

**Guild Gazette, 20th March 1973**

**Homosexuality – A dirty word?**

Butch, femme, fairy, queen, homosexual, gay-ad infinitum. A multitude of different names for a person who is exploring one aspect of human behaviour. Almost all these names have become or were originated as terms of abuse and denigration. To admit to oneself, let alone to another, any homosexual feelings, value judgements and myths implicit in the names above.

Naturally, many people will deny to others recognition of their own homosexual feelings. They fear, justifiably, hostility, abuse, ridicule or at best patronising tolerance. These fears are just one of the reasonable for the Homophile Society (GaySoc) insofar that it enables the individual to talk freely to others experiencing the same difficulties, without fears, and with access to knowledge and information ordinarily inaccessible.

Another reason for GaySoc is the considerable discrimination against people known or suspected of being gay. A recent case occurred in the university concerning an undergraduate applying for a postgraduate course. He had applied the previous year and had been accepted, but then had the opportunity of an Honours year, which he took. He re-applied this session, well in time, and asked for the same references. He was somewhat surprised when one of his tutors called him in to present the alternative of no reference or for the reference to contain mention of the fact that he had become a member of Gaysoc. This fact had come to the tutors notice through the ‘student grapevine’. Neither alternative seemed acceptable, so the student concerned decided to fight this, and only be satisfied with a reference as excellent as the previous one without mention of his membership of Gaysoc, which he considered as irrelevant to the course he was applying to as would his political affiliation. With the support of other members of Gaysoc he was able to reach this satisfactory solution. Being able to cope with the confrontations that were necessary, was at least partially due to the fact that he had overcome attitudes to gayness that he had internalised and was able to express and assert himself without being aggressive or provoking hostility.

It was due to an unusual set of circumstances that brought out into the open a case of possibly harmful discrimination, which was only resolved satisfactorily sue to the fact that the individual concerned had support. How many cases of discrimination occur without anyone’s knowledge, or on someone without any support available, by policy or by individual quirk, will not be known until there are more people involved.

There are many myths surrounding homosexuality, and they are still being perpetuated in sex education lesson at school, in medicals schools and hospitals, text-books, newspapers and paperbacks such as Dr. Reubens’s ‘Everything you want to know about sex…’. The mythology surrounding homosexuality is by no means exclusive, there is probably as much about heterosexuality. The content of this myth about homosexuality as a profound effect on the relationship the gay or bisexual individual has with society and other people when there is secrecy and ignorance.

**Myths**

The common myths about homosexuality include those that say that homosexuals are limp wristed queens if they are men, or close cropped horsey Amazons if female. Also homosexuality is confused with paedophilia and transvestitism. Homosexuals are also considered to be immature inadequate individuals or just downright perverted. Or ‘cannot help it, poor things, they are born that way’. Many of these myths have been made respectable or are derived from Freudian psychoanalytic theory, not least of all that homosexuality is due to an unresolved Oedipa/Electra complex. The idea that homosexual behaviour is unnatural or perverted is related to psychological theories or personality and religious (Judeo-Christina) dogma, and hence is seen as a threat to a society based on monogamous procreative heterosexual relationships. The evidence supporting these myths are derived from those people who imitate much of the sexist behaviour on our society, with bizarre consequences. None of the myths are about homosexuality, they are about the results that social attitudes has on the individual.

The ‘normal’ shuns the gay, for fear of guilt by association, whilst the normal trying to overcome this actually feels the guilt of association. This does have its value in-sofar that the gay begins to realise his/her bisexuality, and the ‘normal’ their homosexuality.

It is homosexuality that is condemned, not necessarily homosexuals ‘wo can’t help it, poor things’ or some other liberalistic repressive rationalisation. This attitude is no more clearly stated than in the Sexual Offenses Act (1967), which says effectively ‘that if you are over 21, in private, and not in service of Her Majesty the Queen, then it’s not illegal. Otherwise nothing changed. Female homosexuality has never been illegal, but attitudes to lesbians are just as stereotyped and mythologised as to male gays, which goes to show that it is homosexuality that is condemned and feared, and that female sexuality is denied and ignored.

A Homophile Society, and the retreat of gays and bisexuals into an inward looking group, could be accused of hindering the process of sexual liberation, but the need and usefulness of the society merely shows that an organisation exists not only for ideals, but also the here and now problems that society and other individuals put in the way of gays and bisexuals seeks social, sexual, and emotional fulfilment or satisfaction. Anyone aware of their gayness, however much or little, faces problems and needs to seek solutions and understanding with others experiencing the same problems.

It has been said that the change in the law has eliminated problem for gay men, but it does not seem to have stopped people being ‘cured’ by psychiatrists, moralised to by doctors, harassed by police, kicked out by parents, shunned by friends or denounced by the gutter press. The law merely reflects attitudes in society and the removal of the mirror has undoubtedly helped the development of gay liberation, and although the homosexual can now be forgiven, homosexuality is still condemned. Gays and bisexuals must fight against the attitudes to gayness they hold themselves and in others. Being a member of a group such as Gaysoc is part of the process of self-liberation and a means of changing societies attitudes …

There are at least 300 exclusively gay women and men as undergraduates in Liverpool University and probably as many bisexual, don’t know and not sures. Come out of the dark, you don’t have to be fantastically liberated, you can be as quiet and confidential as you like, but make a move and commit yourself to doing something about yourself. This is also applies to all academic and non-academic staff.

**HOMOPHILE ORGANISATIONS:**

Gay Liberation Front (G.L.F), 5 Caledonian Road, London N1. 01-837 7174. Mainly operates in London and a few other towns – not Liverpool. Publishes ‘Come Together’ and Gay Manifesto.

Campaign for Homosexual Equality (C.H.E), 28 Kennedy St., Manchester 2. 061-228 1985. 70 groups in England and Wales groups in Liverpool and Wirral. Published ‘Lunch’, National bulletin and many relevant leaflets. Local groups active politically and socially.

A Gay newspaper (fortnightly) ‘Gay News’ 10p available from Virgin Records, Bold Street, and Probe, Clarence Street.

Any other information about the local situation available from Gaysoc on enquiry via letter rack (G) or phone 709 4410 evenings.

C:\Users\DMOONEY\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\1TOQHPGS\homosexuality,a,dirty,word.tiff