

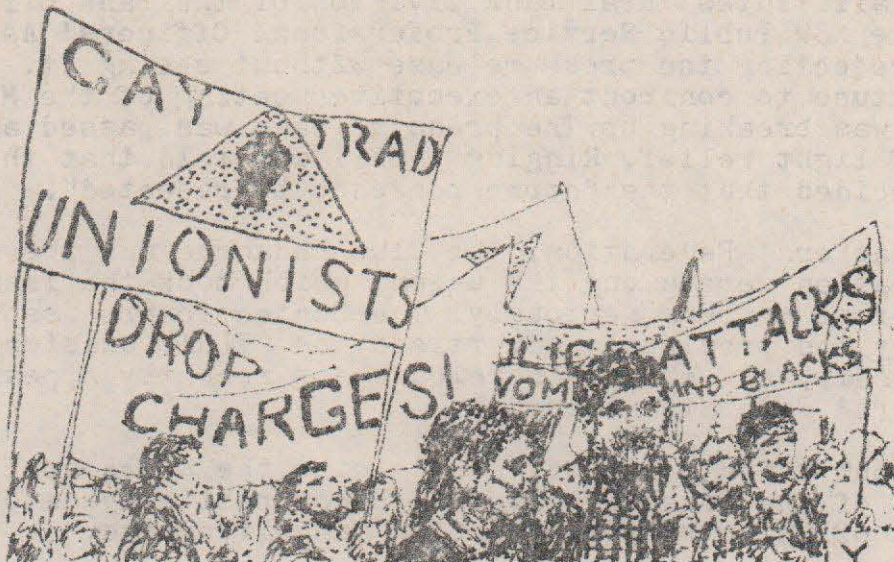
# the gay trade unionist

newsletter of the nsw gay trade unionists' group

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## Gay Solidarity Week 1979

The week was a huge success, despite mutterings of trouble from the media and Darlinghurst police. Unfortunately for GTUG, many members were involved in the peaceful running of the marches so that could not publicise the group. However, a large contingent from the Australian Railways Union, the Australian Telephone and Phonogram Officers' Association, and the Australian Clerical Officers' Association marched under the GTUG banner - a striking effort from various ARU gays!

## ITA Victory

The Annual General Meeting of the NSW Independent Teachers' Association, on April 28 declared the Association's opposition to anti-gay discrimination.

The Association is to prepare "a policy statement on the Association's opposition to discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, sex, sexuality, marital status and political conviction."

## Gay Labor Group

The idea of a Gay Labor Group is being resurrected again this year after a warm response to the idea at last year's National Homosexual Conference. Organisers hope the group will in the short term co-ordinate isolated moves within the Labor Party for gay rights, and in the long term achieve law reform for NSW gays.

A meeting of Labor Party members will be held at the Gay Solidarity Centre, 603 King Street, St. Peters.  
Saturday, 25th August 1979 at 2.00pm.

## Next Meeting

Will be held at CAMP 33A Glebe Point Road, GLEBE.  
Sunday 19th August 1979 2.30pm.

Agenda will include discussions of GTUG's contribution to the ACSPPA and the 5th National Homosexual Conferences, and an assessment of the 4th August Seminar. Final billeting arrangements will be made for the Melbourne Conferences.



## The Art of the Brush Off

Doing the rounds of the Labor Council Building and the Trades Hall handing out a press release advertising the ACSPA National Meeting on Homosexual Workers hasn't been easy. The general response has been to defer a decision on publication until the next executive meeting. That decision will "definitely be made next week". Sorry not this week, next week..... how about a month after the conference!

There have been the odd flat refusal. Oddest of all came from two ACSPA affiliates Rural Bank Division of the Bank Officers' Assoc. and the NSW Public Service Professional Officers' Association - both rejecting the press release without seeing it. I also had the misfortune to confront an executive meeting of the Miners' Fed. as it was breaking up. The press release was passed around for a bit of light relief. Ringing back I was told that the executive had decided that the "correspondence be rejected".

The Teachers' Federation, the Club Managers and the Confectioners Association were among the unions which took the issue of their homosexual members seriously. The Confectioners Association told me they had previously advertised the GTUG's existence to its membership, and the press release has recently appeared in the Teachers' Federation journal.

Will your union's executive publicise the ACSPA conference? Copies of the press release and other publicity material and a list of union responses are on hand if needed.

## ACSPA National Meeting on Gay Workers

VENUE: Victorian Teachers' Union, CAMBERWELL.  
(The VTU is on tram route No. 75)

PROGRAM:

9.30 am	- Registration and Coffee.
10.00 am - 11.30	- Speakers (Bill Richardson to chair)
	1. Bill Richardson Federal Sec.
	ACSPA. Opening of meeting and
	discussion of processes involved
	in achieving change through
	unions.
	2. Gay Trade Unionist - Melbourne.
	Oppression of homosexual workers.
	3. Gay Trade Unionist - NSW.
	The need to work in unions.
	4. Gail Radford, Assistant
	Commissioner, Public Service
	Board.
	Changing employment practices.
11.45am - 1.00pm	- Films.
1.00pm - 2.00pm	- Lunch.
2.00pm - 3.00pm	- Workshops - Oppression in the workforce.
3.00pm - 4.00pm	- Organising through unions.
4.00pm	- Reporting back. (Jude Munro to chair).

It is envisaged that people will be allocated to workshops on an industry basis.

DATE: 30th August 1979, the day preceeding the opening of the 5th National Homosexual Conference.

BILLETING: The Vic. GTU's have kindly arranged billets for those wishing to attend. If you will be attending the ACSPA Conference, please let us know the details before the next meeting. ie. Whether you will be representing your union or whether you will be going in a private capacity, and whether you will need to be billeted.

PUBLICITY: NSW GTUG have 1,000 leaflets. People are needed to leaflet bars, gay and womens' centres, and to make personal enquiries at trade union offices. Can you help? let us know (ph: 519 6235) or come to the next meeting.



# 1. ADB Research into Homosexual Discrimination

The afternoon seminar began at 2.00pm with a welcome by Richard Wilson.

Chris Burvill, a research officer with the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board then gave a talk on the results of some of her work.

She started off by pointing out that the 1977 Anti-Discrim. Act did not make it unlawful to discriminate against homosexuals. However, it did instruct the Board to carry out research into discrimination against homosexuals.

An earlier report of the Board into discrimination in legislation on the grounds of sex, race and marital status recommended revision of those sections of the Crimes Act relating to homosexual acts - on the grounds that they applied only to males and therefore discriminated on the basis of sex. Those particular recommendations had not yet been acted upon.

The main body of Chris's talk consisted of a report on two of three surveys relating to homosexual discrimination that she had been involved in this year. These were of: employment agencies, employers and homosexuals who took part in a phone-in.

She skipped the report on employment agencies and went straight on to the survey of employers. Apparently both had yielded similar results.

The survey of employers had involved 100 employers in the private sector in NSW. The survey aimed to cover a representative range of business and industry - wholesale, retail, manufacturing, etc. in both city and country.

Of the 100 employers, 5 admitted to having rejected a job applicant because of homosexuality over the last 5 years.

All denied having refused to promote anyone because of homosexuality. 3 had dismissed employees because of homosexuality, including:

- a night porter in a hotel who had allegedly been unreliable as a result of using his job to get sex, and
- a process worker who had expressed sexual interest in another employee.

3 employers had cautioned employees, warning them to "be less blatant," and not to "bring the employer's business into disrespect."

25 of the 100 employers felt there were certain jobs that would be unsuitable for homosexuals. These usually involved contact with the public, ("You couldn't have lesbians selling girls' wear or underwear.") or supervisory positions ("The morals of juniors have to be protected.") One said you couldn't have a gay working as a cellarman because he wouldn't be able to lift the barrels.

About a third of the surveyed employers expressed reservations about employing gays - because jobs involved contact with the public, or because they feared friction among workers.

70% saw no problem if the Anti-Discrimination Act was extended to include homosexuals but 30% were opposed - seeing this as impinging on employers' rights. If it were extended they felt employers would find administrative ways around the Act.

The survey of homosexuals consisted of relatively in-depth interviews with homosexuals who phoned in.

Those who phoned in covered all groups but there were more professionals than others, and teachers were the most highly represented group.

Many were closetted. They feared the sack, and felt knowledge of their homosexuality might affect their promotion prospects.



Many felt their homosexuality made it difficult for them to get a job.

14 had to change jobs because of their homosexuality (including one policeman) - most from professional jobs to jobs of lower status.

12 had been sacked. 5 of these were working in the health area. 4 felt forced to resign after being confronted. One lesbian teacher resigned after victimisation, anonymous phone calls, and being socially ostracised.

Often gays preferred to go quietly and avoid making an issue in order to preserve their chances of re-employment.

Few sought assistance from their union, and those that did usually did persevere in the face of initial discouragement. Only one had actually received union backing.

Not unexpectedly, those working with children or in the health area seemed to be the most vulnerable or most likely to suffer discrimination.

Chris expressed surprise at how recent most of the reported cases had been. This may have been the result of people being more open, but things did not seem to be getting better.

## 2. Summing Up

The seminar broke up into two workshops to discuss work experiences and ways of working through unions. Decisions at these and the final summing up session are listed below:

- 1) The denial of the right to be openly homosexual at work is a serious form of anti-gay discrimination.
- 2) That the central concern of GTUG is social freedom, and therefore in seeking to develop links with the trade union movement it co-operate with other human rights and anti-discrimination groups. That it consider approaching womens', blacks and migrant groups towards presenting a united front to unions on discrimination.
- 3) That GTUG seek to implement the International Gay Association's request that gay groups work upon their nation's delegates to the International Labor Organisation with a view to amending convention 111 to outlaw discrimination against gays in the workplace.
- 4) The GTUG publicise to unions, gay groups and employers, the activities of the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board and its research into discrimination against gays.
- 5) That GTUG approach the NSW Trades and Labor Council, seeking the assistance of the TLC Education Officer, to research further the nature and incidence of discrimination against homosexuals in the NSW workforce, and such research to supplement that currently being undertaken by the NSW ADB.
- 6) That GTUG endorse unions' actions to seek ACTU endorsement of the ACSPA resolutions on gay rights, such endorsement not being seen as conflicting with the need for research at the State TLC level.
- 7) That because the seminar/workshop recognises that the denial of the right to be openly homosexual at work is a serious form of anti-gay discrimination, it is concerned by the policy of the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board to discourage its employees from being open about their sexuality and homosexuality, and not to employ openly homosexual people. This policy has been adopted for political reasons, and considers it to be an unacceptable position for a body such as the ADB, when its clear charter is to identify discrimination and recommend means of eradicating that discrimination.
- 8) That the GTUG seek funds from the 5th National Homosexual Conference, and from the trade union movement.





## 1,2,3,4,5 British Civil Service Victories

Britain's largest public service union, the Civil and Public Services Association (membership 273,000) amended its rule book to include opposition to discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation at its annual conference in May 1979. Conference also passed a resolution recognising and supporting the CPSA's gay group. All members are to be circulated with information on the group and the editor of the union's journal has been instructed to give publicity to the group and its aims.

Shortly before CPSA met, the 110,000 strong Society of Civil and Public Servants (SCPS) passed a motion (without comment) declaring that homosexual discrimination is intrinsically evil and causes unnecessary suffering. The Executive was then called on to take steps to try to bring homosexual discrimination to an end. However, a move to include anti-discrimination measures for gays in the union's rule book was narrowly defeated.

These considerable advances followed the decision of the top-ranking First Division Association and the Association of Tax Inspectors on the 3rd of May to oppose any discrimination against homosexual officers.

In the wake of these victories, the 100,000 members of the Institution of Professional Civil Servants have been assured that a policy statement to help local branches fight against anti-gay discrimination will be drawn up. Previous to this assurance, the IPCS maintained that it had always opposed discrimination, but preferred to do so quietly and discreetly.

**POSTSCRIPT:** The CISA Gay Group welcomes contacts with Australia. It also produces a monthly newsletter. The address is: CISAAGG, c/- 92 Clarendon Road, LONDON W11 2ER UK.

## Advances for Ontario Gay Teachers

Two teachers' federations of the Canadian province of Ontario, have amended their anti-discrimination policies to include "sexual orientation". They are the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF) and the Toronto Teachers' Federation, (TTF).

Some controversy arose around whether these measures would provide any practical effect. The President of the OSSTF said that the effect of the moves will be nil because "we already provide support for gays". She was referring to the assistance given to teachers when Toronto police handed over to employers the names of those teachers arrested after a raid on a Toronto steam bath.

However, there are moves afoot to get the sexual orientation clause included in local agreements (awards) with school boards. The President of a Toronto "local" or sub-branch of OSSTF thinks this inclusion will give the union the power to step in where someone gets into any trouble simply because of their sexual orientation.

And a spokesperson for the Ontario Gay Teachers' Caucus said that "until sexual orientation clauses are actually included in teachersboard contracts, gay teachers will have no real protection."

The ONTARIO GAY TEACHERS' CAUCUS can be contacted at: .  
Box 543, Station F, Toronto ON M4Y 2I8 CANADA.



## **GTUG Goes International**

A letter from Lex Watson, the Australian representative of the International Gay Association, to GTUG in NSW and Victoria marks the beginning of a co-ordinated campaign by gay trade unionists around the world to work towards the amendment of the Discrimination (Employment & Occupation) Convention 1958 of the International Labor Organisation, so that it covers sexual orientation.

The International Gay Association at its first Annual Conference in Holland at Easter, set this as the task for Australia in the coming years.

"The Australian trades unions are increasingly supporting the rights of gays not to be discriminated against at work and there is active and continuing gay communication with the unions on this. The same is true of the UK. Unfortunately, most of the international gay groups do not have direct links with trade unions, often owing to the hostility of the unions themselves. It was felt that unions would be more willing to support gay rights if they knew that similar unions in other countries were also doing so. It is therefore proposed that groups be requested to send the name of their organiser dealing with trades unions to Lex Watson, or if they do not have one, the names, addresses, and policies on civil and gay rights of trade unions in their countries."

The task for GTUG is two fold:-

- (1) We co-ordinate the collection of trade union policies from around the world. This would be used on a national and international basis to lobby trade union confederations.
- (2) And we,
  - (a) lobby the Australian peak trade union councils into adopting gay rights policies, and
  - (b) for them to encourage other national union bodies to act at their national and at the international level (ie. ILO)

### **ASK NOT GTUG CAN DO**

This project will only get off the ground if more people can contribute their skills, time and energy. A discussion of the group resources is planned for our next meeting on the 19th August. So come along!!!!

## **August 4 Seminar on Discrimination**

Over 30 major unions in NSW were personally approached, often at the executive level, about sending a delegate along to the seminar. Of these the Nurses Association, the Electrical Trades Union, the Australian Social Welfare Union and the Printing and Kindred Industries Union turned up. Apologies were received from the NSW Teachers' Federation, the Federated Engine Drivers and Firemen's Association and the Liquor and Allied Industries Employees Union. The Public Service Association executive although not endorsing a representative to attend, resolved that they support legislative change to overcome homosexual discrimination.

**THE AIM:** of the afternoon was to develop some understanding of the issues of anti-gay discrimination in employment in NSW, both for the trade union movement and GTUG delegates to the ACSA National Meeting on homosexual workers.

A floating number of around 40 people attended the address by Chris Burvill from the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board and the workshops and summing up sessions after.

**MONEY:** The cost of the afternoon was around the \$100 mark, paid for by the two people who did most of the organising for afternoon. One of these people is currently unemployed. GTUG would appreciate all donations to help pay off this debt.