worker be dismissed.

Ignorance

But, with the assistance of his NALGO representatives, Ian was able to persuade Tower Hamlets to offer him another job in the research department instead.

As former colleague Tony Bristow explained: "Somewhere, where he had no direct contact with the general public."

Throughout the long and involved battle with the council, it has become clear that there is a high level of ignorance in the minds of the councillors about the nature of homosexuality. A NALGO statement explains that the council's committees seem to see no distinction between homosexuality and a sexual attraction towards children.

Blessing

Ian accepted the research department post and with it a reduction in status and a considerable drop in salary.

As the council refused the union's offer of the Arbitration and Conciliation Advisory service, the matter was taken to an Industrial Tribunal. In July this year, the tribunal found that Ian had been wrongly dismissed and asked for his reinstatement.

But the council's administrative committee, on August 9, decided by eight votes to seven not to reinstate the man, but pay him off instead.

And immediately the news was announced, the Area One workers—numbering about 25—took unofficial strike action.

The workers' 1300-strong NALGO branch has since given its blessing to their move and is now seeking official recognition from the union's national committee.

At the branch meeting on August 18, the strikers' recommendations were overwhelmingly supported.

Petition

Support has come too from other parts of the Borough. Three of the council's seven social work teams have staged one-day token strikes on a daily rota basis, and a 700-name petition has been handed to the council by Tower Hamlets employees.

The fact that the council has seen fit to totally ignore a tribunal's findings is causing considerable unrest. "This is a threat to all council employees," Tony Bristow told Gay News.

The strikers are continuing to demand Ian's reinstatement and want the council's policies committee to convene immediately to discuss this. And they also want the vacant position of Principal Area Officer to be blacklisted.

A strike fund has been set up and donations should go to the NALGO branch treasurer, at 196 Cable Street, E1.

GAY PRIDE WEEK

See report page 2 and photo report back page

Red-hot memoirs

LORD BRADWELL, better known as Labour MP and journalist Tom Driberg, died on August 12 at the age of 71.

One of Parliament's more enthusiastic homosexuals, he leaves behind him half-finished memoirs which friends say are gleefully frank about his sexual adventures with politicians and other public figures.

Gore Vidal, who has seen the manuscript, describes it as "exquisitely written and wonderfully indiscreet."

But the account stops short before reaching Driberg's own election to Parliament in 1942—no doubt to the relief of a number of other Parliamentarians.

Tom was also helpful to gay rights organisations. When CHE held its first fringe meeting at a Labour Party conference, in Blackpool in 1972, Tom was the only MP to turn up. He spent a long time discussing tactics with gays present. The meeting took place at the Chamber of Trade, Queen Street...



QUENTIN CRISP on CHARLES LAUGHTON

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LISBON

—report on the emerging gay scene—p13

FRANCES FAYE

—a 'legend' comes to London—p27

SNAKES & LADDERS

—the gay way with Badgie Dyke—p24

GAY BAN COSTS A MILLION

SCARBOROUGH TORY Councillors have lost their town over a million pounds by refusing the 1977 conference of the Campaign for Homosexual Equality. Not only have they lost money from CHE delegates, but the Liberal Party has now voted overwhelmingly to move its own conference away from Scarborough to another resort. The Liberals' five to one vote for a boycott was taken behind closed doors at a private meeting in Bradford.

CHE's conference would have netted the town's hoteliers and tradespeople around £90,000—but the 2,000-delegate Liberal conference, lasting a whole week, was expected to bring in well over a million pounds.

Now the council has had the bald nerve to demand taxpayers' money from the English Tourist Board in a bid to "attract more conferences" to the resort. The money would be spent on a massive capital investment scheme to rebuild some of the resort's outdated facilities.

No sum has been disclosed, but the amount requested is so large, says the English Tourist Board, that the Board will have to apply for special Government funds.

CHE conference organiser Griff Vaughan Williams has written to ETB Chairman Sir Mark Henig to put him in the picture about the council's high-handed treatment of CHE, and asking him to consider the episode before making any grant.

Other organisations may follow the Liberal lead in boycotting Scarborough. Young Socialists have already moved their conference from Scarborough, but it is not certain whether the decision was a result of the ban on CHE.

Labour Party headquarters told Gay News: "We're pretty sure that was the reason, but we haven't been able to confirm that yet."

The National Union of Students have also found an alternative site for their meetings, but they took their decision because of rebuilding works going on in the town.

Other bodies under pressure to boycott Scarborough include NALGO (the National and Local Government Officers Association), the Labour Party and the Library Association.

President of Scarborough's Hotels Association, Bill Carmichael claimed that: "In general our members support the council's decision."

Bradford is also under attack for its refusal to host CHE. Ironically enough, the Liberal meeting which agreed to boycott Scarborough was held in Bradford before Liberals knew of that council's ban on CHE's conference. Liberal Policy Promotion Director Gordon Lishman accused Bradford councillors of being "both ignorant and prejudiced."

He added: "Even the National Front, the British equivalent of President Amin, have the right to meet freely to discuss and propagate their vicious doctrines. How much more right has CHE, a responsible, legal, campaigning organisation, to the same right and the same facilities?"

"There is very little doubt," he concluded, "that we [the Liberals] shall not return for other conferences while Bradford Council continues to deny freedom of speech to minority groups."

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private REPORT
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Les sez he didn't

SCARBOROUGH: The comments which top TV comedian Les Dawson was supposed to have made about the Scarborough CHE conference controversy (as reported by the *Sunday Mirror's* Showbiz section recently) were untrue.

Replying to Terry Sanderson, Rothamsted CHE Convenor, who complained to Les after reading the article, the comic says that he suspects remarks made by him in private were twisted, and then passed to the *Mirror*. He never spoke to the *Mirror* himself.



In the article, Les was said to agree with a local council decision to ban Campaign for Homosexual Equality from using the town as a conference centre. And it added that Les thought that gays would upset holidaymakers.

'Normal' people

However, Les says: "You're so wrong when you think I'm unfeeling about the problems you face—I've been around too long to have high-handed, biased opinions about the sufferings endured by humanity in so-called minority groups."

"What I meant and said in private was this: the resulting publicity in town about the conference was, for a start, bound to create ill-will."

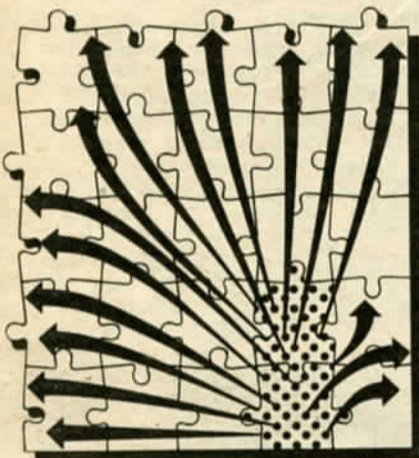
"And having seen some of the 'normal' people around in the streets of the resort, I cannot see them having sufficient open-mindedness or wisdom to look upon your cause with compassion. Please ease the hearts of your members regarding my stand in this matter."

The letter concludes: "Power to you."



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Numbers down on last year

GAY PRIDE WEEK had its successes—and its disappointments. Events like the Clapham Common Sausage and Mash picnic attracted more people than anyone had hoped, but the main public demonstration—Saturday's march through London to a Hyde Park Rally—was two thirds the size of the march last autumn.

Fleet Street reported 2,000 marchers, but a man strategically placed with a push-button counter only managed to clock up 828 people. However, a profusion of banners and placards made the event appear at least as well attended as last year's—if not better.

The rally that followed was addressed by a number of speakers including Ian Harvey, whose irony flew straight over his audience's heads, and who was booed for 'thanking' the police for marching with demonstrators.

John Lindsay had the audience more on his side when he spoke of "the fascist threat from the National Front" and similar racist parties. He reminded the crowd of the quarter of a million homosexuals who had been sent to their deaths, wearing pink triangles, by the Nazis and said that the only path forward for gay liberation was in unity "with other liberation movements, by uniting with women, by uniting with blacks."

David Steel sent a letter of support which was read out by Young Liberals Chairman Steve Atack. Mr Steel wrote:

"As leader of the Liberal Party I am glad to send a message of support to CHE's campaigning week.

"You will know that following Scarborough Corporation's decision to ban your annual conference, we have decided to ban Scarborough as the choice of town for our party conference.



"I hope you will regard this as more than a mere gesture of support."

Rev Peter Elers, the Vicar of Thaxted, said "We are all here because we believe in our right to love—and the most important thing in the whole world is to be able to love and to be free to love and be loved."

Asked why he thought attendance on this year's march was down on last year's, CHE Information Officer Nigel Hart said "As far as we can tell the out-of-town support was much the same as last year. This means fewer Londoners turned out.

"I expect some were on holiday, but I'm still disappointed. Gay Londoners are quite ready to go to clubs and discos, but when it comes to doing something for gay rights it's another question."

He felt that Gay Pride Week had been organised in too much of a hurry this year. Barry Jackson had been the only person who could give up the time to do a great deal of work on it and plans had only been drawn up two months before the event took place.

Learning from that mistake, there had been a meeting the day after this year's week ended to plan for next year.

'No pride here'

LITTLEHAMPTON: The Campaign for Homosexual Equality was refused permission to hold a Gay Pride rally and pop concert in the Green in Littlehampton by Arun District Council.

The councillors objected particularly to the proposal that there should be an information tent for people who wanted to know more about CHE.

"There would be wholesale proselytising and I feel convinced that the majority of the people of Littlehampton would be against this," said Councillor Elwin Hunter.



Like 20% of CHE members, 2.5% of GN readers and 0.01% of the capital's gay population, Bosie went on the Gay Pride March on August 6. A pity, really, that the remaining 99.9% of gay Londoners should have been otherwise engaged—they missed a nice stroll in the open, not to mention the satisfaction to be derived from solidarity, sisterhood, brotherhood... A pity too, that Roy Jenkins will be strengthened in his belief that there is little public demand for law reform and that the public will continue to believe that homosexuals are just a tiny, tiny minority in this heterosexual land.

And while on the subject of gay pride, a few special words of thanks: to Keith and Malcolm, who set out for the march but got tied up over lunch; for Jeremy, who is opening a super new gay club soon, who had some shopping to do with William.

Was fascinated with the possibilities of Walter Legge's suggestion in the *Sunday Times* for a replacement for 'gay'. Mr Legge (who very sensibly lives in St Jean Cap Ferrat on the Riviera) proposes to revive a word listed in the OED: "arsy-versy." Leaving aside what would happen if Mr

Legge tried to get *Sappho* to call itself "A magazine for arsy-versy women"... Picture, if you can, next year's arsy-versy pride march when, all differences put aside, members of the Campaign for Arsy-Versy Equality stride through London arm in arm (?) with the Arsy-Versy Liberation Frontiers and students from the university Arsy-Versysoes. Gravely the arsy-verses wave their banners: "Glad to be Arsy-Versy", "Arsy-Versy Right Now", even "BHS is Arsy-Versyphobe".

Suddenly someone shouts: "Give me an A!", "A"; "Give me an R!", "R"; "Give me an S!"...

Comments, on a postcard please, to St Jean Cap Ferrat.

For the sake of those few people he has unaccountably failed to tell personally, let it go down on record that Bob Workman, GN's dashing photographer, has just been circumcised...

Went to listen to the man with the engaging grin who, Sunday after Sunday, harangues listeners at Speakers' Corner on the horrors of homosexuality. Spontaneously (and without outside help), we gay men are

responsible, it seems, for the invention and spread of VD. We do this by: "crawling on the backs of other men."

Imaginative though this sounds, our homophobe would seem to lack somewhat in mental elasticity, for he answered one argument put by Alison Hennegan, CHE's staunch Vice Chairwoman, by accusing her of "crawling on the backs of other women"... And that certainly isn't listed in CHE's leaflet "All You Want to Know About Lesbianism."

As someone who only discovered that there was life north of Hyde Park when creeping poverty forced me to move to W9, I was fascinated recently to visit Preston, Lancs, and its CHE group.

I would like to describe the group's many attractions, but I have been severely taken to task for sexist and self-oppressive comments concerning the famous London Monday Group Hairy Chest Controversy, so I will confine myself to saying that Preston CHE's energetic, not to say acrobatic, convenor, Peter Wollny, goes to great lengths to keep his group happy. And he succeeds. □

Bosie



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