

LIVERPOOL UNIVERSITY

GAYSOC

'Backs to the wall boys!' Typified reactions we received from people when we said that we were going to attend a meeting of the University gay society. Indeed such comments serious or not, betray a general attitude amongst heterosexuals towards gays — as if what we were about to attend was some bizarre, clandestine gathering, at which we needed to be on our closest guard. Of course, the stereotyped image of gays is very far from the truth: in reality, they are as diverse, not-to-mention, as "ordinary" as straights. It is frustrating then, that, after ten years in which they have begun to make their presence known in society, homosexuals are still subject to such prejudices.

The pressures exerted on gays in a predominantly heterosexual society are still great: the guilt, fears and self-hatred which a gay may experience before coming to terms with his homosexuality, cannot be over-emphasised. Through our moral upbringing we are conditioned to accept a heterosexual lifestyle with the result that homosexuals are forced to suppress their real instincts: thus they may prefer to convince themselves that they are 'straight' rather than risk the rejection and ridicule they fear may be encountered by 'coming out.'

In theory, at least, gays at University should meet with much more liberal attitudes in a freer, more open-minded environment. Since its foundation a year ago, it has been the aim of gaysoc to protect and further the interests of gay women and men in this University. Its meetings, held every three weeks on Thursday evenings, provide for its fifty or so members a relaxed milieu for social gatherings. In addition the society organises occasional talks

on homosexuality and the position of homosexuals in society as regards the church, the Law and politics.

Moreover gaysoc provides an important stepping-stone to the gay scene in the city — certainly, gay night-clubs, such as 'The Masquerade,' can be very intimidating to an isolated man or woman. However this could not be said of 'The Third Room' at the Everyman bistro, by far the best social revue we came across. Run every Monday night by Link (an umbrella organisation for the aid of all gay groups in the city) and supported by gaysoc, it offers to the gay populace of Liverpool a friendly atmosphere in comfortable surroundings with none of the more sordid associations of gay night-clubs.

Gaysoc then, with its aim to ease students into gay life without a 'baptism-by-fire,' fills an important role in the University. Why, in that case does it receive so little support from the majority of gay students in Liverpool. Ignorance maybe, although the blitz-posterings campaign of last year failed to bring a marked increase in membership. It seems more likely that apathy or fear is the cause. A pity, for how can gays expect to improve their situation, if they fail to lend support to organisations set up specifically for their benefit?

NB: Anyone interested in getting in touch with gaysoc, should contact the membership secretary via the gaysoc drawer in the guild office.

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