

*Su Clarke writes on behalf of
the Defy the Clause Group*

For those whose heads are still firmly stuck in the sand (or should I say closet?) when it comes to lesbian and gay liberation, Section 28 is the name given to the previous Clause 28 of the Local Government Bill which was passed earlier this year. The Bill hopes to censor the "promotion" of homosexuality (whatever that means). It was passed despite great protest from the gay community and its supporters. As one of the more insidious attacks on civil liberties in recent times it adversely opened many peoples eyes to the repressive nature of the Moral Majority. Lesbians and gay men are being legislated against simply because of their sexuality, something which should be protected as the right of every individual to decide for her or himself. The proposal of the Clause brought the gay community together in a way that has not been seen since the late sixties. However, the passing of the Clause has left many feeling disillusioned and unsure of what to do next.

The Eurotour that arrived in Manchester on November 28th was organised by Dutch lesbians and gay men as a response to Section 28. The purpose of it is to build strong links between lesbians and gay men all over Europe in preparation for 1992 (the unification of Europe). The influence that Thatcherism may have on Europe is a worrying one. Such links are therefore an important step to ensure that similar or more aggressive legislation is not passed in the future and on a wider scale.

A delegation of ten people from Liverpool travelled to Manchester in order to be part of a welcoming committee when the tour reached the Town Hall. When the tour finally arrived (very colourfully and musically I might add) we discovered this was only the second official reception they'd had (the other one being in Berlin), even though they left Amsterdam on October 14th and have travelled throughout Europe to such places as Paris, Munich, Gotenburg, Oslo and Copenhagen. Even London didn't come up with much by all accounts (am I allowed to be regionalist and have a private snigger at that?). This lack of support for our foreign friends is, I think, indicative of the



Liverpool Defy the Clause Group hit Manchester!

disillusionment I mentioned earlier. Hopefully publicity of the tour will give us the energy to realise that our battle has only just begun and that we must not get disheartened.

Manchester City Council put on a superb reception with loads of free drinks (what more could we ask for) and speeches from the Lord Mayor, the deputy leader of the Council, representatives from the North West Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Equality, and speakers from the tour itself.

The Eurotour is heading for Edinburgh and Birmingham next. The fight against the implications of Section 28 is one we should all be concerned with because, no matter whether it is ever used or not it is indicative of a clamp down on human rights. If you are reading this as a straight person who sees the lesbian and gay issue as yet another hysterical minority group, I can only leave you with this poem:

First they came for the Jews
And I did not speak out —
Because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for the communists
And I did not speak out —
Because I was not a communist.

Then they came for the trade unionists
And I did not speak out —
Because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for me
And there was no one left
To speak out for me.

Pastor Niemoller

Liverpool Defy The Clause Group meet every 2nd & 4th Thursday at the Mutual Aid Centre, Seel Street, Liverpool 1.