

# **INTERNAL INFORMATION BULLETIN**

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REPORT ON MEMBERSHIP POLICY GIVEN TO THE POLITICAL  
COMMITTEE OF THE SWP BY JACK BARNES, FRIDAY,  
NOVEMBER 13, 1970

Since the early 1960s the party and YSA have been moving toward a policy which proscribes homosexuals from membership. This was mentioned in the organizational report to the February 1970 SWP plenum. The evolution of this policy was summarized as part of the organizational report which was adopted by the August 1970 YSA plenum. This report was printed in the September 2, 1970, *Young Socialist Organizer*.

The main purpose of this policy was the protection of the party now and in the future from the effects of legal or extralegal victimization and blackmail of homosexual members.

The Administrative Committee believes that this policy is wrong. It doesn't accomplish its purpose and it breeds problems and misinterpretations both internally and publicly. In so doing it shifts attention from the central question in all membership policies and decisions—the security of the party, its growth by recruitment from the mass movement, its capacity for disciplined activity in all periods, and its political homogeneity.

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Most homosexual organizations have described the problems and oppression that homosexuals face in capitalist society. These problems range from the threat of physical attacks to the invocation of archaic and reactionary legal codes concerning sexual behavior, to occupational exclusion, the threat of blackmail, housing problems, and various forms of psychological oppression and social pressure. All of these are very real problems that homosexuals face to one degree or another, and which can lead to conflicts with the cops, blackmail, and susceptibility to pressures of all kinds.

Another thing which the homosexual organizations point out is that because of the depth and intensity of social pressure and prejudice, the psychological pressure on homosexuals is such that a homosexual usually goes through personal, sexual crises in which she or he becomes obsessed—to the detriment of other aspects of her or his life—with the problem of finding any fulfilling sex life under these conditions and in this society.

In the past experience of the party, this aspect of the life of a homosexual has led to membership problems. That is, some homosexual comrades reached the stage in a personal crisis, in which being a member of our kind of political organization and being able to throw herself or himself into the work of the party became difficult or impossible. Under these conditions they often tried one way or another, directly or indirectly, to change the character of the party into some form of therapeutic organization which would help solve the personal problems of the individual homosexual. We've had several experiences like this. What happened under these circumstances in the past was that a leading comrade in the area had discussions with the homosexual comrade facing such difficulties. No one can remember a single instance where there was ultimately any problem in such a person understanding through discussion that the best course would be to become a sympathizer or move away from the party. Quite often instances of this sort involved

people moving away from organized revolutionary political life. Such a person can't handle his or her personal development to the degree that she or he can be enough of a stable, disciplined party member whose basic fulfillment comes from political activity as a disciplined member of a combat party. Needless to say, this type of problem is not limited to homosexual comrades. We also have homosexual comrades for whom this question has never come up. Their personal lives, regardless of the problems and pressures that were entailed, did not conflict with party membership.

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As we have discussed this question informally, everyone agreed that we must put the discussion of our policy in the context of the changing objective situation. First, there is the change in attitudes that is gradually evolving in this country. There's no question that the general acceptance of different norms of personal behavior has increased. This has reflections in the legal sphere. One state, Illinois, has abolished all penalties for homosexual acts between consenting adults. Other state legislatures are discussing it.

In the last election the two main New York state candidates of the Democratic Party and one of the candidates for the Republican Party—Goldberg, Ottinger and Goodell—all came out with public statements endorsing what was in essence a Bill of Rights for homosexuals, demanding that they be treated like other citizens, that their private lives be their own and not be subject to legal or police restraint as long as they don't damage the rights of other people. Quite a few other candidates made statements—Walinsky, and several of the congressional candidates. This is the first time comrades can remember that major bourgeois candidates did this. The fact that they did take such a stand in the midst of an election campaign says a lot about the changing attitudes in society as a whole.

There are a number of cases now at various levels of the federal court system demanding rights for homosexuals. Legal fights against entrapment laws and entrapment practices have been successful in several states and municipalities. A homosexual in Connecticut is fighting to get a driver's license which has been denied him because of his conviction for sodomy. This case is being handled not by a small group of radical lawyers, but by the Connecticut ACLU. And this legal test, like others, is being reported objectively and favorably in papers like *The New York Times*.

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One characteristic of the radicalization itself, especially in the youth movement, has been discussion about sex. Adolescents have all kinds of social restrictions put upon them concerning their private lives, and especially their sex lives. The way they're treated in the schools, under the law, etc. has become an issue among radicalizing youth. So there's a widespread and growing opposition in very broad layers of young people in this country

against sexual repression and the enforced mutilation of sexuality.

This has been reinforced by the rise of the women's liberation movement, which has been even more intimately concerned with repression of homosexuals. This is true because one of the central questions faced by the women's movement is the question of sexual oppression. In addition to their class, race or national oppression, women are especially oppressed as a sex. Comrades are familiar with the many things which the women's liberation movement has done to draw attention to this—the publicity campaigns, the propaganda and educational materials that have been written by various activists in the women's liberation movement against the objectification of sex, against the exploitation of sexual relations, against the reactionary and debilitating sexual norms and pressures of society, against the possessive and compulsive sexual relations bred by this system. They see that the social attitudes toward homosexuals are simply another facet of a sick sexist racist class society. From the beginning a certain number of women's liberation activists and leaders have publicly identified themselves as homosexuals or bisexuals. And more and more the women's liberation movement has recognized the reactionary character of lesbian-baiting and the threat it poses to the movement if capitulated to.

Finally we have growing numbers of public political and social organizations of homosexuals, something that is unique in American history. Beginning in 1968 and early 1969 and undoubtedly sparked by the general radicalization and reinforced by the rise of the women's liberation movements, we saw across the country the proliferation of homosexual and homosexual rights organizations. It's probably not an exaggeration to say that almost every major campus in this country has either a homosexual rights organization or an organization of militant homosexuals demanding their rights, demanding an end to all discrimination, demanding a scientific and objective view of homosexuals as human beings. It's become the norm, as opposed to being unusual, for contingents of the more militant and more open homosexual groups to march in various protest demonstrations in addition to organizing some of their own.

This all takes place in the post-Kinsey period. For the first time, scientific knowledge of the extent of homosexuality, and the characteristics of homosexuality has become widespread. This has helped in breaking down the stereotype of society divided into exclusively homosexual and exclusively heterosexual people. The fact that individual human beings go through different periods in their lives, with different characteristics to their sexuality, has become more widely known. The fact that homosexuality of one kind or another is widespread in the population, that it cuts through all geographical and class layers, has been established.

There has also been the experience, the growing body of literature available and the evolution in the understanding of the younger generation. The younger generation has begun to differentiate between sexuality and reproduction, sexuality and religious norms, sexuality and the sex-roles imposed by the nuclear family system, and has begun to understand the relation between sexuality and class society. For this generation, opposition to restrictive norms and repressive attitudes that feed reactionary ideologies has become the norm.

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We had been evolving toward a policy of blanket proscription of homosexuals from membership in the party. The faults of this policy are several. One is general enforceability.

The more we thought about it the more we realized we were not enforcing this policy and we could not enforce this policy. Maybe one of the ways to look at this is to compare it to our policy on narcotics and marijuana, use of which is incompatible with party membership. We have this blanket policy for a variety of reasons the comrades know, including the chance of victimization and frame-ups, of which there's been a whole record of experience in the radical movement, and the hatred of many of the oppressed of this country for the narcotics trade. We've had a firm and clear policy on this question, which we've enforced. When we know of, have evidence of, or even hear rumors of the use of marijuana in the organization, we look into it. If it's true we tell the comrades they have to knock it off, we explain why and say they must comply with this rule or leave the organization. We've done this consistently and even-handedly. It's not been arbitrary, it has not been tongue-in-cheek, and it has not basically been handled one way in one locality and a different way in another. If our policy was to be the blanket proscription of homosexuals from membership in the SWP, we would have to enforce such a policy in the way we enforce the narcotics policy.

It is a policy that can easily be misused. If it's really going to be a policy, it would be the obligation of branch organizers and executive committees to check into the sexual predilection of prospective members, if one is supposed to proscribe a certain sexual category from membership. It doesn't take much imagination to think of the negative results of this practice.

If we do not carry out and enforce the policy uniformly, an additional problem comes up. That is, it becomes known that there is a policy of the party that is not enforced uniformly. If the policy is not enforced at all, then it appears that the leadership supports the policy only tongue-in-cheek. That would be a default of leadership. If it is enforced, but not uniformly and consistently, there would be the suspicion that the leadership was being arbitrary. Why pick this one and not that one? Over a time, this would raise the question of the leadership's fairness in carrying out other general policies.

Our tradition, the tradition of the revolutionary movement, has been that the private lives, the psychological and cultural views, and the sexual behavior of individual comrades is basically their own business. There's been a general tolerance within the movement, as opposed to a society which in general is very intolerant of anything that's different or threatens its morals and norms. At the same time, the party is not responsible for what members do as private individuals and does not take responsibility for their private conduct. While minimizing interference in or responsibility for the private lives of members, their private conduct and their personal demeanor must be subordinated to the needs of the party as a whole. If a person's private life became damaging to the party the individual is asked to leave the party. As I outlined earlier the party's security, its capacity to recruit militants from the mass movement, political homogeneity, and its capac-

ity for disciplined action always comes first.

Leaving the homosexual question per se aside, we occasionally have comrades who go through periods where they simply are not in control of themselves personally or psychologically. We sometimes have to ask them to leave, or find a way out of the party for them at a certain stage. The same is true with comrades who get on some kick and decide they are proselytes whose mission is to put the party on trial or to turn the party into something other than a revolutionary socialist combat party.

All individual revolutionaries are very interested in culture, art, sex and the evolution of social norms. But we must always remember that the party's role is political. It is defined by its purpose and the strength of its enemy. First and foremost is the organization and recruitment from the mass movement of a combat party that has a political program for the defeat of the capitalist state. A large number of questions of art, cultural norms, mores, etc., are not really within the field of party policy or "line." As long as we in fact apply the materialist method in our analysis there is plenty of room for divergences of opinion. It is a very good idea to have a little tolerance for each others' views on these matters.

The party is a political, not a therapeutic, organization. While revolutionaries get their personal satisfaction from understanding and working to change this society, we neither accept members nor do we keep members ultimately because it is good for them. We recruit members and we keep members because it is good for the party.

\* \* \*

Any sort of blanket membership proscription of homosexuals cannot remain and has not remained an internal question in the SWP. In several cities, we've been publicly attacked or asked to clarify our position on homosexual membership. The comrades have responded to

such attacks or questions with leaflets and public statements which show the difficulty of trying to explain to non-members the reasons for a blanket proscription of homosexuals. Secondly, such statements have shown the discomfort our members feel in trying to carry out this policy. It raises a whole series of concrete problems within the women's liberation movement: problems of recruitment, of hidden red-baiting in the form of slander, of misinterpretation. There's no question that the membership of our movement is in its overwhelming majority uncomfortable with such a policy. We see all the evidence of that. Of course we also know that with some newer members this is for the wrong reasons. It takes a little while for members, especially new members, to actually come to an understanding of what a revolutionary party is and what it cannot be.

But more is involved than misunderstanding by new members. What is really involved is an uncomfortableness with a policy which is really not viable in that it creates more real problems for the party than it solves.

So the conclusion the Administrative Committee has come to is that we should reject this evolution toward a policy of proscription of homosexual members per se and continue the actual practice which has basically been the party's policy on this type of question for some time. That is, we will continue to deal on an individual basis with any homosexual comrade or any other comrade who because of a personal crisis or personal demeanor, more and more finds her or his personal life in conflict with disciplined functioning in the party or in conflict with the kind of a party that can recruit out of the mass movement, that is going to become a mass party. And secondly, of course, we will continue to take into account the character and personal demeanor of anyone who applied for membership. We always have. But a general policy of proscription of homosexuals is incorrect.

#### MOTION ON GAY LIBERATION MOVEMENT PROBE PASSED BY 1971 CONVENTION OF THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

1) To approve the memorandum on membership policy adopted by the Political Committee on November 13, 1970.

2) To reaffirm the party's position, stated in the Political Committee motion of May 25, 1971, of unconditional support to the struggles of homosexuals for full democratic rights including full civil and human rights, and against all the forms of discrimination and oppression they suffer under capitalism.

3) To end the information gathering probe of the gay liberation movement initiated by the Political Committee on May 25, 1971.

4) To authorize the National Committee to organize, following the convention, an internal party literary discussion of the gay liberation movement and the party's orientation to it, leading to a decision by a plenum of the National Committee.

## REPORTS ON GAY LIBERATION MOVEMENT PROBE

[The following is a transcript of the reports given to the Gay Liberation Probe panel at the party national convention. These reports were not edited by the participants.]

### *KIPP DAWSON, NEW YORK*

On June 27 New York's gay liberation movement celebrated what it calls its second birthday with the Christopher Street Liberation Day March of 6,000 which culminated in a "gay in" of 20,000. That march drew together the major gay liberation groups in the metropolitan area, and it was largely through our probe of the Christopher Street Liberation Day Committee that the New York local began to learn about the gay liberation movement.

The various groups in the gay liberation movement in New York all see the "Stonewall Riots" of June 1969 as the beginning of the movement. The Stonewall Inn was a gay bar on Christopher Street in the heart of the "gay ghetto" of Greenwich Village. One night in June 1969 it was raided by police. That raid prompted the first major fighting-back on the part of the gay people there, resulting in a confrontation with the police which in turn resulted in the organization of actions uniting gay people against police harassment. This series of events was the beginning of the development of a new kind of gay group, and marked a turning-point in the evolution of the older groups, especially Daughters of Bilitis and Mattachine Society. Previously the only non-social organizations of gay people had been those which called themselves "homophile" groups, and which were civil-rights oriented, having as a goal integrating homosexuals, even if as "sick" people, into society. The new groups, the predominant one of which was at first the Gay Liberation Front, dropped the use of the polite word "homophile," which literally means *liking* one of the same sex, and adopted a stance of what it calls gay pride, which is symbolized in the use of the word *homosexual*, meaning, of course, *sex* with a person of the same sex. The new groups organized around the theme of gay pride.

Our probe has focused on the Gay Activists Alliance, Daughters of Bilitis and the other lesbian groups which share its headquarters, the Gay Task Force of the SMC, and the Christopher Street Liberation Day Committee (CSLDC).

#### *Gay Activists Alliance*

The Gay Activists Alliance is the largest gay liberation group in New York, with weekly meetings averaging 300, nearly all of whom are men. GAA has a three-story headquarters and publishes a monthly printed newsletter, *The Gay Activist*. Its weekly dances usually attract over 1000 people.

GAA describes itself as "a militant, non-violent, activist organization dedicated to the acquisition of civil rights for all homosexuals. . . .

"Membership is open to anyone who agrees with and supports the purposes of the organization with active participation. GAA is a one issue organization concerning itself exclusively with the liberation of homosexuals, avoiding involvement in any cause, program or action not relevant to homosexuality. This policy was adopted to enable GAA to relate to all homosexuals regardless of individual differences in social perspective. . . . GAA is

a structured organization of elected officers and committees. . . . The general membership of GAA is the sole source of policy decisions. . . . Social events, discussion groups, and a variety of projects in the arts are sponsored to help articulate a homosexual identity and pride, the feeling being these are the first stages of homosexual liberation."

Their goals are outlined in the preamble to their constitution which states: "We as liberated homosexual activists demand the freedom for expression of our dignity and value as human beings through confrontation with and disarmament of all mechanisms which unjustly inhibit us: social, economic, and political. Before the public conscience, we demand an immediate end to all oppression of homosexuals and the immediate recognition of these basic rights: THE RIGHT TO OUR OWN FEELINGS. . . . THE RIGHT TO LOVE. . . . THE RIGHT TO OUR OWN BODIES. . . . THE RIGHT TO BE PERSONS. This is the right freely to express our own individuality under the governance of laws justly made and executed, and to be the bearers of social and political rights which are guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights, enjoined upon all legislative bodies and courts, and grounded in the fact of our common humanity. . . . It is . . . to the imagination of oppressed homosexuals themselves that we commend the consideration of these rights, upon whose actions alone depends all hope for the prospect of their lasting procurement."

GAA describes its birth in November of 1969, as a split-off from the then-fractured Gay Liberation Front which was heading in the direction of a confrontationist ultraleft-oriented group. They say, in their introductory brochure that at that time about a dozen gay people "shared their concern—even anger that the potentials for social and political change regarding the oppression of the homosexual community were not being used most effectively. From common experiences in other organizations they all agreed that a structured, single issue approach would best accomplish their initial goal of law reform, to give the homosexual citizen the rights and freedoms granted to every citizen. In January of 1970, after framing a constitution, choosing a name, a symbol, and officers, this small group rented meeting space, put an ad in the *Village Voice*, and when two new people showed up, an organization was born."

GAA is organized into committees which meet regularly to outline activities. These include committees on orientation, unfair taxes, news, talk group, national gay movement, culture, financial, fund raising, and political action. Each committee has a chairperson who sits on an executive committee which holds open weekly meetings of about 20-25. Political action refers to picket lines, sit-ins, mass actions, lobbying, etc. GAA uses these tactics in fighting for equal rights legislation or in "zapping" various institutions of gay oppression.

GAA was the only New York City group to organize an action around specific demands during Gay Pride Week which preceded the Christopher Street march. On June 24 several hundred gay people joined in their candlelight march to City Hall which demanded passage of a city bill which would have extended existing fair employment legislation to cover homosexuals. Nine GAA leaders were arrested at City Hall the next day when

they attempted to enter City Hall to talk with officials about the bill. That night one of the GAA leaders, Arthur Evans, spoke on Lower Manhattan's Militant Labor Forum's Gay Pride Week panel.

During the 1970 election campaigns GAA, while not formally endorsing candidates, focused a great deal of time and attention on exposing candidates hostile to civil rights for homosexuals and "informing the gay community about pro-gay rights candidates." Bella Abzug received a great deal of favorable publicity from GAA members.

During July GAA organized 2-3 busloads of people to go to Bridgeport, Conn., to join in a demonstration in support of people who were being attacked for their participation in a gay liberation demonstration there June 20.

Of the Christopher St. march the current issue of their newsletter says: "The Christopher Street Liberation Day March was a beautiful and inspiring event, an exuberant expression of freedom, pride, and love. . . . It would be a mistake, however, to feel that the millenium had come, that the struggle for gay liberation had been won. For every gay person who marched this year, a hundred stayed home or went to the beach for the weekend. The movement, though strong, has still failed to reach and inspire the large majority of gay people in New York City and elsewhere. There is a danger of our becoming too self-satisfied, too complacent. . . . We have no time to sit back and congratulate ourselves on how far we have come: we still have a long way to go, and we will only reach our goal if we travel together."

GAA members, while predominantly young, include a full spectrum of gay male activists from anarchists to socialists to liberal Democrats to conservatives.

The Student Mobilization Committee's Gay Task Force played an important role in mobilizing gay people for the April 24 antiwar demonstration. The Gay Task Force nationally put out 30,000 leaflets, 5000 buttons, and posters and brochures, the bulk of which were distributed in New York. The Task Force held several meetings prior to April 24, the largest of which was attended by about 20 gay people, including GAA members. The Gay Task Force also helped to build gay participation in the NPAC convention this summer with a letter which was signed by leaders of the gay liberation movement around the country.

The organized lesbian movement in New York is centered at the loft of Daughters of Bilitis. DOB is the oldest lesbian group. It was formed in the '50s, and in the last few months has undergone some organizational changes which reflect a recent influx of new members who have participated in the women's liberation movement. In 1970 DOB decided to change from a national organization into a federation of autonomous chapters. NYC DOB has a large loft. It currently holds activities or meetings about three or four evenings a week. Its meetings average about 80 women, and its weekly dances usually attract more.

DOB now seems to be composed of three layers of women: (1) the women who relate to DOB as a social center, many of whom are not openly gay outside of the DOB loft, and virtually all of whom have been in DOB for some time; (2) an old core of DOB women who seek to challenge, in one way or another, society's repression of lesbian rights, still predominantly "integration" oriented but some of whom are seemingly receptive to the militancy

of the new movement; (3) younger, newer women, a significant number of whom have been in the women's liberation movement and have a confrontationalist and/or living-room feminist, counter-culture perspective. DOB's current officers reflect an attempt to bring these three layers together. The co-chairwomen are Anna Sanchez, one of the women who helped kick us out of the Women's Center, and Tina Mandel, a long-time DOBer.

DOB recently held a constitutional convention where it redefined its goals from helping the lesbian adjust to society to a more militant stance. At the same time DOB decided to open its loft to all lesbian groups, and currently shares it with the Gay Women's Liberation Front and Radicalesbians.

Under the influence of women who have been among our opponents in the women's liberation movement, the DOB loft has become an organizing center for anti-mass-action forces in the women's movement. DOB women, along with virtually all of the members of GWLF and Radicalesbians (both of which are smaller than DOB), were among the leaders of the anti-mass-action perspective for the abortion movement. Many of the women who were mobilized by Joanne Steele and others to disrupt pre-conference meetings of WONAAC, and the abortion conference itself, came from the DOB loft. During the conference some of the WISE leaders prepared a special leaflet to be distributed at a DOB dance calling on all lesbians to attend the Sunday session to vote down the "anti-lesbian" women there.

This use of the DOB loft began around the time of the June 12 planning meeting for the abortion conference. Following the role that gay comrades played in defeating the motion to add to the conference call a demand for "freedom of sexual expression," GWLF members and other women from the DOB loft went in force to a Christopher Street Liberation Day Committee meeting to demand that the two women comrades there, Eva Chertov and myself, be excluded from CSLDC meetings and activities. Shortly after that a motion was passed at a DOB meeting excluding SWP members, or members of what they called any SWP or YSA "front," (including NPAC, the SMC, and WONAAC) from attending DOB meetings. From that time on the major activity at the DOB loft, aside from social events, seems to have been organizing women to oppose the single-issue, mass-action perspective for the abortion movement.

DOB, GWLF and Radicalesbians supported the Christopher Street march but did little to help build it, other than publicizing it to their own members.

NYC DOB publishes a monthly mimeographed newsletter called *The Lesbian Letter*.

#### *CSLDC*

The Christopher Street march was organized by the Christopher Street Liberation Day Committee, a group that has existed with varying degrees of activity and varying composition since the last march. CSLDC is organized on a steering-committee-like basis, and held no mass meetings in preparation for the march. Meetings averaged about 30, including representatives from most of the groups in New York City and several from out of town. Its work was carried out by workgroups (sub-committees).

The leadership of the CSLDC came primarily from a half dozen gay men, and two women, all of whom have been in homophile and then gay liberation groups

or circles for a number of years, most of whom were not currently members of other gay groups.

The character of the Christopher Street march had been established by the time (late March) we began attending meetings. It had been decided that there would be no demands, and no rally, on that day; that the day would be limited to a celebration of gay pride and gay unity, and would be built around the theme that gay is good.

The march was built through mailings to groups around the country, regular news releases, the distribution of leaflets, posters, and buttons, and weekly ads in the *Village Voice*.

The march was preceded by Gay Pride Week, which included activities by several of the gay groups designed to publicize themselves and recruit new members, all of which were advertised in literature and news releases distributed by the CSLDC. Most of these events were social. On the day before the march an all-day series of workshops, called the Gay Liberation Forum, was sponsored by the CSLDC. 300 people participated, a majority of whom were women. The workshop on lesbianism and the women's liberation movement was among the largest, and attracted both our opponents and a number of serious women. During a two-hour discussion on the WONAAC and the abortion conference, at least one woman who had been a spokesperson for WISE at the June 12 planning meeting became convinced enough of our approach to the question of lesbianism and the abortion movement to go back to her home and help organize support for it, and be the main spokesperson for it at the abortion conference.

As I mentioned, at the June 13 CSLDC meeting about eight women from the DOB loft, none of whom had been active in CSLDC, led by Martha Shelley, walked in to demand that Eva and I be excluded from participating in CSLDC meetings on the basis of our participation in the June 12 abortion conference planning meeting. They interrupted the meeting to read a statement which basically (1) claimed that at the abortion meeting Eva and I, as lesbians, had led a fight against the recognition of lesbian demands; (2) therefore they doubted whether we were really lesbians (the statement described us as "heterosexual imposters"); (3) therefore we were the "oppressors" of lesbians; (4) therefore "the lesbians" couldn't work on the same committee as Eva and me; (5) therefore they demanded that we be kicked out. During a highly emotional five-hour debate and discussion, most of the members of the committee expressed hostility to what they thought we did at the abortion meeting, but defended non-exclusion in the CSLDC, in spite of their strong desire to involve these women in the committee.

#### *Gay Liberation Front of the Tri-Cities*

There are several important gay liberation groups in our region, but I want to report on one which stands out in importance. This is the Gay Liberation Front of the Tri-Cities, based in Albany, N. Y. This is the group which organized the March 1971 march on Albany of 1500, which was one of the actions with the sharpest political focus in our area this year. It was also impressively organized, and attracted a wide spectrum of groups. The march demanded: repeal of the sodomy laws, repeal of the loitering laws, repeal of the solicitation laws, repeal of the impersonation laws, enactment of fair employment for gays legislation, and enactment of fair housing for gays legislation. The march was organized on a non-

exclusionary basis with the aim of uniting everyone possible around the demands.

GLFTC organized a week of Gay Pride activities culminating in bringing people to New York for the Christopher Street march. They were also active participants in the Gay Task Force, both for the April 24 demonstration and for the NPAC convention. Their representatives at the June 13 CSLDC meeting were among the strongest speakers in favor of nonexclusion, and went out of their way to commend the SWP and to point out *The Militant's* coverage of the gay liberation movement. Leaders of the group have sold *The Militant* and spoken at a Militant Labor Forum.

#### *YSA and SWP Activities*

As part of our probe, both the Lower Manhattan and the Upper West Side Militant Labor Forums had Gay Pride Week panels around the time of the Christopher Street march. Arthur Evans represented the Gay Activists Alliance at both forums. The Lower Manhattan forum included a spokesperson for the GLFTC and one gay comrade, and the Upper West Side panel included one comrade and a woman leader of the CSLDC. Both forums were among the largest of each branch's forums since the division, and like the YSA educational weekend panel, both elicited much discussion and both impressed the non-comrades who spoke at them.

We also sell at most major gay liberation activities, and have found a growing interest in *The Militant*.

#### *Gay Press*

As with the women's liberation movement, the publications of the gay movement tend to reflect only certain parts of the movement. The three publications of most popularity in New York reflect this. *Gay* is a biweekly newspaper which balances between the gay-bar, nude-photo scene and the gay liberation movement. It has carried an editorial and good articles on the Gay Task Force, as well as a full-page attack on our panel at the YSA educational conference, condemning us primarily for being johnny-come-latelies.

*Come Out!*, which is published irregularly, has been an organ for confrontationists and counter-culturalists in the gay movement. Martha Shelley has been among its regular contributors. Its latest issue contains attacks on us in five separate places.

*Rat*, while not a gay newspaper, is circulated in the gay movement and attempts to represent itself as a publication of a significant grouping of lesbians. It, too, is basically counter-institution oriented, and rarely comes out without an attack on us. The latest issue contains a full-page attack on WONAAC and the abortion conference, and a call for women to join in organizing opposition to it.

#### *EVELYN SELL, AUSTIN*

Our probe in Austin consisted of discussing gay liberation with several activists in that movement. One that we spoke with most extensively was a founder of the Austin Gay Liberation Movement and is still a leader of it.

Austin Gay Liberation began in the fall of 1970 with about 30 people at its first meeting. Since the university refused it student-organization status, they utilized the SMC off-campus office for their first meeting. They attempted to meet in the dorms, but the university administration also refused this space. Their first activities included pickets and a civil liberties drive to gain campus



organization status. To this day, the university has refused this status and their fight still continues and it is going into a court situation.

About the only political people in Gay Liberation at its inception were some ex-SDSers. One leader of Gay Liberation is very friendly to the YSA and a very active SMCer who works closely with us in antiwar work. A few women came to these first meetings, but they felt quite alienated by the male chauvinism exhibited there and they have begun to build a gay women's group as a result of the national conference that was held there several months ago. The Austin group did host this national gay liberation conference that was held in a Unitarian Church in late March of this year. During the conference gay women held a separate workshop from which an ongoing Austin group has been formed. This gay women's group has its own meetings, dances, etc. They attend some of the meetings of the men's movement and they've helped the men's gay movement financially through the money they've made through these dances. There are about 20 women active in this particular group with one ex-SWP comrade who has asked to rejoin the branch.

There are no political tendencies actively orienting toward gay liberation actions, although one Spartacist has attended some of their meetings. In the state, there are groups in Austin, Houston and Denton—mainly in mid-Texas. However, people did come from some small outlying areas to the national conference held in Austin during March.

Austin Gay Liberation now includes few politicians, no CPers, or even CP influence that we can tell. The Spartacists have a friendly attitude towards it. The Mayday ultralefts are generally interested. The local underground newspaper, *The Rag*, has given the gay liberation movement a lot of coverage. The interviewer who gave us this information said that he does not think a lot of the people in the group read *The Militant*. However, during their demonstration for Gay Pride Week, *Militant* salespeople did report that quite a few demonstrators said they read the newspaper and they had bought it and comrades report that they know of at least two or three people in Gay Liberation who read our press very extensively and are interested in it seriously.

The person who gave us this information also said that he does not think that most people in the group consider themselves radical, although they are alienated by the system. As for future activities, he said that the whole thing was quite vague at this point. They did fight for campus recognition and there is now a big fight against police harassment in Austin as there is in Houston, for example. No comrades in the Austin branch or the YSA are attending gay liberation meetings as members, although one YSA comrade attended a couple of the gay women's liberation meetings as an observer.

The SWP and the YSA have helped the gay liberation groups in Austin in various ways. For example, by offering our facilities for mimeographing, helping secure rooms for meetings, offering housing for people who came in for the national gay liberation conference, helping out with our ideas. For example, they solicited our ideas on how to wage their civil liberties fight for campus recognition.

#### **MICHAEL MAGGI, HOUSTON**

Houston is the regional center for the Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma region. There are gay liberation groups in some of the other big cities besides those Evelyn men-

tioned, including Dallas, Fort Worth, Beaumont and New Orleans. In Beaumont, the group was very small—about 5 or 6 people—but they're all high school students. And in New Orleans the group is larger—between 35 and 50 people regularly attend meetings of a campus gay group, the Gay Liberation Front at Tulane. I don't have any detailed information on any of these other groups.

In Houston the Gay Liberation Front was formed last October and since then there's been a very rapid turnover in the people going through it because they generally patterned it after the New York Gay Liberation Front. Some of the New York GLF people came down and helped start the group and it was sort of an auxiliary to a group called the Red Coyotes, for a while, which was a remnant of SDS in Houston. So it participated in several ultraleft actions and was never actually able to get anything in terms of a stable organization until the spring.

At that time, reacting against the isolation they felt from the gay community as a whole, they dropped the "Front" off Gay Liberation Front to become the Gay Liberation Organization and tried to orient more on the campus to become a registered campus organization and started holding meetings on campus every week. Right now there are about 40 people who attend the weekly meetings. About two-thirds of the membership comes from three different universities and two or three different high schools in the city. One-third of the group is women and there are a number of Black men who attend these meetings.

Just recently there's been the beginnings of a new organization, a gay feminist group, out of the women attending Gay Liberation meetings, but that's still just in the process of getting off the ground.

In terms of activity of the group recently, on the antiwar movement, Gay Liberation didn't take a formal position on April 24 or Mayday, but a great majority of the people who attended one or the other of the actions attended April 24. About ten different members of Gay Liberation went to April 24 and about three or four went to Mayday.

Several of the people who were involved in hippie businesses were involved in Gay Liberation, and were bombed by the Klan just after our branch was attacked, and they were drawn into the defense work and actually helped contact independents who could endorse the defense committee and who became supporters of our defense campaign in the city.

In June they held a major activity which was a conference. About 175 people attended the conference, which brought in national speakers. The conference itself was paid for by the student association which granted \$1350 to fund the conference.

In terms of the fall activities which are being planned right now, the central activity is probably going to be a legal defense of a number of individuals who were busted a week ago on various charges, most of them on sodomy. And what they're doing is forming a committee against illegal police raids, modeled after the Committee for the Defense of Democratic Rights in Houston. Because the police raid itself was illegal and they felt inclined to put together a broad sponsorship against illegal police raids on gay groups, bars and activities.

This summer they're beginning to discuss the abortion action nationally and they're probably going to actually do some work in building that action. Gay Liberation decided to endorse the November 6 demonstration and

there's going to be one full-time person working on the gay task force, an independent from Gay Liberation.

Since it's a campus registered organization and there's been previous contact with the student government and other student groups on campus, Gay Liberation's budget for the next year's activities totals \$22,000, which includes funds for dances, forums, conferences, participation in possible national conferences and actions. Some section of that money will not actually be used. Gay Liberation consciously sought out a campus orientation at this point and is orienting toward getting campus groups started not only at the University of Houston, but at Rice University.

That's essentially where the group is right now. A number of the individuals are sympathizers to our movement. In fact, the leading organizers of Gay Liberation initially approached the branch in Austin and asked if we would send a straight comrade to help organize Gay Liberation when they tried to make this turn away from ultraleftism because they had read *The Militant* and *ISR* and knew about our party generally and they were interested in getting some help. There have been regular sales at Gay Liberation meetings and at activities and most of the leading activists of Gay Liberation subscribe to *The Militant* at this point.

#### LOUIS PROYECT, BOSTON

Boston, like some other branches around the country, has been participating in gay projects in order to gather information about the movement during a period of upswing. We found it very helpful to see all the tendencies in the gay movement and make judgments upon them based upon a concrete appreciation of what they were doing. This taught us more than all the literature written by people in the gay movement that had been developed in Boston over the last period.

What I would like to do is point out some of the highlights of Gay Pride Week and from this report I hope that we can get the following: (a) an idea of the scope of the movement, and (b) the role that various tendencies play within it.

I'll just give a brief rundown of the events that week. There was a worship service for gays, gay relationships and rap sessions for lovers, and workshops and a dance. There are a few things I want to focus on since they tell us something about the groups that are involved.

The first is a meeting where representatives from the gay organizations met and basically told what they were all about. What we found out from that meeting was that these groups from Boston broke down into two different categories. One category would include Daughters of Bilitis, Homophile Community Health Service, which is an organization which tries to help and counsel gay people to consider their gayness not as a problem, and tries to relate to other problems they have, and Homophile Union of Boston. These different groups one might categorize as single-issue type groups. They tend to relate more just to the gay question, not taking stands on other issues, like the other groups I'm going to talk about now have, and in general they were easier to work with on this Week and tend to be less sectarian toward us than these other groups, which are the ultraleft groups.

The two main groups are grouped together around a newspaper called *Fag Bag* in Boston. One is Lesbian

Liberation and the other is Gay Liberation Front. The main thing we found out about these groups is that they tended to consist of people who are very similar in some ways to the WISE formation, which I'm sure all comrades read about in *The Militant*, coming out of the abortion conference. They're opposed to us on our whole program. They know us from other movements. To give you an idea of the type of politics they represent, Lesbian Liberation were women who seized a Harvard building several months ago, and held the building, along with other women, for quite some time, and the slogans and the demands that were presented were in the usual ultraleft way that they've been presented before in the past by SDS and other ultraleft groups.

Like I say, they're opposed to our whole program and what we found out, at a multi-media teach-in the following evening, that these ultraleft groups were bent on attacking the SWP and attacking our presence to the extent that we did participate. They launched a very vicious redbaiting attack during this teach-in and in particular attacked our right to sell our press, pass out our campaign literature, etc. When a comrade was about to speak that evening, we found out that they were ready to go to the extent of not letting him speak at all. Finally he was defended by the other wing of this movement, namely a woman from DOB, who said that anybody who's gay and anybody who wants to build this movement should be allowed to speak. In general that was accepted by the audience, that the comrade did have the right to present his point of view in a democratic way and eventually what happened was that the ultralefts there began to attack other people who they just opposed in a sectarian way. They took the point of view that unless you're ready to attack the SWP and the YSA at this teach-in, you were with them.

And then there was the march the next day which consisted of about 250-300 people which passed symbols of the oppression of gays—a church, a gay bar, a police station and the state house.

The one thing I could say about these different groups, and they characterize themselves this way, is that the ultraleft groups tend to have a very unstable composition and they don't meet in a regular organized fashion. They tend to be more like a commune than an actual political group. Their newspaper, *Fag Bag*, discussed this whole problem of why they can't get themselves together, why they can't function, etc. The other groups, the single-issue groups, which, as I tried to characterize, have a much more stable membership, and I would say they probably are easier to work with on a long-term basis in united front type coalitions around specific issues.

#### NATALIE HARARY, LOS ANGELES

The Gay Liberation Front was formed in December of 1969 by about ten people who had come out of different left groups such as the Peace and Freedom Party and New Mobe. In the first half year, they had two small demonstrations against institutions which oppress the homosexuals, such as psychologists conferences, bars and restaurants. During the summer of 1970 they had three gay-ins which were a coming-out in public and the last one that they held had 2,000 people at it.

In November and December of '70, the leaders of the GLF said that they were going to take over a whole

area of land to have as a homosexual center where there could be homosexual freedom. This was a publicity stunt, and nothing ever really came of it.

In June of 1970 there was the first Christopher Street West demonstration which had 1,200 people marching with 15,000 onlookers. In June and September of 1970 they picketed places which discriminated against gays. And then in January of 1971 they got a headquarters. In April of 1971, the GLF in L. A. sent some of their people to San Francisco to work on the gay contingent for April 24. The gay contingent at the April 24 demonstration, as comrades know, was the largest demonstration of gays before Christopher Street West, on the West Coast. It got out 2,500 people.

In the spring of 1971, in February and March, there were two demonstrations against police brutality in response to the police murder of three gays without cause. 250 people rallied at the police station in Hollywood.

All the other gay groups that have formed in L. A., exclusive of DOB, originated out of the GLF and from time to time there have been different caucuses which have formed within GLF, such as a Revolutionary Caucus, the Gay Women's Caucus, and the IS caucus. GLF weekly meetings now attract about 20-25 people and they're in the process now of looking for a new headquarters. They don't have any democratic structure or means of reaching out to people the way the gay women's group has done, and are rather in a dilemma as to whether or not they should continue the GLF. What's happened is that a New York GAA-type of organization has split from the GLF in the absence of any continuity or way of reaching out.

We don't have any information about the campus groups, except that they do exist on some of the major campuses such as UCLA, Cal State, and some others, and that there are two gay women's groups on two of the major campuses.

The last action that was initiated by some of the initial founders of GLF, who are no longer active in GLF, was the Christopher Street West 1971 demonstration June 27. This was built by a number of planning meetings, a few of which a comrade attended. It was built around the basis of nonexclusion. It was seen by the main organizer of it as a spectacle, what he saw as a non-political parade. And that's what happened at this Christopher Street West action. It was not a demonstration, but a parade with floats and various church groups, and different organizations that brought them. The leadership of it was the more conservative, older section of the gay liberation movement. Although everyone was welcome to participate, there was not any democratic form to allow for real democratic processes. So what happened was that there were about 2,500 people who demonstrated in the parade with an estimated 25,000 onlookers. These onlookers, apparently unlike last year, were there to participate in the demonstration as could be seen by the raising of fists and cheering. The general looks of the onlookers indicated they were obviously predominantly gay people who had come to be in a demonstration. But there was no form for their coming into the streets.

The two contingents that were formed for these demonstrations were the lesbian contingent and the GLF contingent. The slogans give you an idea of the main reasons for the demonstration: "Out of the Closets and Into the Streets!" and "I'm Gay and I'm Proud!" This type of gay pride and coming out.

In August of 1970, a women's caucus of GLF formed. In October they moved to the women's center leaving the GLF and I'll read a statement that they put out explaining why they left GLF. They didn't see it as a hostile thing but apparently felt that they identified more with the women's liberation movement. This is a statement by the Lesbian Feminists: "We realized that our oppression was twofold, we were oppressed as gays and oppressed as women. Once in the women's center our activities became more solidly aligned with women's liberation. The coordination of efforts between gay and straight women resulted in a successful conference dialogue on the subject of lesbianism in the women's liberation movement. The conference called for orientation in order to articulate our evolving identity with a new name, Lesbian Feminists. . . . One of our goals is to educate the public about lesbianism. In furtherance of this we provide data for guiding attitudes towards lesbianism in the professional community and in the public generally."

When they first left the GLF they averaged about 25 or 50 at discussions. These discussions were around the relationships of the gay liberation movement and the women's liberation movement, and out of this came the gay-straight dialogue conference and at the very first meeting there were 150 people at it. A straight woman comrade attended and spoke in one of the small workshops that were held. The response of the Lesbian Feminists to what our comrade said was one of surprise that a straight woman could understand lesbian oppression and was also so understanding of women's liberation, and our comrades were able to engage them in discussion afterwards. That was the best contact that we had with the Lesbian Feminists. Then we had one at the women's center. The third one was held recently at the NOW headquarters which was a dialogue between all the women's gay groups initiated by the Lesbian Feminists and NOW on the relationship of women's liberation to the lesbian movement. As the result of this the L. A. NOW added to their constitution a statement recognizing lesbians as allies in the women's liberation movement, as sisters, and welcoming lesbians to join NOW.

An important discussion went on at this meeting on the question of the relationship of lesbians to the abortion movement. This was raised by a NOW woman who raised the question of how supporting lesbians was going to help her get an abortion. This was answered by some Lesbian Feminists along with our comrade who attended on how abortion relates to all women and that it is necessary to include lesbians in the abortion struggle. This is how the Lesbian Feminists felt, exactly the way that we expressed it at the meeting. Lesbian Feminists includes women who have been active in the GLF and in women's liberation. And also women who are new to politics and the lesbian liberation movement is their first movement.

The Lesbian Feminists are the most political of all the gay women's groups in our area. The Lesbian Feminists mobilized under their own banner in the April 24 antiwar demonstration.

A second group is the Gay Women's Service Center. The Gay Women's Service Center was formed by one of the women founders of GLF. They didn't see this as a split from the Lesbian Feminists but they wanted to have a non-political counter-institution type organization to serve the lesbian community. And they did not want the center to be feminist or political in any way—they

don't even let the Lesbian Feminists use the center. This group has not had any actions or had any discussion meetings and is now looking for a new headquarters, and as a result of this hasn't drawn any significant number of women around it.

The third group is the Daughters of Bilitis which is the oldest group which was formed in 1956 as part of the national group. The statement of purpose which came out of that time, and this is still in the constitution, says that the purpose of this organization is to help rescue the victims of society. Up until the formation of the more leftist groups like the Lesbian Feminists and until the beginning of the gay liberation movement, DOB had been composed mostly of older women. There has been an influx of young women, and it now consists of as many campus women as the Lesbian Feminists. That's one thing I forgot to mention. There are quite a number of campus women in the Lesbian Feminists who are young, and there are also quite a number in the DOB who have come in recently as a result of the gay liberation movement.

In March of this year the DOB had a discussion and decided that they had to become more political in response to both the women's movement and the gay movement and they divided into three committees. One was an educational committee which was for speakers and reach-out. They held several successful speaking engagements particularly on campuses and on various radio stations. Second was the social committee, and the third was the psychological, which was organizing consciousness-raising groups.

In April and May of this year, the Lesbian Feminists and the DOB got together to discuss what they were both thinking of within their individual groups.

This conference was finally called by all of the three groups which I've just gone over briefly, who got together to discuss having a lesbian conference and they agreed that they had a lot of political differences, but there was a need for this kind of unifying conference at the time. They had the perspective of having an ongoing coalition of the three groups—to have as much unity as possible around a coalition basis, having as much understanding of the differences within the gay women's movement.

The organizational steps that were taken by the intergroup conference were similar to what we see in building the conference in general. That is, non-exclusion, open to all women, with the purpose being to reach out to all lesbians and to all the women who were interested in the question of lesbians to attend this conference, which can be seen by the leaflet they put out to publicize the conference. This said that this was open to all women, and that groups should bring literature and banners.

There were weekly meetings of the intergroup conference, with representatives from all three groups to plan out the conference and various committees were set up to build the conference. They started out with national mailings, leafletting of bars, campuses, a poster was put out, and there were many radio and TV interviews. They saw the conference as an organizing tool to bring women from the West Coast and around the country together to discuss, as it said on the publicity, the political, psychological and social position of lesbians in society today. And this would begin a regional and national discussion. They organized things like monitors, housing,

food, a place to hold the conference.

The conference turned out to have more of a national character than only a West Coast conference. There were more cities represented from all over the country than from the West Coast alone. Gay women came from Boston, Ann Arbor, Wisconsin, Tucson, Albuquerque, North Carolina, Austin, Houston, Seattle, Minneapolis, Washington, D. C., London, England, and some exchange students from France, and 12 cities from the West Coast. There was a broad political spectrum represented, from conservatives to ourselves and women came from many different milieus—high school, campuses, gay women's groups, women's liberation. Some were feminists, some weren't. Some had previously been active in different movements, especially women's liberation, and for some the lesbian movement was their first political activity.

At the beginning of the plenary session a group led by an IS woman and an independent Maoist tried to form a revolutionary caucus. They approached me as a revolutionary to join them in a revolutionary caucus, but their efforts were seen by the organizers of the conference as sectarian and it petered out before the afternoon session. That was the only ultraleft action at the whole conference and it was totally dismissed by everybody there. They thought it was really stupid.

The discussion throughout the conference, which was in the plenary and then workshops, discussed the discussions going on in the lesbian movement around the country. Specifically the relationship of the gay liberation movement to the feminist movement and how to build a lesbian movement, and then to radical politics as a whole. There were no specific formulations for demands that the movement would raise that came out of this conference. That was not what the organizers who first conceived the conference conceived it as, but rather as a first conference, which it was, to share ideas and experiences of the gay groups from all over the country.

There were differences over whether the women should march in the Christopher Street demonstration because of the "sexism of the gay men" in the movement. This discussion was a concrete discussion around the role of lesbians in the gay liberation movement and the overwhelming sentiment of the people who spoke was that this was a very important demonstration and action of the gay movement, that we should link up, from a position of strength, and that the lesbian movement is part of the gay movement while autonomous. The organizers of the conference identified strongly with feminism.

This conference culminated in the gay women's contingent in the Christopher Street West parade, which started out with 200 women, mostly from the conference, which showed the continuity of the conference. There was not a big turnover and most of the women stayed for the whole conference. This contingent grew to about 300 during the march. They chanted "Out of the Closets and Into the Streets" and "Join Us." A lot of women standing along the side joined in. These women had not previously been active in the movement and each time a group of women joined in it was seen as a victory of the lesbian movement in reaching out. Cheers went up from the contingent and so forth. And the women could see the movement growing concretely through mass action in the open, in the streets.

I'll show briefly our role. We assigned one woman comrade to work on the conference in May when the confer-

ence was already off the ground and they already had an initial leaflet out, and to attend the gay women's intergroup council meeting as part of our probe. That was myself. I was known as an SWPer and a YSAer and the whole approach was just a totally non-exclusionary experience. None of the red-baiting at all that we've seen in other parts of the country. Anyone who wanted to build the conference was welcome. This is also the approach of the president of DOB, who was very glad to see that the SWP was supporting the conference. We were the only left group participating in the conference and selling our press and having a literature table up. We were able to have great number of political discussions and get out quite a number of *ISRs*. As a result of this, some of the Lesbian Feminists have attended our summer school and are planning to come to the YSA convention at the end of this year.

#### ART GURSCH, CHICAGO

The gay liberation movement in Chicago had its beginnings in December, 1969, after gay organizations had already been successfully organized in a number of other cities. It began as a rap group in Hyde Park after two University of Chicago students, after discussing its feasibility, put an ad in the *Chicago Maroon* for an initial meeting to be held at the apartment of one of them. Eight people came to that first meeting, held during the second week of December.

The group met three or four times before doing anything. Its first "action" was intervening at a straight dance.

By the end of January, the group had grown considerably, but was still centered in the Hyde Park area. By the beginning of February, a definite pattern of activities had been established, including new members' meetings, weekly business meetings, and study groups. During this time, the group put out its first button, "Out of the closets, into the streets."

The group's first political action in the streets was held February 12, when they intervened with a banner at a Conspiracy trial demonstration and at a demonstration against Agnew at the Conrad Hilton. The group put out its first newsletter in mid-February, calling it the "Gay Liberation Newsletter."

On February 21, the first gay dance was held at the University of Chicago, the purpose being to raise money for the bail fund. It was a huge success. About 500 attended.

On February 25, Gay Liberation picketed the Women's Bar Association to protest the speaking engagement there of Officer John Manley, a vice cop who had achieved notoriety for enticing and entrapping gay people in Lincoln Park. (Earlier, he had infiltrated a gay liberation meeting.)

In March, some members decided to intervene in SMC for the April 15 antiwar actions. April 16 was designated as Gay Liberation Day, as part of the week's activities. There was a contingent of about 150 in the April 15 action (for which there was a special leaflet), at which Bill Dry of Northwestern University spoke. On the following day, a rally was held in Grant Park at Randolph and Michigan, at which the speakers included Martha Shelley, Bill Dry, Henry Wiemhoff (one of the founders in Hyde Park), and Lee Weiner of the Conspiracy. About 150 participated. Afterwards, there was a march to the courthouse on LaSalle to protest the trial of David Stienecker, the editor of the *Mattachine Midwest* newsletter,

who had been arrested on a frame-up charge of slander by John Manley (Stienecker had exposed him in the newsletter).

In the meantime, groups had been formed at Northwestern, on the north side, at Roosevelt University (which did not last), and at the University of Illinois, Circle Campus. On March 8, a highly successful teach-out was held at Northwestern, in conjunction with women's liberation.

On April 18, the first non-campus dance was held at the Chicago Coliseum. This was a very significant event, for it was held after fighting extremely heavy odds. First, insurance was denied us by companies throughout the country, simply because we were gay. On the 17, we finally received insurance from the same company that insured the Black Muslims.

A more serious matter was that we found out, on the day of the dance, that the vice squad was planning to raid it and bust everyone on charges of public indecency. A lot of people didn't come for fear of a raid. It hurt us. Gay Liberation members were prepared to be arrested and fight the case in court. Our lawyer, Renee Hanover, and lawyers from the ACLU pressured the vice squad until they gave in, proving that victories can be won. Lawyers, law students, and the press were at the dance as witnesses for gay liberation, as spies against the vice squad who came in drag as gays. An enormous legal struggle was imminent if a raid had occurred. It didn't. We had a reasonably successful dance, about 1,000 people, and a precedent was established in Chicago.

We decided to concentrate our efforts on one bar, the Normandy. The following weekend, we picketed there to protest its prohibition of dancing. We picked the Normandy because it was the largest bar in Chicago and probably the most oppressive. We ruined their business for a week. They gave in.

April also saw the beginning of Chicago Gay Liberation as a city-wide organization. CGL began regularly to hold city-wide meetings, in addition to the various campus and area meetings.

In May, the first city-wide meeting of all the homophile groups (*Mattachine Midwest*, ONE, Gay Liberation) was held. The purpose was mainly to exchange ideas.

Also in May, the women formed a women's caucus inside CGL. After that, few women took part in the general business meetings.

In May and June we spent most of the time planning for Gay Pride Week at the end of June. People came to Chicago from various parts of the midwest. A midwest conference was held at Circle Campus. Workshops were held on various aspects of gay oppression and on what the movement should do. About 100 people attended the conference.

On June 27 we held a rally at Washington Square, followed by a march to the civic center. Only 200 people attended this, as contrasted to the mass turnouts in New York and L.A. Later, I will go into the reasons for the poor turnout.

The movement reached a low ebb during the summer. Weekly meetings continued to be held. Committees were set up to deal with specific areas of work. Many of the U of C people dropped out of CGL out of pure exhaustion. Most of the people who were left were northsiders.

On July 24 about 50 people again picketed the Normandy to protest its \$2.00 minimum charge. The manage-

ment gave in after one night. In August 5-15 people picketed a restaurant for its refusal to serve gay people. This fizzled out after a week, and nothing further was done. We had a contingent on Hiroshima Day.

In September some members went to Philadelphia to participate in the Revolutionary Peoples' Constitutional Convention. The gay workshops there resulted in all sorts of ultraleft rhetoric and demands.

Later in the month, the reformists in the group initiated a split, the new group calling itself the Chicago Gay Alliance. The new group decided to concentrate solely on the problems of gay people. This split had very little effect on the campus groups (U of C, U of I, N U).

This split, although perhaps it couldn't be avoided, was a severe blow to the movement, from which it is just beginning to recover. CGA has been primarily a social-oriented group, concentrating on social activities, speaking engagements, and rap groups. It did open a community center in February and has attained a membership of over 100 people (meetings get about 50 people). One of its main activities was to pressure aldermanic candidates.

CGL (which in February changed its name to Gay Liberation Front), in the meantime, degenerated into a small group of ultralefts. Under the guise of "getting itself together" it has done nothing of significance since. The meetings still go on, however. It did intervene in the RPCC in November in Washington, where several of them got busted for staging a sit-in at a straight restaurant, and became part of the Washington 12. In October, we went to an ultraleft conference in Minneapolis, where there was much rhetoric on "dealing with one's sexism and racism" and nothing accomplished. At my prodding, we had a contingent on October 31st. Later, one member attacked the rally while I was at the microphone speaking.

In the meantime, the campuses weren't doing much. U of C set up a coffeshop and has been mainly engaged in consciousness-raising. UICC, since its inception, has done little other than holding dances, rap sessions, and occasional speaking engagements. Northwestern has been quite isolated until just recently.

In January a well-attended all-city meeting of all the groups was held. Out of this was formed the Chicago Gay Unity Council, consisting of one or two delegates from each group, about nine by this time. The purpose of this committee was to create communication among the groups and to coordinate Gay Pride Week. However, a separate (and open-ended) committee was set up for the latter, and the Unity Council has been rather ineffectual, though meetings are still being held, with three or four groups participating.

In February, a Gay Liberation Task Force was set up in the SMC to mobilize gay participation for April 24 and future actions. About 20-25 people went from Chicago.

At present, the homophile groups in Chicago consist of the following: Chicago Gay Alliance, Gay Liberation Front, The Red Butterfly (formed in January), Mattachine Midwest, ONE of Chicago, Circle Campus, U of Chicago, Northwestern, Women's Caucus, Third World Gay Revolutionaries (formed in September, and who make up about half of GLF), and the Gay Liberation Task Force.

The main theme in the early development of the movement was getting rid of "the dragons in their own heads." In other words, members were afraid of many things that

were not real fears (such as being beaten up, etc.). Every step people took cut across their own fears. The purpose of the first dance was to raise money for bail because people were afraid of being busted at the WBA picket a few days later. This didn't happen, however. Much of the discussion consisted of trying to define what "gay" is and exchanging ideas. In March, 1970, a statement of human rights was drawn up, and still serves as a basis for the movement in general.

The movement was doing wonders in the spring of 1970, but after Gay Pride Week, it began to almost fall apart at the seams. Much of the unity was lost, conflicts arose, people became inactive, much of what was discussed at meetings was bullshit, and little concrete was done anymore, and what actions that did occur were small. One reason was that the novelty of political activity simply wore off for some people. Others left town for the summer after the campuses closed. But most important were the conflicts that inevitably take place sooner or later in any movement. The major conflict that began to surface in June was that between the political and social gay people. While Gay Pride Week was being discussed, some people at the meeting wanted to have a beauty contest (Mr. and Mrs. Gay Pride) as part of the demonstration. A hot debate followed, with the end result being no beauty contest. But the social people lost interest, and, as a result, the action was very poorly coordinated.

After that, there was a real drought in Gay Liberation. The U of C people mostly left CGL, and most of the people attending the meetings were future CGA members and the ultralefts (in a minority) who stayed in CGL after the split. The only reason the Normandy picket in July was successful was that the U of C people came back for that. Political activities that summer were planned by the Legal and Political Action Committee, of which I was chairman. The picket of the restaurant (The Astro Fiasco) bombed because we just couldn't get any interest beyond the confines of the committee.

Another conflict was that between the women and men. The women didn't feel that the male-dominated group was relating to their needs, and so they split. The mistake made by many women *and* men was that sexism is *not* going to be eradicated by abstract "dealing with your sexism" sessions, as the women demanded and many of the men tried earnestly to do, but by participating in mass actions. Both the reformists and the ultralefts simply cannot see the importance of mass actions, and that has badly hurt the movement.

The split, which was brewing at least since June, occurred in September, as a result of deepening political, personal, and racial conflicts. In September, there was the intervention at the RPCC, at which the gay workshop called for the leadership of the movement by Third World people. Afterwards, the Black Caucus in Chicago changed its name to the Third World Gay Revolutionaries and demanded that they be recognized as the vanguard of the movement. Also, the ultralefts tried to impose a series of ultraleft demands on the movement. The reformists, in their white bourgeois world were freaked out. I should point out that there were racist attitudes among many of them. The Third World people did have a legitimate gripe in that the group was basically middle-class white oriented. But the ultralefts did not see the futility of basing the movement on a bunch of ultraleft demands, and did not come to the realization that before gay people can



deal with racism and sexism in general, they first have to deal with their oppression as gays, through mass action. The reformists did not see the necessity of having any kind of independent political action. Neither saw the importance of mass actions around basic gay demands. Later on CGL began having closed meetings to draw up an ultraleft political perspective based on the demands passed by the Third World caucus at the RPCC.

Gay Pride Week in Chicago culminated in a parade of at least 1,000 participants on Sunday, June 27. Assembly was at Diversey Harbor parking lot, where a speech on the significance of gay pride week was given by Jack Baker, president of the University of Minnesota student government and who is waging a court battle for the right to get married to someone of his own sex. The participants then marched down Clark St. through Chicago's main gay "ghetto" to the Lincoln Park Forum for a "gay-in" with rock music.

Earlier in the week, a number of workshops were held at the University of Illinois, Circle Campus and at the Chicago Gay Alliance community center on various aspects of gay oppression, life styles, etc. These included a legal forum, presented by a panel from a new group called the Committee of Gay People and the Law, who spoke of the legal problems facing gay people. This was attended by about 30 people. Other workshops were on the subjects of same sex marriages, by Jack Baker; gay life styles; the problems of parents of gay people; sadism and masochism; bisexuality; the positive homosexual (concerning personal problems); Third World gays; and gay women. The workshops had attendances ranging from 15 to 100 people.

On Friday, June 25 a rally and kiss-in, sponsored by the Gay Liberation Front and attended by about 100 people, was held at the Civic Center Plaza to protest and re-enact the arrests of Richard Chinn and John Cantrall for kissing good-by as they left a CTA bus on April 30. A rally scheduled for June 28 at the Federal Building was not held.

The Chicago Gay Pride Week Celebration Committee (CGPWCC) was the open-ended coalition which planned and built the activities, except for the GLF rally at the Civic Center plus a couple of social activities organized by the Chicago Gay Alliance (CGA). This coalition was dominated by the CGA, but included representatives from Mattachine Midwest, ONE of Chicago, U. of Ill. (Circle) Gay Liberation, Northwestern, and U. of Chicago. The ultralefts of GLF, while not boycotting the activities, did not take part in the building of them. The weekly meetings of the CGPWCC averaged 20 to 25 people in attendance. The building of the action was done quite inefficiently, with constant delays in getting out materials. For example, the parade leaflets were not put out until two weeks before the action, in spite of the fact that the actions had been decided on since March or April. Also, the amount of publicity done (leafletting in bars, etc.) was not as good as it could have been. In addition to the leaflets, buttons and posters were also put out.

In spite of the haphazard publicity, plus the fact that the coalition failed to raise even one political demand, the action drew at least 1,000 people, making it the largest gay action in the history of the gay movement in Chicago, quintupling the size of the 1970 gay pride march. As for the political nature of the event, it was the attitude of the dominating forces on the coalition to simply build

the action around "gay pride," leaving out all issues relevant to gay oppression, such as job discrimination, police harassment, etc. In fact, many of the aspects of the action were outright reactionary, such as parading female impersonators in decorated floats. In effect, the action was built basically around sex roles rather than political demands, and this circus-type atmosphere, to say the least, did not do anything to raise the issue of gay oppression in people's consciousness. This lack of political consciousness on the part of the coalition leadership can be readily seen in the Chicago Gay Pride newspaper (of which some 10,000 copies were distributed) which contains several sickeningly sexist advertisements plus very mediocre articles (mostly on personal subjects).

On the positive side, the parade was built as a mass action (although the coalition leadership probably did not think of it as such) and was successful as such. Furthermore, the parade demonstrated that significant numbers of gay people, even in Chicago, can be mobilized for independent political action in the streets. And 1,000 gay people marching in the streets *is* a political action in itself. The negative aspects of the event are, of course, a reflection on the political bankruptcy of the CGA leadership, which dominated the coalition, and not the 1,000 or more participants.

Unlike last year, there was a complete black-out of the events by the bourgeois news media, in spite of the fact that press releases were sent to all the communications media.

The most important development since Gay Pride Week is the probable folding up of the Gay Liberation Front. This development comes at a time when it briefly appeared that GLF might become revitalized. During Gay Pride Week there was some talk by some of its members about continuing the demonstrations at the Civic Center around issues such as job discrimination by the Federal government, especially around a specific case of a gay postal employee who was arrested on a frame-up charge and fired from his job, but who finally got it back after a long court battle.

However, as is the case with many ultraleft, sectarian grouplets, the GLF had been pretty much run by one particular "leader" at whose apartment the meetings were held. When this person and his roommate, both Black people, decided to quit GLF to devote all their time to Third World gay issues, the group fell apart. Whether or not GLF continues will depend on whether or not the remaining members (less than ten) want to continue it. Its future at the moment appears doubtful.

If GLF does fold up, the CGA will be the only city-wide gay organization with any degree of militancy, and by far the most important organization to watch. It currently has 275 members, meetings draw about fifty, and while the leadership is very reformist, it has a number of healthy people, and it is currently the only organization that has the resources to pull off concrete actions. Unfortunately, right now the leadership is into trying to relate to the Catholic Church, trying to convince them that gays are not "sick." The CGA has had internal difficulties lately, as well (mainly personal conflicts) resulting in new elections, but these are probably only of a temporary nature. There are two other city-wide organizations, both old homophile organizations, and neither being of great importance. One of these is ONE of Chicago, basically a social club for old men. The other is Mattachine Midwest, which is completely bureaucratically run, and which is

unable to do anything anyway because they're never able to get a quorum for their business meetings. Thus CGA is the most important group to watch, although we should not ignore the campus gay liberation groups at U. of C., UICC, and Northwestern.

During the spring, there was a split in the Women's Caucus, the new group being the Radicalesbians, a more political group of women who felt that the WC was too much involved in simply discussing their personal problems.

Another new group was formed recently, called the Chicago Committee on Gay People and the Law, which plans to intervene at the National Lawyers Guild convention in Boulder this month.

The current organizations are as follows: Chicago Gay Alliance (275), Gay Liberation Front (10), Mattachine Midwest (200), ONE of Chicago (200), Gay Liberation at UICC (35), U. of Chicago Gay Liberation, Northwestern University Gay Liberation, Women's Caucus, Radicalesbians, Chicago Committee on Gay People and the Law, and Third World Gay Revolutionaries.

Note: A group called Gay Youth (for those under 22) was formed last spring, but is temporarily defunct until the beginning of the school year.

One more thing—a group of people are planning to put out a newspaper, independently of any of the organizations. The first issue is to come out later this month.

#### *BETSY SIMMS, MINNEAPOLIS*

The first gay liberation group that was formed in Minneapolis, now approximately 16 years old, was called FREE, for Freedom of Erotic Expression. The group is campus based and has conducted various campaigns around civil liberties issues which deal with employment discrimination against gays. The group is largely male, and is now somewhat inactive. The major thing that has happened around the group is that Jack Baker, who is now the president of NSA at the University of Minnesota, who was elected just last spring, ran specifically as a gay person. He did not state, as far as I know, any other kind of politics in his campaign.

People from FREE are now working on a general radical journal which deals with all kinds of questions around the radical movements including the gay movement. The second major grouping in Minneapolis is forming around a thing called Gay House, which is a commune but which is also a meeting place and crash pad for gays. Their major activity is a newspaper which they are planning to put out in the fall. There are no gay feminist groups in Minneapolis.

Gay feminist activities are confined to gay caucuses within women's groups, and almost every women's group has a gay caucus. Interestingly enough there are three gay women who initiated the gay movement among women in Minneapolis, who are writing for the women's page in San Francisco, and they had taken an anti-gay liberation position. They say that the movement is largely made up of "new homosexuals," doesn't really organize the mass of gay people who have always been gay.

Gay women in the women's movement have tended by and large in relationship to us to be ultraleft. They do not support the concept of the abortion campaign. They said that they were for free abortion on demand, but they couldn't endorse it or come to the conference. They did not actively participate in the activities around the abor-

tion coalition demonstration that was held last spring. They finally gave us their endorsement. They are largely organized into small living collectives and by and large in terms of the antiwar movement they related much more to Mayday than they did to April 24.

The central feature of the gay movement in Minneapolis is that its politics are not defined, there are no demands. The movement tends to be inward turning because of its relationship to the women's movement in Minneapolis and the women's movement in Minneapolis tends to be inward turning, and there have been no mass actions around gay liberation issues.

#### *SUSAN SWOPE, DETROIT*

The Gay Liberation Front of Detroit was started about a year and a half ago. The initial organizing meetings for GLF in Detroit involved sometimes as many as 200 people. The initial organizers were a member of IS, a conservative civil libertarian, and several people who had not been involved in any type of politics before. The initial perspective was multiple: agitating for law reforms, providing a social alternative to the bars, and education, both internal and external, through the use of their newspaper, *The Gay Liberator*.

The Detroit *Gay Liberator* was published monthly. It gained a national reputation because of its serious attitude and its lack of the pornographic overtones we see in a lot of the other gay papers. Their first public action occurred on Mother's Day of 1970 when they picketed an Episcopalian Church in the suburbs of Detroit. They were protesting a threatened cut-off of funds to the church in which they had been holding their meetings.

Memberships and activity picked up generally in the fall of 1970. They had monthly meetings of 40-50 people. Most of them were male. They also formed several caucuses. There was a Black caucus. Most of them identified more with the Black caucus of GLF than they did with GLF as a whole. The Black caucus held several independent actions, participated in an Angela Davis demonstration, gave some food and money to some Panthers who had been framed up, things like that. A women's caucus was formed which confined itself mainly to consciousness-raising and fell apart within about a month.

GLF was active on several fronts. They intervened in a national librarians' convention which was held at that time. They helped them to organize a gay caucus. They succeeded in breaking up the convention of the Episcopal Church in Detroit at that time. Several gay and straight practitioners were going to present proposals regarding gay rights to the convention and the convention voted not to hear the proposals and at that point, GLF took over the stage and the meeting was adjourned.

They participated in the antiwar demonstrations last fall. The antiwar action in Detroit only had about 1,000 people at it, and they organized a contingent of between 50 and 100 people. They had a general gay rights demonstration on a day in January when the temperature was -7 and there was a 50 mile an hour wind, so they only had 30 people.

The group fell apart in March due to a combination of factors. The ISer who had been primarily responsible for most of the organizational burden left. There was a conflict over political perspective, ranging from working within the system to radical confrontation. Also during that time a youth caucus had formed which continued after



the demise of GLF. A Christian caucus was formed which left GLF shortly before its demise, withdrew from politics completely, formed a gay church and I understand that they had a schism and that there are now two gay churches in Detroit.

After the disintegration of GLF, the former leadership kept in touch with one another. They are now about to begin republishing the *Gay Liberator* as an independent organ of the gay movement in Detroit, not the organ of any particular organization. Recently members of the GAA of NY were through Detroit and discussions are now underway for forming a GAA in Detroit. The feeling seems to be that GLF related primarily to radical gays, and an organization is necessary which can relate to all gay people.

The only lesbian organization in Detroit is the DOB. They still tend toward the old-style DOB. It's primarily a social organization. Meetings are held on Saturday night and there's rarely any business at the meetings at all. They're just social affairs. However, most of the members are young, mostly young working women, because they have a rule that no one under 21 can belong, so there aren't too many students. That rule is because they're afraid of being accused of contributing to the delinquency of minors.

The woman who's the driving force behind Detroit DOB is somewhat typical of many of the members. She hasn't been involved in any kind of politics before. She attended the abortion conference and she signed the proposal for the lesbian workshop. Members of DOB are now beginning to discuss relating to women's liberation and relating to gay issues in general. The general feeling seems to be that DOB should become political.

There are a number of other gay groups in Michigan. The only two others that we have had any contact with are Radicalesbians and Revolutionary Lesbians in Ann Arbor. Radicalesbians was formed about a year ago by a number of women who can be described as refugees from the New Left. They claim a membership of around 40. They have been inactive over the summer, but they plan to become active again in the fall. Revolutionary Lesbians is a split off from Radicalesbians. They claim that their difference with Radicalesbians is that Radicalesbians relate primarily to gay issues. Revolutionary Lesbians call themselves a radical, feminist, separatist, lesbian group and apparently they have only two members. Radicalesbians claim that their only difference with the Revolutionary Lesbians is that the Revolutionary Lesbians have personal and emotional problems and that they weren't able to get along with the sisters in Radicalesbians.

#### AMY LOWENSTEIN, PHILADELPHIA

There used to be a GLF in Philadelphia, but I understand that it has dwindled to nothing. There is a Homophile Action League which has dwindled to about three active members who are demoralized because the city isn't reactionary enough to get people mobilized to do something about their oppression. There's a Radicalesbians where I attended one meeting. They seem to have about 10-20 members, and they fluctuate in membership. I can't really say too much about their politics except that they're organizing people to go up to next week's lesbian feminist convention in Connecticut, about which I don't know too much.

#### RICH ROBOHM, WASHINGTON, D. C.

My knowledge of the gay scene in D. C. is rather limited, so this report is somewhat less than comprehensive, which is just as well considering the length of some of the others. I'll just run down some of the organizations. Gay Activists Alliance: Most of my time has been devoted to this group, which seems to be the most valuable organization in the city. GAA is open to all gays and sympathizing straights who fulfill its membership requirements, attendance at a certain number of meetings, and are in agreement with its stated goals: equality, end to discrimination, freedom of expression to be fought for by nonviolent means. GAA was formed largely by people active in the campaign of Dr. Frank Kameny, president of the local Mattachine Society, and a leader of Mattachine nationally, who ran on a personal freedoms platform for non-voting delegate to Congress. These people sought to create a more militant, activist-oriented organization, as they saw it, through which gays could struggle on various fronts against their oppression. Many of the founders of GAA were dissatisfied with the dominant role played by Kameny in Mattachine, and with its image as a more moderate, respectable group. Kameny feels that Mattachine was already filling the need that GAA purports to fulfill, and that GAA's formation was more due to organizational hassle and personal conflicts, that to any real political differences.

Kameny continues to dominate the activity of Mattachine locally, but he also plays an active role in GAA, and maintains a friendly relationship with it, remaining as a member and chairman of the legal committee. D.C. GAA seems to be modeled carefully after NY GAA, with its statement of purpose and its constitution and by-laws very much the same as those of NY GAA. Having formed quite recently, April 1971, the group is feeling its growth pains attempting to establish and define its organizational norms. At this point, there is a tendency to over-emphasize the parliamentary and purely organizational aspects of the group's functioning. This is due largely to the anarchic operation of the amorphous Gay Liberation Front, which is scorned by GAA for its lack of structure and its inability to function smoothly, if at all.

GAA is now working on several projects, including confronting the editor of the *Quicksilver Times*, a local underground paper, for printing an anti-gay cartoon, meeting with the head of the vice squad to demand an end to harassment and entrapment of gays in D.C., and protesting to the *Washington Post* for its failure to give any coverage at all of the Christopher Street demonstrations in NY.

GAA also participated in a zap of the University of Maryland SDS, attending its meetings along with members of the University of Maryland Student Homophile Association, and raising the issue of gay liberation with the WSAers in attendance. GAA sent about two busloads, carrying about 85 persons, to Christopher Street, with at least 50 more going by car. A workshop bull session is being held in a couple of weeks in order to hash out GAA's political perspectives and orientation. Presently constituted committees include executive, actions, legal, social, membership and publicity. Women make up about 20% of GAA's membership and play an active part in its leadership and operations, participating on the executive and other committees, but are not organized within GAA as women. Male chauvinist remarks or references are not

unheard of among GAA members. On one occasion, the GAA president was disdainful of the criticism he received from a woman whom he had referred to as "girl."

Student Homophile Association is the next group. It consists of several fairly active members and a large periphery. It has been in existence for several months. It has held dances, zapped the SDS, organized for Christopher Street, and operated the best-attended coffee house on campus at the University of Maryland. The University of Maryland has a clause in its governing code barring discrimination in hiring, housing, promotion, etc., against gays which was passed last year by the faculty senate and approved by the regents. SHA is working on setting up a computer dating service for gays. It has cosponsored dances with D.C. GAA, to which it is similar in structure and politics.

There's very little to be said about the Gay Liberation Front. It's 6-10 men living in a commune. The time I visited there, at least two of the people were tripping on acid. It's essentially a bunch of ultraleft, abstentionist, self-indulgent livingroom acid-heads.

The *Gay Blade* is the DC gay community newspaper. I wasn't able to find out much about this, but it's a small paper which renders services to the gay organizations in the city without favoring any one in particular. *Mattachine* is known by the public and the press in the area as the organization representing gays. Kameny is known as its president and chief spokesperson. It seems to have some fairly substantial financial backing, although its numerical backing has dwindled somewhat of late.

Along with all the other gay groups in the area, *Mattachine* built and participated in Christopher Street, but its main field of activity remains the legal battles. *Mattachine* participated with a nascent GAA in an action at the American Psychological Association convention where several gays interrupted a seminar chaired by a particularly notorious psychiatrist and read a statement and list of demands.

A group of gay women meets at someone's home every Wednesday evening for a consciousness-raising session. This meeting is announced in GAA meetings and in a calendar put out monthly by GAA. A group of gay men and women meet every Tuesday at the Washington Free Clinic. I know nothing about this group, but suspect that it's ultraleft, because a story reporting favorably on its sessions appeared in the consistently ultraleft *Quick-silver Messenger Times*.

The active gay movement in the DC area, that is GAA, *Mattachine* and the Student Homophile Association, is at present on a rather low political level. Most of the activists who have joined the movement have not had any previous experience in any other political movement. Hence, they are now just learning the ropes of political organizing and are developing a consciousness from the starting point of fighting against the oppression they suffer as gays. The course of this development will be very telling as to the radicalizing effects of struggling against this particular form of oppression. Most people in the gay movement in DC have the perspective of building the organizations in which they are involved and seeing the movement grow, drawing in the thousands of gays who have not yet come out and begun to engage their adversaries in struggle. The GAA in particular is enthusiastic about the prospects of having a national demonstration in DC next summer as opposed to another Chris-

topher Street and is trying to persuade leading members of the gay movement in NY of the desirability of such an event.

Except for the ultralefts, the YSA and SWP enjoy fairly friendly relationships with the gay movement in DC, when they know about us, which is rarely. They're willing to work with virtually any group around the issues of the gay movement. However, as a single-issue organization, the groups limit themselves, as organizations, solely to the issues involved in gay liberation. Little ideological discussion has taken place either about the origin of gay oppression or the strategy for gay liberation in DC. *Red Butterfly's* publications, for example, are not widely known or read among members of the GAA.

DEAN HALL, ATLANTA

Before I discuss the Atlanta report, I want to briefly discuss what the South is like in terms of the gay movement. Like throughout the rest of the country, the radicalization is getting very deep there. With the gay movement, there are gay organizations in every state in the South, except for Mississippi and South Carolina. The types of groups that are forming range from GLF to transexual-transvestite leagues, gay churches and things like this. The type of people that are coming into this movement throughout the South is a whole new layer of people which have never been involved in any type of organization before, never been in antiwar movements or things like this. This has drawn in many people. The one thing they lack is organizational abilities, because of their newness to the radicalization.

I don't know too much about the various groups and what they are doing, but I do know about Knoxville, Tenn., which has been trying to gain recognition on campus. Due to lack of abilities in organizing, they have not been able to build a successful defense campaign in order to get recognized. Each time they go to get recognized, which has been three times, they gain more support from the people at the university there, until it reached the point where, after the third attempt failed, the student government at the University of Tennessee made the GLF a committee of the student government, gave it a room, a budget, and things like this. But this was denied by the administration and unfortunately they weren't able to build upon this and school ended.

In Tallahassee they have a gay newspaper which comes out bi-weekly or so, and I've only seen one copy of it. As far as what the other groups are doing in the South, I don't know.

The history of the gay movement in Atlanta is fairly recent. It was only around last fall that a gay discussion group formed at Emory University, from what I've gathered. It's only very sketchy information that I have on the history of the gay movement but in a few months this gay discussion group sort of evolved into a GLF which was citywide. The first meeting they held they drew over 100 people. At this meeting, they decided to have a structure meeting, having rap groups, legal committees, a publicity section, publish a newspaper, theatre, things like this. But due to lack of leadership, organization, very little of this was able to come through.

In the early period of GLF, the type of people that were involved were very healthy people. There were reformists and ultralefts among them. Most of them for

the most part were very new to participate in any movement, except for the gay people from the *Great Speckled Bird*, an underground paper in Atlanta, and several ex-comrades. These were people involved in building the GLF. As for the rest of them, they had never been involved in other meetings.

It was around this type of environment that proposals were made to endorse April 24. Since most of the people were around Mayday, they decided that rather than to fight one or the other, they endorsed both of them. After the April 24 action, there was a proposal made to build for June 27 in Atlanta, a demonstration with a rally. This was enthusiastically accepted, but once again due to a lack of organizational know-how on how to build this and lack of leadership, pessimism quickly took over the organization, and by the time the action came, there were very few people attending the GLF meetings. When June 27 did come off, over 200 people participated in the action. In Atlanta, we had fantastic press coverage and it was a very militant demonstration. It was very independent and very militant, and there is a lot of pride in that march.

A unique thing about the gay movement in Atlanta and the June 27 march was that it put forth demands. Repeal of all anti-homosexual laws and end job discrimination for homosexuals.

Since the organization lacked leadership and organizational abilities, it has since been taken over by another group, which is the Anti-Imperialist Women's Collective. This group came into the GLF when the women's liberation collapsed because of bankruptcy of politics and of money. So the gay women merged with the GLF. Since that entry, the whole nature of the GLF has turned from a healthy, non-sectarian one into a sectarian and fairly unhealthy organization. They were opposed to building a gay contingent for August 7, which was proposed by another member of the GLF and was just sort of accepted by mutual consent, but nobody came out for the action. There was no gay banner, no nothing, even though there was a good deal of discussion about this.

Recently, there has been a great deal of harassment at a gay bar in Atlanta which some people thought the Mafia was taking over, and rather than investigate this situation and plan some type of action, they just ignored and pushed forward in a more sectarian direction in response. They began turning to gay dances, not trying to reach the broader gay community, just isolate themselves.

#### MARY MURATI, DENVER

Our probe in Denver has been very minimal. The groups that exist: in Boulder there's a GLF and a Women's GLF. The Women's GLF is also in GLF, general GLF. In Denver, there's apparently a woman from DOB and a woman from the Mattachine Society around, but there are no formal organizations. In Denver, there's a Women's GLF, which split from the GLF over sexism. It too has been taken over by the anti-imperialist women. First they changed their name from Anti-Imperialist Women to Ladies' League for Non-Alienating Politics. Then, in a very non-alienating fashion, they entered the women's gay movement and destroyed it. They spread demoralization and abstentionism throughout the gay women's movement there. They moved into a commune with a number

of the gay women and that's where it's at right now. They haven't really done anything at all since May, when they carried out a little bit of activity.

The GLF, at this point, is predominantly men. In the past, it has drawn 50-100 people to meetings. The last meeting, which was a few weeks ago, drew six. There haven't been meetings for several weeks. There's a lot of demoralization in GLF as well. I think primarily due to a lack of leadership and a lack of perspective. The gay community itself is extremely large in Denver, I don't know exactly how large, but it's generally apolitical or reformist.

At one point there was a leaflet going around for writing Congresspeople for some proposed bill that was coming up. There is not a lot of hostility, at the same time, to radical ideas or to mass action. The activities that have been carried out are predominantly social events. Boulder GLF and Boulder Women's GLF have had dances, softball games and there's been talk about a gay center. The dances are an indication of the potential of the gay movement in the Boulder and Denver area. The last dance was about two weeks ago, there were over 500 people at this dance.

On April 17 we had a building demonstration, antiwar demonstration, in Denver, to lead up to April 24 in S. F. Unknown to any of the organizers of the march, a gay contingent was formed. There was a small gay contingent, gay men's contingent, on that march. Then the next month, during the ultraleft Mayday rallies, Women's GLF had a small contingent of half a dozen women or so and came down there with picket signs and so forth. That was the last open thing that has been done by Women's GLF.

Just before we came out to the convention, we had another antiwar demonstration, a Hiroshima Day demonstration, August 6, and again there was a gay contingent. This time it was built by two comrades, including myself, and one independent who is from GLF. He managed to get GLF funds for a leaflet. The demonstration was quite significant in a couple of different ways. There was no one there who had been an activist in the gay movement before, except for this one person. The people there were predominantly gay men who had come out from the gay bars that we had leafleted the previous night, which is a very significant thing for Denver because Denver's a big closet. The only place that gays usually come out are in the bars or else at these dances which are way off in the mountains in a place called Hidden Valley. It shows the potential that Denver can have.

There's been a discrimination campaign within the past few weeks of firing gay people in stores, and so forth, around Denver. Boulder GLF was going to be coming down this past week and setting up a meeting in Denver to discuss fighting it with the possibility of picket lines, rallies, and so forth. If that comes off it will really be significant, because it will be the first open thing that has been done, other than passing around some leaflets asking people to write their Congressmen.

There was a National Lawyers Guild convention in Boulder about two or three weeks ago, and this had a lot to do with contributing to the building of the meeting that I just talked about. There was a lot of guilt baiting. Lawyers were told they should be nicer to gays, this type of thing. There were a couple of resolutions that came out of it, surprisingly, dealing with taking up gay

cases and fighting for the rights of gay people and lesbians around the country. I don't know specifically what those resolutions were. More significantly, there were some gay people from Chicago who had been involved in some demonstrations before and had participated in Christopher Street demonstrations. They talked to a lot of gay people in Boulder and from Denver, and had a lot of influence in getting them to be a little more active and open in activities.

We've had a couple of forums, both in Denver and in Boulder, on gay liberation and they have been very successful as far as turnout and discussion and so forth is concerned. I think that what they primarily showed was that in this area there's a definite lack of leadership, that the movements are either in a reformist direction or have a very social orientation—dances, parties and so forth. I think that if there's not a correction of this situation that there's going to be very little hope for the gay movement in Denver.

*GLORIA ALBEE, SEATTLE*

The Seattle GLF split about a year ago into a campus group and a non-campus based group. The campus group (referred to as the right wing) is a single issue oriented organization, quite small, and has received \$1,000 from the University of Washington. They're currently using this money to set up a resource center.

The non-campus group, which is referred to as the left wing, calls the campus groups sexist and calls itself revolutionary. Its characteristics are generally ultraleftist and multi-issue.

Neither of these groups initiated any actions around Gay Pride Week. Approximately a year and a half ago, a Gay Women's Alliance split from the GLF because they felt that feminism couldn't be incorporated into the GLF. Gay Women's Alliance functions out of the University YWCA. The University YWCA in Seattle has offices out of which function the Seattle Abortion Referral Service and the Gay Women's Resource Center.

The Abortion Referral Service is run by a group of approximately eight hard core livingroom feminists. These women are generally anti-mass action. They came out of the Abortion Referendum 20 campaign. They have a number of projects such as putting out a weekly newspaper called *Pandora*. There's apparently an on-going debate within the YWCA between the concepts of feminism versus gayness. Over the question of the fourth demand for the National Women's Abortion Action Coalition, the gay women originally understood the nature of this concept, and when it was raised, called it divisive. However, because of the proximity of their working with these livingroom feminists in the Y, within the period of one day, they were won over to the WISE caucus, and have since taken an anti-mass action, Trotskyist-baiting orientation. The gay women apparently feel that they've been rejected by a number of Seattle women's liberation groups, and have been made aware of the past anti-homosexuality policy of the YSA. They recently held a two-day conference to educate the community about lesbianism. The conference consisted of all day and evening sessions held on Friday and Saturday with a \$10.00 registration. About 40 people attended, including two comrades. As far as the comrades themselves within Seattle, we've held a recent Militant Labor Forum where two independent gay women spoke on the gay liberation move-

ment. One of these women was an ex-YSAer, and it now appears that she's interested in rejoining as well as the other sister who spoke. It was a very well attended forum, with a small intervention from some of our opponents. In response to the anti-YSA hostile questions that came from this intervention, the speaker did a very excellent job, explaining that they could not speak for the YSA, but defending us both politically and our orientation toward the gay movement.

*BOBBY DEUR, SAN FRANCISCO*

The same point that's been made relative to several other cities, that there is a vacuum of leadership within the gay movement, certainly holds for San Francisco, where there is a very large gay community. The GLF has declined badly under the influence of a lot of speed freaks and other counter-cultural kinds of elements. The Berkeley GLF is also in pretty bad shape, although they still publish a gay newspaper called the *Gay Sunshine*. Gay Women's Liberation has declined along with the SF Women's Center, from a lack of an action focus. Their original debate was over whether or not to become a social institution, a comfortable place for gay women to meet, since there was virtually none other in the city. There are a large number of bars, but none that are open exclusively to women, and so on. So there was a strong current within Gay Women's Liberation that felt the need for it to be a social organization. Under that pressure and a lot of interest in counter-cultural things, Gay Women's Liberation has declined until it's virtually non-existent.

The two large organizations in the city are SIR, the Society for Individual Rights, which presently has a membership of something like 1,300, holds dances regularly that are regularly attended by several hundred; and the DOB, which was founded in SF in the middle '50s, and to which a large number of the young women who came out of Gay Women's Liberation are attracted at the moment. There's also a small Mattachine Society that doesn't seem to be very active. SIR is the only one of these large organizations that has called demonstrations, or any substantial actions. They've demonstrated at the Federal Building several years ago, and also very recently, over the issue of job discrimination against gays in federal positions.

There are a large number of quasi-religious groups, similar to the Metropolitan Community Church that Natalie mentioned in L. A. There's a large congregation there as well. A Catholic renegade church and an Episcopal congregation as well. They all seem to reflect, not so much a religious sentiment, as much as a need for places where gays can congregate.

There are no bars open exclusively to women, which brings some of this pressure. There is, however, an all-Black gay bar in the city. The Radicalesbians are one of the groups that looked for a time as if they were one of the groups that were going to provide some sort of leadership for gay women in the city. They made a very large intervention at the Vancouver Indochinese Women's Conference. They came with a large packet of materials and spoke very articulately against the perspective of diverting the women's struggle into "anti-imperialist" struggles. They spoke quite a bit around the Bay Area when they returned

about the treatment that they received in Vancouver. But they've withdrawn quite a bit. They're really not an open membership organization—they're a collective and they're into counter-cultural things recently and they're quite withdrawn from anyone else.

The campus groups at San Francisco State and at Cal, which are very large, but are not yet proposing significant actions. There's a group called the Bay Area Gay Alliance, a new group, which has formed on a basis of a leaflet similar to the one read from NYC from the GAA—an open, single-issue organization, presently composed mostly of men. Although they're interested in having women participate, women haven't done so yet. The International Socialists participate in that group. A large number of gay women and men from the Bay Area went down to the Christopher Street activities in LA, and among gay women at the women's conference there was some discussion of holding a similar conference, organized by all Bay Area lesbian groups early this fall.

One point which I'd like to make about SF, which may not be true to the same extent in other places, is the political weight of the gay community. It's indicated by a couple of things that happened recently. Willie Brown, who is an Assemblyman from the Bay Area, has introduced a bill in the legislature that is popularly thought to repeal the legal harassment of gay people. It doesn't, of course. It's a very reformist token sort of thing. It does reduce drastically some of the harsher penalties, but is not anywhere close to the kind of thing that should be done. But it's an indication of the kind of pressure that he feels from his constituents. The gay men's groups organized marches from SF to Sacramento and supported the bill.

Another thing that happened recently is that Diane Feinstein, who is president of the Board of Supervisors for the city, had heard that there was some unrest among the gay community as a result of some comments she'd been making in an anti-smut campaign. She felt compelled to ask SIR to set up a meeting for her with the gay community where she could explain her views. At that meeting, which was not widely advertised, there were about 350 people present and they put a lot of questions to her and made her very uncomfortable for that evening, although a number of them seemed to be taken in by her explanations. The point is that this is a political force to be reckoned with. There are going to be gay candidates in the city elections this fall for the Board of Supervisors and possibly for mayor as well, and it will be an issue in the campaign.

We've held one forum, from which we found a very good response when we were leafletting in the bars, and a large number of gay men came. It was a forum presented by an activist in the LA GLF. We found it difficult to arrange for a woman from the Gay Women's Liberation from the Bay Area to speak with him on the platform—most of them had been so antagonized by the ac-

tivities of gay men that several of them agreed to speak at a forum at our bookstore later in the summer, but not on the same platform as a gay man.

Gay women participated in the April 24 demonstration, but again, as part of the women's demonstration, and not with the gay contingent. We found a very friendly response to *Militant* sales at demonstrations and meetings that we've gone to. A large number of people in the gay community, while they're not entirely friendly to our politics, do recognize the importance of the coverage that *The Militant* has given to the gay liberation movement on a national basis.

We found no antagonism among gay women to the abortion campaign and a substantial number of them have been participating in the campaign from the very beginning.

The only other thing that I'd like to mention is that in San Jose, the GLF still does include men and women working together and they planned a Christopher Street demonstration under the auspices of the GLF there.

#### JOHN WILLIAMS, CLEVELAND

What's happening in Cleveland in the past approximately six weeks is that a GAA has formed there. I've only been there a little over a month myself. Cleveland has had very little activity in any way concerned with gay liberation. There's a small GLF there that's virtually inactive. It's a social clique, as they tend to be all across the country. The GAA there has about 25 members and it was organized solely because a gay man was arrested in the mall in downtown Cleveland with some of his gay friends. They arrested him for loitering or something and beat up a couple of people. They took it to court and interest grew around that single incident and it initiated in forming the GAA.

At this time, the problems within the Cleveland GAA are similar to those around the country, and that is that fewer and fewer women are beginning to attend the meetings. Primarily, of course, because of male chauvinism within the gay liberation movement. The activities planned ahead for Cleveland include gay dances and we're in a thing whereby the *Plain Dealer* has made a statement that Edgewater Park, which is located on Lake Erie on the west side, was one of the filthiest parks in Cleveland and that it was frequented by homosexuals, alluding to the fact that that was why it was so filthy. Now they're demanding a retraction, and if the retraction is not made within I think what is a seven-day period, as of this week, they're going to picket the *Plain Dealer*, so I have a feeling it will be made. That's about the only activity, except the dances and they are seeking to endorse a candidate who supports gay liberation.