

**socialism
and the fight
for lesbian,
gay and
bisexual
rights**

OUT, proud and militant

A MILITANT LABOUR PAMPHLET

CONTENTS▼

Page▼

Introduction	1▼
Prejudice - get angry and get even	2▼
HIV/AIDS - profit and propaganda	7▼
Parenting and fertility rights	16▼
Age of consent and criminalisation of gay sex	21▼
Fighting prejudice and discrimination in the workplace	25▼
Domestic violence affects us too	31▼
Unity against the fascists	35▼
The socialist way forward	37▼

Written by Militant Labour's
Lesbian, Gay and
Bisexual Group
June 1994

*Printed by Militant Publications.
Published by Militant Labour, June 1994*

INTRODUCTION

June 1994 - 25 years on from the Stonewall uprising which gave birth to "lesbian, gay and bisexual pride" which we now celebrate every year with a 100,000 plus strong demonstration and festival. Fitting then that it is this year that the Tories should be given a taste of the anger and militancy which burns as strong as ever within our community at the prejudice and discrimination we face.

On Monday 21 February, the Tories cowered in parliament as demonstrators attempted to storm parliament on hearing that the vote to equalise the age of consent at 16 had fallen. 18 is still discrimination! It still means fear of arrest, the emotional stress and isolation felt by most gay teenagers, it still means depriving the most vulnerable section of society of life-saving safer-sex education.

The anger which swept the 5000 plus demonstration - the biggest mobilisation since the battle against Section 28 - echoed the mood of New York's lesbian and gay community in 1969, which resulted in that famous uprising against the police with running street battles lasting several days. They'd had enough of the constant harassment and raids carried out around their clubs. This February, no clearer message could have been sent to the Tories, that despite almost 15 years of fuelling prejudice, of strengthening laws against us, of scapegoating us - we are still out, and still fighting back.

The militancy of the lesbian, gay and bisexual community has forced concessions from the Tories - the reduction of the gay age of consent to 18, its extension to Northern Ireland, and the decriminalising of homosexuality in the armed forces. Internationally too, governments have had to introduce reforms - the Republic of Ireland now has an equal age of consent at 17; Germany has announced its intention to follow suit; New Zealand's parliament has voted to ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and HIV status (including in the police and armed forces); Russia has finally repealed the law which sent gay men to labour camps for up to five years.

However, these concessions go nowhere near far enough. The anger and frustration we feel at the blatant discrimination that remains must be turned into building a movement that will win all the rest. The militancy of the lesbian, gay and bisexual community is as strong as ever, but the question is: how can we best direct that militancy to end the prejudice and discrimination we face, and to achieve the equality that is our right? It is to try and answer this, that the Militant Labour Lesbian, Gay & Bisexual Group have produced this pamphlet.

PREJUDICE - GET ANGRY **& GET EVEN**

- ▼1986-1991 - 70 gay men are murdered
- ▼1989- 33 men jailed for consenting sex with men aged 16-21
 - 3500 prosecutions for under age gay sex
 - 2022 arrests for "indecent between men" (the highest since 1955)
- ▼April 1989 - Karen Greig dismissed from the navy for being a lesbian; the man who raped her was kept on
- ▼January 1992 - home of HIV-positive man and his family firebombed in Nottingham
- ▼January 1993 - first Home Office survey shows violent attacks against gays up by a third
- ▼Spring 1993 - Paul Mayho, student nurse forced to resign because of his HIV-positive status
- ▼November 1993 - The Marcus Garvey library cuts its order of the Pink paper to just one after Daily Mail accuses them of distributing "obscene gay propaganda"
- ▼Winter 1993 - lesbian mother in USA loses custody of child to her own mother and step-father who sexually abused her as a child
- ▼February 1994 - Hackney headmistress and lesbian, Jane Brown, victimized in "Romeo and Juliet" affair
 - 13 arrested in raid on Birmingham gay sauna
- ▼April 1994 - 13 more arrested in raid on the Mineshaft (Manchester gay club)
 - gay immigration officer sentenced to 6 months for forging documents to allow his Brazilian lover to stay

These are just a handful of outrageous incidents which have found their way into the press. Behind them lie thousands upon thousands of unreported physical and verbal attacks which lesbians, gay men and bisexuals endure day in and day out - all reasons why anger must be turned into organised action to wipe out bigotry.

It seems contradictory that over the same period of time, attitudes have been shifting towards much greater support for the ideas of equal rights for women, for an equal age of consent, against racism, and against the 'traditional' family val-

ues promoted by the Tories. A social attitudes survey conducted by the *Independent*/NOP showed more acceptance of same sex relationships too: in 1985, 59% of people considered such relationships to be always wrong; this had dropped to 35% by 1993.

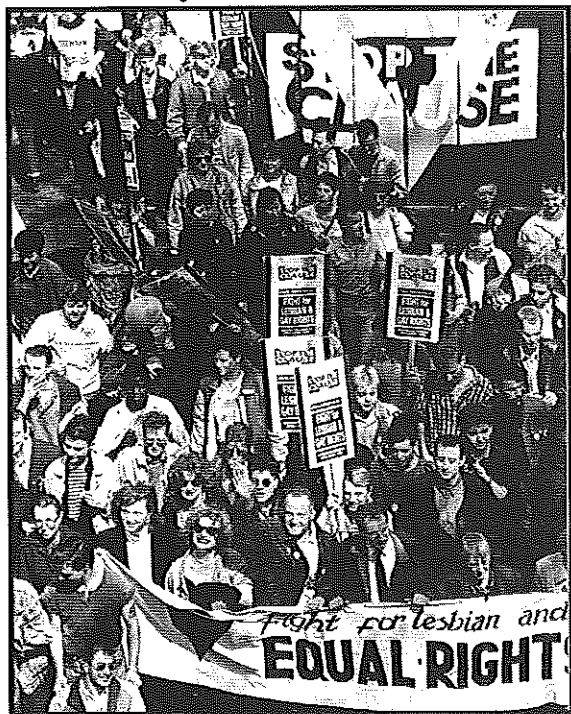
The anti-gay prejudice which the Tories have whipped up over the last 15 years using legislation, government guidelines, and not least their friends in the gutter press, has clearly had its effect. Their hypocritical pronouncements about how people should live their lives are reinforced by images conjured up in the press of lesbians and gay men inhabiting seedy underground worlds, living on the fringes of society. Human tragedy is seized on and twisted. Look at the reporting of the hunt for the gay serial killer last year. Gervase Webb of the *London Evening Standard* wrote, for example, of the "literally twilight world" of gay sadomasochists, of their "air of vulnerability and wariness", and of the "predatory, risky and anonymous world of multiple sex partners and hasty sex." The horrific arson attack on a Kings Cross porn cinema in March 1994 was seized on to ridicule and condemn gay men, with headlines like "Gay porn club victims die in dresses". There was no condemnation of the parasites who made fortunes through showing porn in unlicensed and dangerous buildings. Most blatant of all has been, of course, the propaganda campaign to label AIDS as a "gay plague".

Are the Tories just bigots?

Why do the Tories and their friends in the press go to such lengths to encourage anti-gay attitudes? Is it pure bigotry or does some other purpose lie behind their ravings? To find out, we must look back over the last 15 years of Tory rule, and see what their overall plan and purpose has been.

The 1980s opened with mass unemployment and recession. The 1990s opened in the same way. For the majority of people in society, Tory policies have led to living standards slipping further and further behind. A report from the Institute for Fiscal Studies (June 1994) shows that while the share of income going to the richest tenth rose to 25%, the share going to the poorest tenth fell to 3%. Now 11 million people (20% of the population) live on less than half the average income. Meanwhile the rich swan around with their pockets full, and the big companies make record profits. While people die for lack of money going into the NHS, the Queen is about to get a £1million government handout for not growing

• crops on her land. Their wealth has been at our expense.



Deep bitterness and anger burns within society against what they've been doing. The last thing the Tories want is for this feeling to explode and for working class people to take back what should be ours. So long as they can divert attention and keep us all divided, then they can sit pretty. No more powerful a weapon can be wielded than prejudice.

Look at the hysteria whipped up against gays in the early years of discovering AIDS: what a marvellous distraction while they got on with the business of putting chains round the unions and prepared to knock out any other obstacles to driving down public spending such

• as left-wing Labour councils.

• The way that anti-gay prejudice has been used to turn opinion
• against Labour perhaps shows most blatantly the cynical way
• in which the Tories manipulate prejudice to suit themselves.

• In the 1980s, the Tories feared the left-wing GLC and some
• of the inner London Labour councils would become a focus
• for mass opposition to their cuts. Anti-gay attitudes were
• fanned to create the impression that huge sums of money
• were being spent on the lesbian and gay and other minority
• communities while everyone else was being left to rot. The
• blame for inadequate spending on schools and housing, for
• cuts in nurseries and other social provision was directed
• away from the Tories and towards the extravagant "loony left
• councils". (In fact, at this time, Haringey council had only
• spent £127,000 and Camden £133,000 on minority commu-
• nities.)

• Section 28 of the Local Government Bill was drawn up with

the same cynical purpose in mind. It reads: "A local authority shall not (a) intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality; (b) promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretend family relationship." Such loose wording is of dubious legal worth. It's only other purpose surely would be to provide political cover for the main thrust of the act which represents the most vicious attack yet on council housing and finances.

In the 1994 council elections we saw the same card being played, leaflets being distributed by local Tories once again attempting to play up spending on the lesbian and gay community. In Waltham Forest the local *Independent* proved a willing ally with a front page headline "Safe Haven for Gays...a youth facility plans to open one day a week for gay youngsters - while four youth centres face the axe."

But this is nothing new. Sexuality has been used throughout the history of class society as a political weapon, around which attitudes and prejudice can be built. The diaries of Irish republican, Roger Casement, published this year by the British government, came with an admission that diary references to gay sex were leaked to discredit him. Casement was sentenced to death in 1916 for his part in bringing arms to assist the uprising of Irish workers against British rule (later known as the Easter uprising). The revelations about his gay sex life were used to cut across the massive sympathy that was developing for his release. Copies of the diary were circulated by the British Cabinet, and extracts leaked for several years after his hanging. The explicit and erotic diary entries were described at the time as "filthy beyond description...they touch the lowest depths that human degradation has ever touched". Through such propaganda they sought to create the attitude that he deserved to hang.

Bisexuality

As the confidence of lesbians and gay men to 'come out' has grown, many more people are openly identifying themselves as bisexual.

Bisexuals suffer the same kind of oppression and abuse as lesbians and gay men. A bisexual man of 20 won't be jailed for having sex with a 16 year old woman, but could be for having sex with a 16 year old man. He won't get half the sentence for being bisexual! Bisexuals are quite wrongly scape-

• goated for the development of HIV/AIDS amongst heterosexuals.

• The issue is not one of who suffers the most, but of what we have in common. Lesbians, gay men *and* bisexuals are all denied the right to choose our relationships free from prejudice and discrimination. We argue therefore that bisexuals should be encouraged to participate in trade union, and other lesbian and gay groups.

• Unity is strength. The Tories gain from the division sown between heterosexuals and the lesbian, gay and bisexual community: they will gain even more if we are divided amongst ourselves.

• **Prejudice - a weapon to divide and rule**

• Anti-gay prejudice, in fact prejudice of all kinds - racism, sexism, etc - will be kept alive and will continue to be manipulated so long as we live in a society which is based on inequality. Prejudice is one of the most powerful weapons the rich use to keep working-class people fighting amongst themselves instead of uniting against a system which denies them decent living standards and a future for them and their children.

• Lesbians, gay men and bisexuals have not been the only ones at the sharp end of prejudice and bigotry. Over the last 15 years, Tory policies have led to a huge shift in wealth away from working-class people and towards the rich. Their policies now openly attack the majority of people. As their support has crumbled, the Tories have turned to use prejudice more blatantly to try and find some basis of support amongst the people they're attacking. While police powers are boosted, single parents are blamed for a generation of "delinquents" and drug abusers. While council houses are sold off, black and Asian people are blamed for housing shortages. After snatching benefits from 16-18 year olds, leaving them penniless, Major has the nerve to insult people forced into begging as "eye sores" and "spongers".

• Our fight against prejudice therefore takes us beyond to job of kicking out the Tories. We need to fight for a society which, for the first time in history, is run by the majority in the interests of the majority - in other words a socialist society.



HIV/AIDS - PROFIT & PROPAGANDA

"The full implications of AIDS only hit me when a friend stopped me on Castro Street, in San Francisco, at the end of April 1984. 'Paul just died,' he said, speaking of someone I didn't know. 'He's the fifth friend I've lost this year.' Michael, my friend, is in his early thirties; his own lover died from AIDS the previous fall. For those of us who have grown up in the Western world over the past half century, the experience of losing friends and lovers in large numbers has been confined to old age and war. With the onset of AIDS, familiar faces - the man in the bookshop, the mailman, casual acquaintances - began to disappear and funerals became an increasingly frequent part of our lives."

(Dennis Altman in AIDS and the New Puritanism)

"In the same week as the Sunday Times reported the plateauing of the epidemic amongst gay men, the British Medical Journal reported that 23% of gay men who took the

• *test last year in Brighton were HIV-positive. There are times*
• *when the gulf between the official version of the world as*
• *reported by the national press and the everyday world I*
• *inhabit with my friends becomes unbearable. Last week*
• *was just such a moment.*

• *“Almost all of my friends have recently commented to me in*
• *their own ways that AIDS and HIV have become much more*
• *real to them in the past year...It's happened in all sorts of*
• *ways. For one friend, it was the sudden diagnosis of an ex-*
• *boyfriend with AIDS and his subsequent shoddy treatment in*
• *hospital that shocked him out of any illusion he might have*
• *had about the epidemic as something 'out there'. For*
• *another friend, it was the realisation that in the past six*
• *months, almost his entire circle of friends had tested posi-*
• *tive.”*
• (Keith Alcorn, *Capital Gay*, 23 April 93)

• These personal testimonies bring to life the cold statistics
• which show a cumulative total, to April 1994, of 9025 reported
• AIDS cases in Britain. 6031 of these have died. 21,718
• cases of HIV infection have been reported to date, 60% of
• which are most likely to have been through gay sex. One gay
• man is diagnosed with AIDS every 8 hours in the UK. Two gay
• men are diagnosed with AIDS everyday in London. In the USA
• the situation is much worse with more than 175,000 deaths
• with AIDS. In Asia and Africa the devastation is horrific. Two
• million people are infected with HIV in Asia. In Africa,
• 250,000 people are living with AIDS, and a further 8 million
• are HIV-positive.

• **“Gay plague” and witch-hunts**

• Whilst worldwide the majority of people living with HIV/AIDS
• are heterosexual, in Britain the majority of reported cases are
• still amongst gay men. Nothing could have prepared the les-
• bian, gay and bisexual community for what was to hit in the
• 1980s. AIDS came to dominate gay politics. The panic and
• ignorance encouraged by the labelling of AIDS as a “gay
• plague” gave a new twist to the discrimination and prejudice
• suffered by lesbians and gay men.

• Genuine fears were left unanswered by a government more
• concerned with fanning prejudice than with people's lives.
• Some found themselves turned out by friends and family.
• Others found dentists and nurses refusing to treat them. In
• Cleveland, the police had photographs of people they

believed to be infected with HIV/AIDS pinned on the station notice boards. Physical attacks increased too: between 1986 and 1991, 70 gay men were murdered. A survey in 1992 found that 36% of lesbians and gay men interviewed had been assaulted because of their sexuality. In January 1992, a Nottingham man and his family were firebombed when it became known that he was HIV-positive. Health workers became particularly vulnerable. A near witch-hunt developed to root out anyone HIV-positive or living with AIDS. This is despite the fact that even now there is only one suspected case in the whole world of a health worker infecting a patient (a dentist in the USA, after failing to sterilise his tools). Health workers are as much at risk from patients, especially where there is complacency over safe work practices.

Peter Curran, an eye surgeon, was one victim of the witch-hunt, showing how lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals became guilty by association. Simply because a friend of his had died with AIDS, as far as the press were concerned that gave them the right to print an article under the headline "AIDS Doc Does Eye Ops". Not much later, a student nurse Paul Mayho at Westminster Hospital, London, was forced to resign after admitting his HIV-positive status. This came days after doctors were told they could be struck off if they withheld such information.



Discussions began in government circles and within the press about new legislation to allow enforced detention for people "knowingly spreading AIDS". (Cuba went one better and actually opened compounds to indefinitely detain people living with HIV/AIDS; families were split up, children on one side of the fence and parents on the other.) Compulsory HIV testing is already being used by Texaco to screen potential employees. When Harrods recently opened new kitchens at its West End store, HIV tests were carried out against the will of some staff, and on the rest who feared to complain. There was no choice, and no counselling.

• **Vested interests**

• HIV/AIDS has become probably the most political virus of all time. Vested interests have distorted every response. On the one hand it has become yet another vehicle through which the Tories have been able to promote their “back to basics” morals; on the other, it has been a golden egg for the drugs industry.

• The identification of AIDS coincided with the beginning of the Regan/Thatcher era which sought to re-establish the hold of their reactionary and right-wing ideas on society - so-called ‘traditional’ values. These ideas could be used to find a basis of support for, amongst other things, the break up of the welfare state, and putting the onus on the family to carry the can for everything. The discovery of AIDS in the USA and Britain, first amongst gay men, was seized upon to push the idea of “just deserts for an ‘un-natural’ lifestyle”, and that “if we all stick to ‘traditional’ family values, everything will be alright”.

• When the case of Roy Cornes hit the headlines, society had to confront the fact that AIDS infects heterosexuals too. Roy was a young, heterosexual, haemophiliac who’d become infected through a contaminated blood transfusion. The press, however, had to find some way of portraying him as “deviant” and on some insane revenge spree. The most personal details of his sex life were rummaged through to find out that after all he did indulge in anal sex. (Scientists at the government’s Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre in London are quoted in *The Independent* (21 May 93) as saying that “anal sex between heterosexuals has contributed very little, if any, to the observed second-generation heterosexual transmission” of HIV.)

• The stereotyping of AIDS as a “gay plague” has been a marvellous excuse for the government to do very little. And right-wing members of the medical establishment have been happy to lend their authority to this cause. Dr Stewart, a former advisor on AIDS to the World Health Organisation, said: “It is an unpalatable and unpopular fact...that those who die of AIDS have, like smokers who die of lung cancer or heart disease, facilitated their own death. In spite of this, governments, charities, drug companies and research agencies continue to plough millions into the AIDS machine.” The *Sunday Times* has joined the chorus with a whole series of articles claiming that the AIDS epidemic is a myth promoted by gay

activists and an "AIDS establishment" who are riding a gravy train". This is justification enough to the Tories who cut Health Education Authority funding by 70% in 1991, with further cuts in grants to HIV/AIDS charities like the Terence Higgins Trust and London Lighthouse by more than 60% two years later.

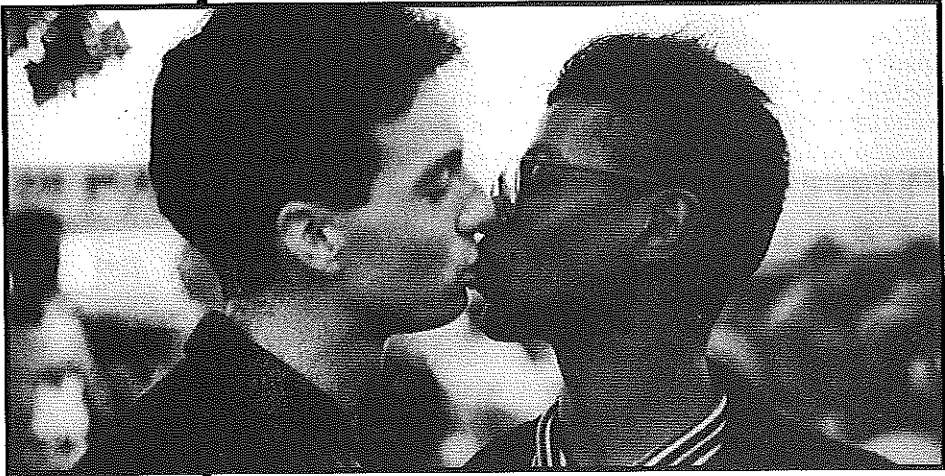
It is scandalous that despite 65% of people living with HIV/AIDS being gay or bisexual, only £1 out of every £16 spent on safer-sex education is targeted at these groups. A briefing paper from the All Party Parliamentary Group on AIDS (February 1994), states that "66% of agencies officially charged with carrying out HIV prevention conducted no work with gay and bisexual men. Of these agencies, 55% reported that this was due to the possible illegality of the work".

Prejudice puts lives at risk

This highlights just one way in which safer-sex education is completely hindered and distorted by prejudice and discriminatory legislation. Last year we learned how Thatcher had slowed down the whole safer-sex programme and clouded the message so as not to offend her sensibilities. All studies have shown that explicit and erotic material is most effective in getting the message over, but instead our TV screens brought us obscure images of crumbling icebergs, and the letters "AIDS" being chiselled into a gravestone. What this was supposed to tell us about safer-sex, we'll never know! But obstruction has turned to outright censorship this year. The Health Education Authority was stopped in January from going ahead with a campaign to promote safer-sex and condoms, while two months later they were forced to withdraw a booklet aimed at teenagers called *Your Pocket Guide to Sex*. Health Minister Brian Mawhinney thought it was "smutty" - saving lives mattered less!

Meanwhile, Education Minister John Patten has been busy making sex education as irrelevant and unproductive as possible. Teachers have been threatened with prosecution should they give contraceptive advice to children, and instructed to inform parents if they discover pupils having under-age sex. He wants to keep young people in as much ignorance as possible by streaming them for classes based on how much they already know ("to protect the innocent"). Renewed emphasis is to be placed on teaching sex in the context of Tory family values. All of this will increase the misery and isolation already felt by many lesbian, gay and bisex-

- ual teenagers, cutting them off even further from official
- sources of advice. Having your sexuality at best ignored, at
- worst condemned, by your school and 'official' society,
- undermines your self-esteem. Yet self-esteem is one of the
- most crucial factors in encouraging people to bother with
- safer-sex.
-



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- All this comes on top of the effects of Section 28 which has
- already led to an enormous amount of self-censorship by
- authorities and agencies wanting to avoid possible legal
- action by Tory councillors.
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• **Drug profiteers hinder progress**

- So HIV/AIDS has become a vehicle for the Tories to hammer
- away with their 'morals' and 'traditional' values, but the drug
- profiteers have been quick to recognise an opportunity too.
-

- Usually, the research, development and marketing of drugs
- goes on behind closed doors. But because of the way
- HIV/AIDS has become such a political issue, we've seen peo-
- ple who live with HIV/AIDS organising together with others in
- the lesbian, gay and bisexual community, and questioning the
- motives and conclusions drawn by the medical profession
- and drugs industry. In combination with lesbian, gay and
- bisexual health workers, more and more detailed information
- is being made available on the latest research and innova-
- tions, and hotly debated. Ordinary people are becoming
- experts in the field. Such is the pressure, that in the USA
- some companies have had to concede an element of "patient
-

participation" in the control of drug treatment trials.

Under this spotlight, the vested interests of drug companies stand exposed. Controversy is raging at present over whether HIV is the sole cause AIDS, or whether it requires certain co-factors to be present. Some scientists argue that HIV only starts causing problems in combination with other factors that might bring about a weakening of the immune system, for example malnutrition or amphetamines like poppers. Articles (ironically in the *Sunday Times*) have been exposing the powerful influence of the drug companies, and the way in which this power is being used to stifle development of alternative, non-drugs-based approaches.

The biggest drug companies are able to influence the health policy of nations and to steer research and development into areas most advantageous to themselves. Through grants to medical research institutions and representatives on policy making bodies, they can promote research into money-making curative drugs-based therapy and starve research into preventative approaches, the 'how and why' of HIV/AIDS.

Wellcome and AZT - the case for public ownership

The Wellcome Trust is the world's biggest private medical research fund, with assets worth more than £6 billion. It distributes more money to institutions than the government's Medical Research Council; around £400 million is donated every year to doctors and scientists in Britain and around the world! Such resources and influence should not be left in private hands, but put in the hands of democratically elected bodies that make decisions based on the interests of everybody, not on those of big business.

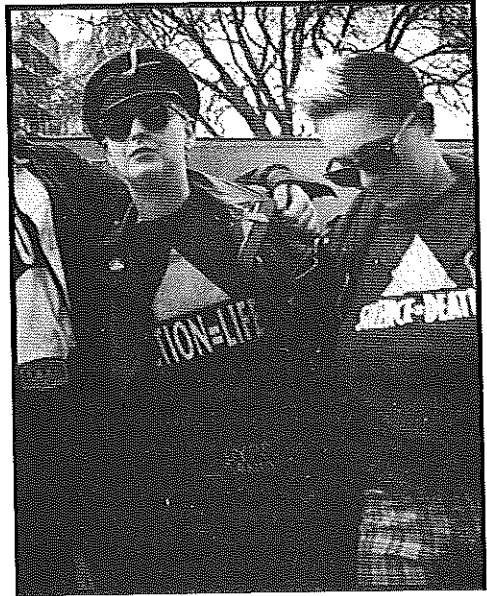
AZT is the most well known of drugs sold to treat AIDS symptoms. It is also the most controversial, and certainly the biggest earner. When it was put on the market, Wellcome's share value rocketed by a third overnight. In America the share price leapt by 276%. With £248million sales last year alone, AZT is Wellcome's second biggest earner. Hardly surprising when it was initially marketed at £10,000 for a year's treatment!

With the results of the 'Concorde' trials now published, which show AZT not to be the wonder drug it was thought to be, other things are coming to light. Because of the massive profits involved, there is a huge rush to corner the market

• first - trials are cut short as soon as there's any positive indication. The millions invested in research and development (£100million spent on AZT for example), means that if they can get away with it, companies will market drugs come what may, whether or not they work, whether or not there's a risk to people taking it.

• Originally developed as an anti-cancer drug, AZT was shelved for possible future use. As AIDS threatened to develop into epidemic proportions, the pound signs rolled in their eyes. AZT was dusted down, and was on the market within 20 months. (Normally, it takes 8-10 years of testing before drugs are given to patients.) It took even less time (8 months) to cash in on the market of symptom-free HIV-positive people. The Concorde trials now show that non-symptomatic HIV-positive people have nothing to show from using AZT - except illness from horrible side-effects.

• A l t h o u g h Wellcome had £500 million wiped of their share value in a day when results from Concorde were first released; record profits had by that time already been made. It's a smash and grab gamble that pays off for the drug



• companies but not, as some believe, for those who have suffered or even died through taking AZT. Sue Threakall of Birmingham is currently (early 1994) trying to sue Wellcome, believing AZT to have contributed to her husband's death.

• The marketing of AZT exposes the myth that the capitalist "free market" and competition will some how produce the best and cheapest products. Quite the opposite! Competition is ruthlessly knocked out of the way by the most powerful companies, while research is restricted and steered

towards what is in the best interests of drug company profits - not people. The thousands who have already died, the estimated 12 million HIV infections worldwide, demands that research, development and treatment be lifted out of the hands of private profiteers and Tory policy makers, and put into the hands of ordinary working-class people.

Alongside this there needs to be a struggle to raise people's living standards. A healthy and stress-free lifestyle is crucial to prolonging life for people with HIV/AIDS. Yet the Tories are making this increasingly unreachable for the majority of people. A trade union-led campaign for decent jobs, pay, conditions, housing and benefits for all, would not only help people living with HIV/AIDS but every other working-class person. The resources are available - it's a question of priorities. A report in the *Independent on Sunday* said: "The director of the World Health Organisation's Global AIDS Programme points out that a basic HIV prevention programme for 1990, for all developing countries, would have cost a twentieth of Operation Desert Storm. But that was Kuwait, this is Africa."

We campaign for:

- ▼ **No cuts in HIV/AIDS spending**
- ▼ **No profiteering from HIV/AIDS - take the drugs, research and medical supplies industry out of private hands, and into public ownership**
- ▼ **Workers' control and management - boards of companies to be democratically elected to represent all workers and consumers**
- ▼ **No compulsory HIV testing - no-one should be forced to disclose their status in or out of work**
- ▼ **No cuts in invalidity benefits - decent benefits for all**
- ▼ **Defend the NHS - for a massive increase in funding for research, prevention, treatment and care for people living with HIV/AIDS**
- ▼ **A trade union campaign against workplace discrimination and victimisation**
- ▼ **A massive education programme based on the full range of scientific and medical information, free from moralising and vested interests to combat HIV/AIDS**
- ▼ **Non-prejudiced sex education in schools**
- ▼ **Repeal Section 28 of the Local Government Finance Act**

a handicapped boy from his foster mother to be adopted by a lesbian couple; utterly rejects the abhorrent claim by the City Council that the decision is in the best interests of the child; reaffirms the position of the traditional family unit as the most secure and stable means of raising all children, especially the most impressionable and vulnerable; and believes that the placing of young children with lesbian couples is not suitable to the needs or the best interests of these children and despite the protestations of the homosexual lobby, never will be". It typifies as much the prejudice which surrounds relationships between gay adults and children as it does the prejudice against any family which does not conform to the 'traditional' pattern.

More blatant is Lady Olga Maitland who told newspapers that gay adoption "would be morally very dangerous. I do believe that a child could be open to sexual abuse". She's obviously never seen the survey conducted by MORI in 1984 which found that 97% of child sex abuse offenders were actually heterosexual men.

Why should these people control our lives?

Incredible advances have been made in fertility treatment which create the opportunity for lesbians to bear children without being forced into having unwanted sex with a man, or without having to resort to the DIY syringe method which means using unscreened sperm and the risk of HIV/AIDS. The only problem is cost - £750 to speed egg production in preparation for artificial insemination which then costs £100 to start, and £50 per month thereafter until pregnancy; or £3000 per cycle of in-vitro fertilisation (where the egg is fertilised outside the womb, then implanted). So if you haven't got the money, then you are at the mercy of government guidelines and doctors who ration treatment on the basis that children should only be born into 'normal' heterosexual nuclear families. That means would-be single parents, disabled people, women seen as "too old", can all forget it too.

The Embryo Act 1990 enshrines all the same prejudices: "A woman shall not be provided with treatment services unless account has been taken of the welfare of any child, including the need of a child for a father." And the decisions about fertility research and treatment all rest in the hands of a 21-member Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority including an actress (Penelope Keith), the wife of ex-Tory minister Sir Leon Brittan, the head of BBC Radio, a representative of

• Wellcome (drug company that produces AZT), a bishop, and a
• man from the Bank of England. Does it make any sense to
• you? Why should these people be allowed to control our
• lives? It is outrageous that the last people to be able to control
• decisions about how research is conducted, and about
• who can have children, are the ordinary women and men who
• would be responsible for giving birth to and caring for the
• child. Doctors and counsellors should be there to make sure
• that a woman is healthy enough for child birth, and to give
• general advice, not to dictate who can and can't have children.

• **Scrap the Child Support Act!**

• The Child Support Act creates more obstacles still. It was
• brought in to save the government money by forcing single
• mothers back into financial dependence on men they have
• left. How many men are going to be willing to risk helping a
• lesbian friend become pregnant, on the basis of "no strings
• attached", if the 'Child Support' Agency is then going to come
• after them for maintenance?

• **The family**

• But why are the Tories so intent on forcing *their* idea of the
• family down everyone's throats? The Market Research
• Bureau Survey (1988) found that only 3.1% of households
• conformed to the traditional model of a breadwinning father,
• dependent mother and children, rising to only 6.2% if part-
• time working mothers were included. By these statistics it
• seems that the nuclear family is the exception rather than the
• rule.

• For the Tories to call themselves "the party of the family" is
• astounding hypocrisy. The avalanche of resignations of Tory
• ministers and MPs since they launched their "back to basics"
• campaign shows that it's an hypocrisy which people just
• won't stomach. The Tories have shown that even they don't
• live by the codes they push on everyone else. And who could
• have done more to pile the pressure onto working-class families
• through cuts, mass unemployment, high mortgages, poll
• tax and so on - pressures which are splitting families apart?
• Families with children now account for almost 50% of those
• living on less than half average income (Institute for Fiscal
• Studies, June 1994).

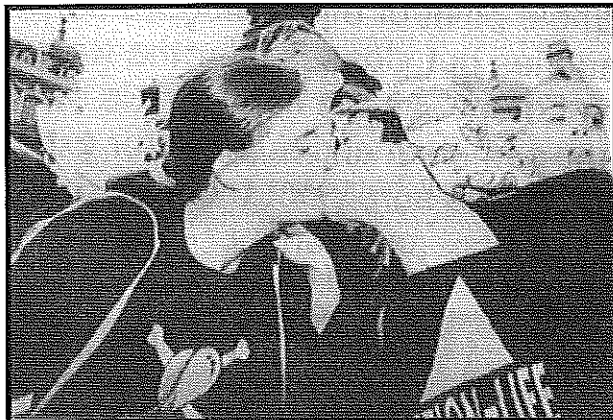
• The 'traditional' nuclear family is a myth, but it's a powerful
• myth that can be used to reinforce certain ideas about the

way they want society to run. It can be used to promote the idea that society is naturally organised in hierarchies (that there's always someone on top who can tell the rest of us what to do), that the nuclear family is the main way to keep order, authority, and discipline in society, that without it civilisation as we know it will collapse. Any other type of family (for example, single parent, lesbian or gay), then becomes a scapegoat for all the problems like crime, drug abuse, and truancy, that capitalist society creates. Conveniently, by using this myth to promote the idea that "you fend for yourself and your family", capitalism is also able to offload responsibilities that should rest with society, onto the family. So women take the full burden of caring for the most vulnerable people in society. What better way for the Tories to minimise public spending?!

Still the Tories have not had it all their way. Virginia Bottomley (as Junior Minister of Health) tried to issue guidelines to the 1989 Children's Act which read: "The chosen way of life of some adults may mean that they would not be able to provide a suitable environment for the care

and nurture of the child. No-one has a 'right' to be a foster parent. 'Equal rights' and 'gay rights' policies have no place in fostering services". She was met with a campaign which forced her to replace references to equal and gay rights with "fostering decisions must centre exclusively on the interests of the child". A lesbian couple in Hampshire also won a victory over prejudice in April 1993, when the threat of High Court action forced councillors to back down. A recommendation from social workers to accept the couple as foster par-





ents had been twice over-ruled .

Prejudice and discrimination should have no place in deciding who can or cannot have the opportunity to bring up children. Marriage certificates and heterosexuality, are no guarantee of good parents, nor of stable relationships. What matters is the caring relationship established with the child,

and the back up from society to make possible a secure and a stress-free home by affording decent pay and benefits, decent housing, full childcare facilities, and a decent education system.

We campaign for:

▼ ***Equal rights for lesbians, gay men and bisexuals to foster and adopt***

▼ ***Equal rights to time off for parental and co-parental responsibilities***

▼ ***Assisted conception, free and on demand, for all women***

▼ ***Scrap the Child Support Act***

▼ ***For real child support - decent benefits; free workplace creches and after school provision; a free nursery place for every child***

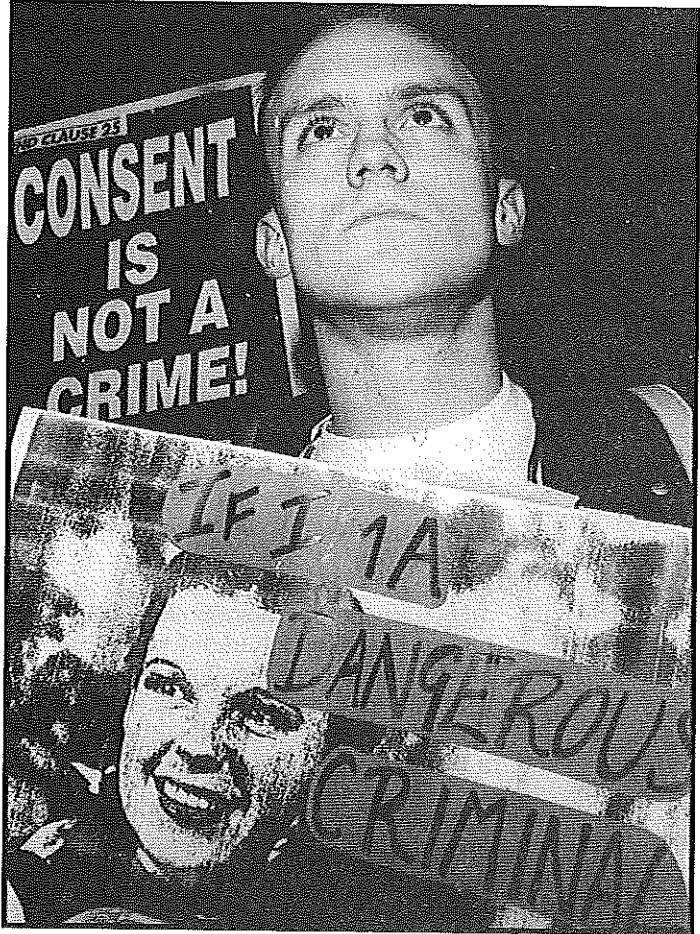
▼ ***A massive public building programme to provide decent homes for all***

▼ ***A living wage and decent jobs for all***

AGE OF CONSENT & CRIMINALISATION OF GAY SEX

When parliament voted against equalising the age of consent for gay sex at 16, they voted to maintain discrimination and to reinforce prejudice that damages hundreds and thousands of lives.

In just one year (1989), 33 men were jailed for consenting sex with men aged 16 to 21, 3500 were prosecuted for under age gay sex, and 2022 arrests were made for 'indecency between men'. These men were criminalised for having s e x u a l r e l a t i o n s that would not even



be questioned if they were between heterosexuals. Amongst those arrested would have been young men like Alan, whose story highlights the reality of these discriminatory laws. At 16 Alan was hauled in by the police for 7 hours cross-examination about the most personal details. The police took it upon themselves to 'out' Alan to his parents. The courts gave him

• two years probation, while five of his friends were fined for gross indecency and buggery, and one of them jailed for 9 months.

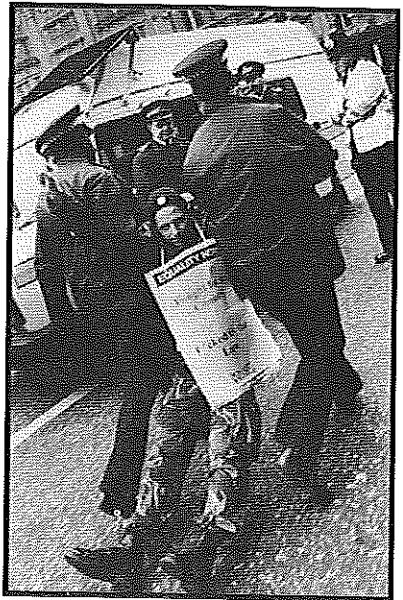
• **Tory hypocrisy**

• Beyond such stories and statistics lie the isolation and undermined self-confidence felt particularly by young lesbians, gay men and bisexuals, in a society which tells them they're "deviant" and "outcasts". The average age at which gay men have their first gay encounter is 15.7 years (according to the Department of Health). It's the bigoted and hypocritical attitudes shown by the MPs who voted against 16, that are to blame for the 20% of lesbian and gay teenagers who attempt suicide. Their attitudes are to blame for putting these young lives at risk by cutting them off from official advice about HIV/AIDS. The prejudice encouraged by such laws robs young lesbians, gay men and bisexuals of the self-esteem needed to even think about protecting themselves from HIV/AIDS. The vote against equalising the age of consent had nothing to do with protecting young men from older men. According to a briefing paper from the All Parliamentary Group on AIDS (February 1994), the average age difference between homosexual partners at their first sexual experience is just one year. And if the Tories are so concerned about protecting young men, why did they press for the withdrawal of an amendment that would have extended the law to cover rape of men.

• Arguments put for maintaining a higher age of consent for sex between men are inherently sexist too. The law clearly places less value on the lives of young women as compared to men. The current penalty for sex with a 13-16 year old young woman is two years in jail, compared to five years for sex with a young man of 16-18.

• It is for all these reasons that Labour MPs who voted against equalising the age of consent should be brought to account by the movement, and by the unions that sponsor them. But perhaps these votes are a natural consequence of the way in which the leadership of the Labour Party has bowed to the pressure of the press and Tories, and has turned their backs on mobilising any fight against the Tories, as well as on socialist policies generally. Alongside they have distanced themselves more and more from the fight for lesbian, gay and bisexual rights.

It's a scandal that Labour should have allowed Edwina Currie, a Tory (and a Tory who voted for Section 28 no-less), to lead the campaign for an equal age of consent. *No Tory should be given the opportunity to parade as a champion of the lesbian, gay and bisexual community.* They belong to a party that has done more to roll back progress on our rights than any government since the 1950s.



MPs voting against 16 hid behind supposed 'public opinion', but whose public opinion? A Harris survey (March 1992) found that 74% of people who were asked "Should the age of consent be the same for everyone irrespective of their gender or sexual orientation?", said yes. Internationally, Britain remains one of the most backward countries on this issue. When Germany announced its intention to equalise the age of consent at 16, it left Britain the only country in the EC that still discriminates on this issue.

The fight goes on

The campaign to equalise the age of consent goes on, but not just through the piecemeal parliamentary reform and lobbying tactics of Stonewall, and not just through the publicity stunts of Outrage. Both of these have their place, but the limitations are plain to see. Lobbying was not enough to change the bigoted attitudes of those who voted against equality. Only mass pressure will force the Tories to concede, which means taking the arguments out into the trade unions and workplaces, and into the community.

Achieving an equal age of consent would be a marvellous victory, but it still leaves an array of other legislation which criminalises gay men in particular. Section 32 of the 1956 Sexual Offences Act for example, makes it unlawful for a man to "persistently solicit or importune in a public place for immoral purpose". Judges have interpreted importuning as including contacts ranging from chatting-up, smiling and winking. In 1988, 545 men were convicted of importuning.

There's also Section 31 of the Criminal Justice Bill, introduced in 1991, which re-categorised everyday contact



between consenting gay men as serious sexual offences.

We need to build a movement that will not only force the Tories to concede an equal age of consent, but that will sweep away all the rest of the anti-gay legislation too.

We campaign for:

▼A labour movement campaign to:

-win the equalisation of the age of consent

-repeal all laws which criminalise lesbians, gay men and bisexuals

▼End police harassment of

lesbians, gay men and bisexuals

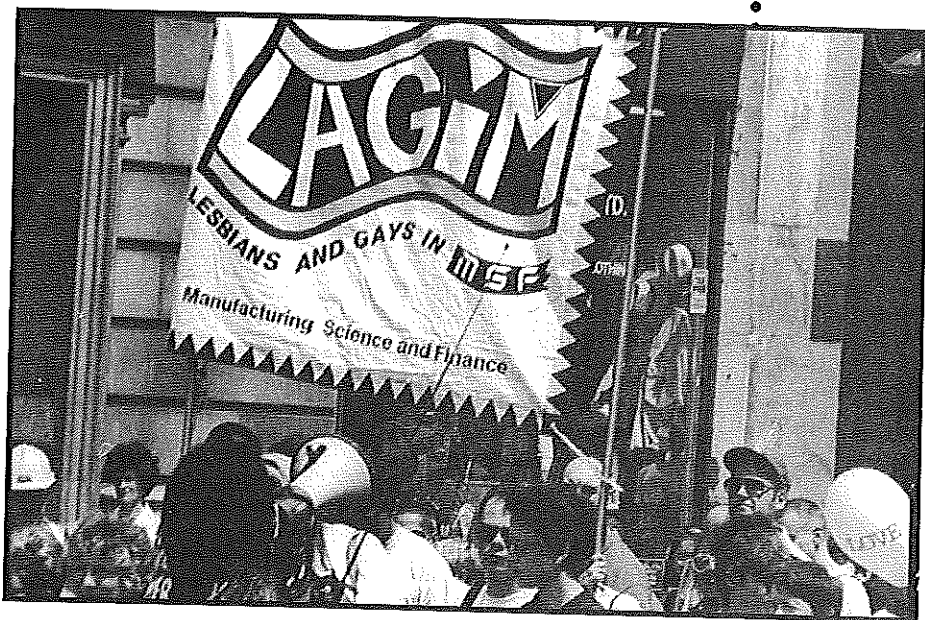
▼The Crown Prosecution Service to adopt a non-prosecution policy, and the release of all those convicted, for consenting sex between men of 16 and over

▼A trade union organised mass protest demonstration in the event of any more prosecutions for such 'offences'

▼The de-sponsorship of trade union sponsored MPs who voted against equality

FIGHTING PREJUDICE & DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE

January this year saw sweet victory in Colorado. In November 1992, right-wing 'family values' campaigners were celebrating voters' approval for an amendment to the state constitution which would legalise discrimination against lesbians, gay men and bisexuals. Now the smiles have been wiped from their faces by Judge Jeffrey Bayliss who has blocked the amendment in a Supreme Court ruling.



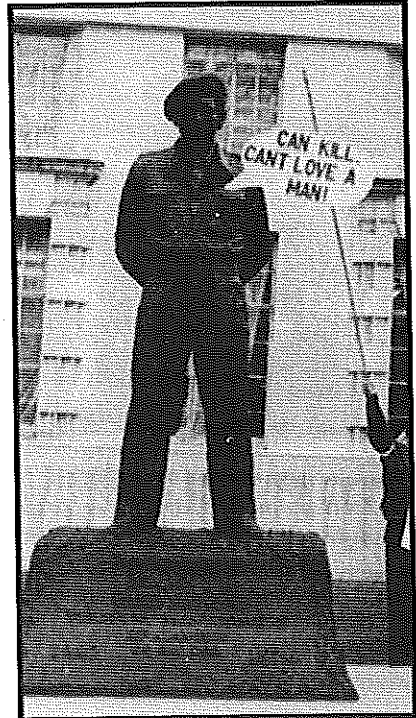
There's been other victories too. The anti-discriminatory legislation passed by the New Zealand parliament has already been mentioned. In Canada, April 1994, a court case set a precedent that employees living in same sex relationships would have the same family leave benefits as heterosexual married couples. In Britain too, some companies like British Rail have recently announced equal opportunities policies which would include protection against anti-gay discrimination

and harassment.

Despite this, Britain remains in the dark ages, with more laws than any other European country which discriminate either directly or indirectly against lesbians, gays and bisexuals. Workers' rights as a whole have been massively cut into by the Tories, but lesbian, gay and bisexual workers remain the only section of society against whom it's still legal to discriminate. People living with HIV/AIDS are probably the most vulnerable of all.

The harsh reality

On average, 75 people are sacked each year because of their sexuality. Countless others suffer the isolation and stress of being harassed by fellow workers or managers, or the fear of being sacked should their sexuality be discovered. The case of David Morgan, a Haringey caretaker fighting dismissal because of his HIV-positive status; the case of Jane Brown, a Hackney headmistress who was victimized because of her sexuality (she was accused of turning down tickets for the school to see Romeo and Juliet because she felt it "promoted heterosexism"); the case of two lesbian nurses accused of altering a rota to spend more time with each other (between them, they had worked 54 years for the NHS and 13 years in the Heart Transplant Unit from which they were sacked); Geoff Brighton, final year student at Leeds University, had passed a medical check before admittance to a Certificate of Education course, only to be recalled and told he had to go for a psychiatric examination as they had since discovered that he was gay. In another case, a teacher had been working for two months before being told



she was "unfit to teach". She discovered this was based on a medical report from her GP which mentioned mild depression arising from the ending of a lesbian relationship: "A lesbian cannot be trusted to teach in a girls school where some of the girls are very well developed." Men, on the other hand were seen as no risk at all!

Little joy can be expected from Industrial Tribunals, which are in any case loaded in favour of the bosses. The 'neutral' chair is usually a retired solicitor or barrister, another panel member is nominated by the CBI, and a third from the TUC.

In their pamphlet, *Gay Workers, Trade Unions and the Law*, the National Council for Civil Liberties cites examples which show that "in almost every case brought by a gay worker it has been accepted by the Tribunal that it is reasonable of the employer to claim that homosexuals are likely to make advances to clients, customers, and fellow-workers, simply on the basis that such fears are held by some people".

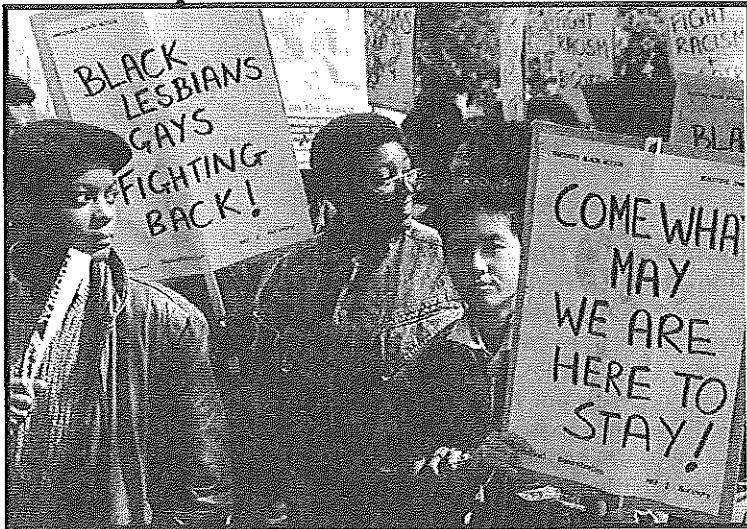
Discrimination comes in many forms

Section 28 of the Local Government Bill gives employers another weapon. We must campaign for the union leadership to mount an active campaign to get this legislation scrapped. It gives a green light to councils to cut services to the gay community. It also increases the vulnerability of lesbian, gay and bisexual council workers (particularly teachers), and provides a legal basis for victimisation - another disguise through which employers can whittle away at jobs. A teacher, Austin Allen, was sacked when, after being asked during class, he admitted to being gay. His job was saved after Bradford NUT threatened an all-out strike.

Conditions of service taken for granted by heterosexual workers, simply doesn't exist for lesbians, gay men and bisexuals, like the inclusion of partners in pensions and widow schemes, in bereavement or compassionate leave agreements, paternity leave should become 'co-parenting' leave. The huge ignorance and prejudice around HIV/AIDS brings quite specific forms of discrimination which must be tackled too.

In the USA, there are a whole range of laws upon which people living with HIV/AIDS can draw. Not so in Britain of course! In fact, the Tories have just blocked the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill from going through. This Bill provided wide rang-

ing anti-discriminatory legislation for disabled people, including protection of invalidity benefit. Although it does not specifically deal with HIV/AIDS, it would have provided those seriously affected by AIDS with additional protection. As far as the Tories are concerned though, it cost too much money! They would rather leave things as they are, allowing business interests to come before people. As the law stands, bosses have the right to sack someone with HIV/AIDS if they can show that they are losing custom because of that worker, or if their business would become disrupted by the refusal of other employees to work with that individual.



The unions have the potential to play a massive role in combating ignorance and prejudice about homosexuality generally, and certainly about HIV/AIDS. They have the resources to conduct a massive

education campaign, as well as access to the eight million people organised within the unions. One small example shows the possibilities. At the height of the AIDS scare, Telecom engineers refused to fix the Gay Switchboard. The NCU (Telecom union) intervened, and after explaining the facts about HIV/AIDS, there was no problem with the engineers doing the job.

Discrimination is the thin end of the wedge

Fighting discrimination at work is not just in the interests of lesbian, gay and bisexual workers. Employers will manipulate prejudice to distract and sow division between workers, making it easier for them to carry through attacks on all workers' jobs, wages and conditions.

The recent BBC dispute shows how discrimination is just the thin end of the wedge. When gay staff member Iain Davidson won the right to the same honeymoon allowances as heterosexual couples, there was uproar from Tories and the tabloid press. The BBC's commitment to equal opportunities went out of the window, and along with it went the honeymoon allowance for every other worker. At the time, the BBC had already provoked strike action over the introduction of "performance related pay". In the atmosphere of privatisation and cost cutting, BBC bosses saw an opportunity to scrap an agreement which had existed for 46 years.

Anything that destroys the solidarity between workers is to the employers' advantage. It is essential, therefore, that trade unions use their resources to fight prejudice and discrimination at work, including the training of full-time officials and shop stewards in how to tackle these issues.

Much progress was made in this direction during the 1980s. A Labour Research survey (June 1991) found that out of 25 unions surveyed, 21 had a policy supporting lesbian and gay rights in some way, 14 had taken up cases of gay victimisation, and 15 had produced and distributed material to members on gay and lesbian issues.

But having good policy and taking up individual cases is not enough. The Tories have given employers a battery of anti-union and discriminatory laws, with which to carry through their assault on the wages and conditions of all workers. Under the weight of this we've seen the trade union leadership refuse to organise any fightback. The fight against discrimination at work, therefore, has to be linked to a fight to defend every job, and for better wages and conditions all round.

For mass action

Legal reforms such as the Sex Discrimination Act and Equal Pay Act have only come about as a result of struggle. For example, one of the key events in pushing through the Equal Pay Act was a strike of women workers at Fords in 1968. But this was not just an isolated struggle by one section of people. The late 1960s and through the 1970s was a period of huge unrest and revolutionary movements internationally. Mass strike movements and demonstrations brought down two governments in a decade. Against this background, a whole number of reforms were won, not just for women work-

ers, but for the working-class as a whole.

Nevertheless, the battle has not stopped there. Women still face discrimination in job opportunities and pay. Trade union action by the workers themselves is still required to force employers into implementing such laws. Legislation can, therefore, be a lever in the fight against discrimination, but any real defence of jobs or substantial improvements in non-discriminatory conditions of work, will only be won through organised action in the workplaces.

Lesbian, gay and bisexual workers therefore have a dual role to play inside their unions. We must organise in the workplaces and campaign for the union to fight discrimination. At the same time, we must link this to the rebuilding of a fighting leadership which is prepared to mobilise the full strength of the labour movement to get rid of the Tories, and to radically change society in favour of working-class people.

We campaign for:

▼ **Full civil rights for lesbians, gay men and bisexuals**

▼ **The repeal of all discriminatory legislation (including Section 28 [Local Government and Finance Act], and Section 31 [Criminal Justice Act])**

▼ **Trade union action and workplace organisation to defeat discrimination, and to back-up legal reforms**

▼ **An active trade union campaign against anti-gay prejudice**

▼ **Training courses for shop stewards on dealing with discrimination and harassment of lesbian, gay and bisexual members**

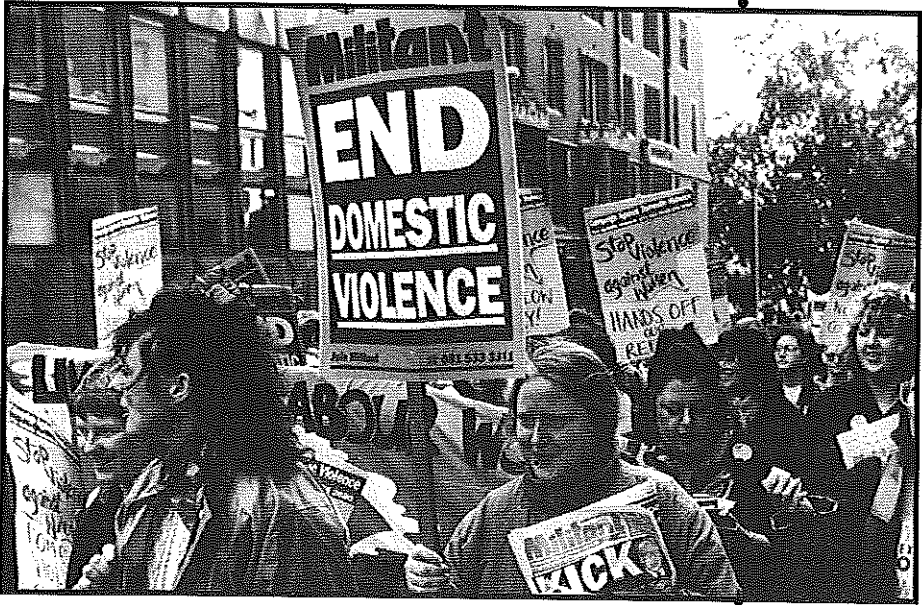
▼ **Negotiation of non-discriminatory agreements with employers, to include no sacking following arrest/prosecution for consenting gay 'offences'**

▼ **Specific non-discrimination policies to be negotiated for people living with HIV/AIDS**

▼ **Safe practices to protect against HIV/AIDS infection; no compulsory testing or disclosure of HIV/AIDS status**

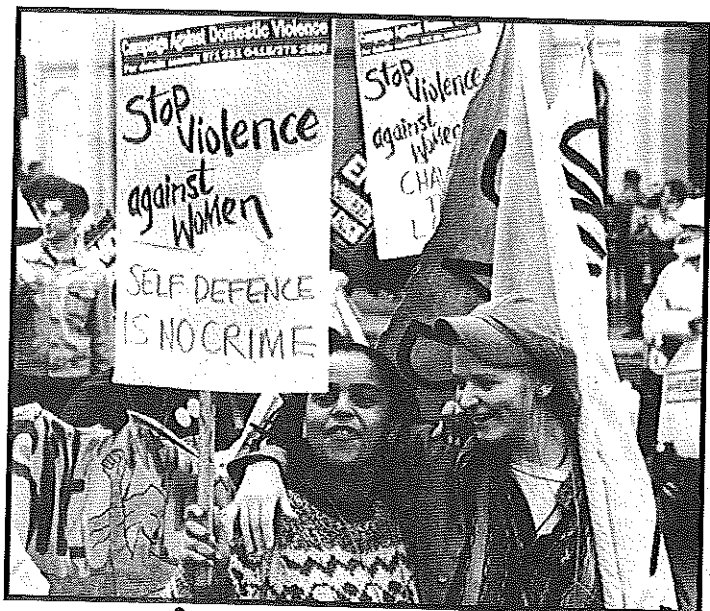
▼ **A fighting trade union leadership, with full-time officials on the average wage of a skilled worker**

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AFFECTS US TOO



"The physical abuse I endured ranged from pushing and being restrained against my will to slaps and a tackle which produced a back injury that left me in pain for several months. I never sought medical help, mostly out of fear of having to explain or lie about what had happened. My injuries were not visible, except perhaps in my mood. For many months I repeated to myself, 'This is not happening'. I knew it was and did not want to believe it. It was a very personal hell." (Naming the Violence, Ed: Kerry Lobel)

The silence over domestic violence has finally broken. More and more women are speaking out about abuse and demanding action. If the above quote was from a woman describing her violent male partner, it would have a sadly familiar ring about it; these attacks now constitute the second biggest category of violent crime. This quote, however, is from a woman describing her violent female partner. That domestic violence



occurs also in our relationships as lesbians, gays and bisexuals is something which is only just beginning to be recognised and addressed.

Domestic violence is about using or threatening to use physical, sexual, psychological or emotional abuse to gain control over your partner. It can include attacks

on their property or pets, economic control over them, even the threat of 'outing' their sexuality to family, friends or workmates.

The effects of psychological and emotional abuse is something less understood about domestic violence generally. The mental cruelty which includes constant threats of violence, verbal abuse, being ridiculed in front of others, being deprived of money, threats over custody of children, being deprived of sleep, being forced to stay in the house, can all have devastating effects.

An article in *The Pink Paper* (29 April 1994), on violence in same sex relationships carried the story of a woman who experienced abuse from her female partner. "People don't realise the amount of emotional torture that goes with domestic torture...she'd spend her time trying to humiliate me by saying that I was stupid or useless and I began to believe her. I was very dependent on her emotionally."

What is clear is that same sex relationships are not exempt from domestic violence. We live in a society that promotes violence as a legitimate way of settling conflicts of interest. The culture in which we grow up is one where the family unit controls the relationships of its members. With its origins in

slave society it was a legal, economic, educational, and religious institution. For the rich, marriages were business contracts and women produced the heirs. Whilst this didn't mean much to the majority who had no wealth to pass on, the institution of the family became the prescription for the rest of society.

Violence was seen as an acceptable method of control within the family. It wasn't until 1896 that the right to beat wives was abolished and the attitudes associated with this have been continued on through our culture and mass media. In 1959 a judge said it was not a crime to punish a wife as "one punishes a naughty child". In 1991, Joseph McGrail was given a non-custodial sentence after pleading provocation when he killed his wife, saying that she had "nagged" him.

Same sex relationships do not exist in a vacuum safely tucked away from all the negative ideas in society. We may wish our relationships to be above something as destructive as domestic violence. Real life tells us differently.

For many years, women in abusive relationships have had no one to turn to. It was just something that women had to suffer in silence. The police saw it as a personal matter to be left well alone, and wouldn't treat it seriously anyway.

This isolation is magnified for those in same sex relationships. Anti-gay prejudice compounds the prospect of not being treated seriously. This is how one lesbian described her experience: "One night a neighbour called the police. They asked what the trouble was and when they realised it was a domestic they didn't hang around. They probably thought two women couldn't do a lot of damage to each other."

The first steps towards recognising the needs of lesbians, gays and bisexuals who face domestic violence are just being taken. The Domestic Violence Intervention Project has conducted a 10 week discussion group with the view of setting up a support group for lesbians. Work in this area is also being conducted by the West Hampstead Women's Centre. Women's Aid, who organise women's refuges, has within it a lesbian advisory group. Two Labour MPs, Mildred Gordon and Barbara Roche, are also seeking ways to include rape of men as an offence against the law.

• All steps along the way, but still a long way to go. This issue
• needs to be brought further out of the closet, linking our expe-
• riences as lesbians, gay men and bisexuals, with those of
• heterosexual women and men. Together we must fight for
• resources which will help those in violent relationships to
• leave, but we must also get to the root of the matter. We
• need to get rid of the society that legitimises violence and
• control within personal relations, to build a socialist society
• based on equality and mutual cooperation.

• We campaign for:

• ▼ **Public funding for refuges and an expansion of the net-
• work to make safe accommodation available for all those
• who need it**

• ▼ **No discrimination in access to housing, benefits, and
• injunctions**

• ▼ **Defend council housing**

• ▼ **A massive public building programme - decent homes for
• all**



UNITY AGAINST THE FASCISTS

"Attacks on the rise in south London". This newspaper headline could have been one of many describing the rise in racist attacks in London. In fact it was taken from Capital Gay (10 September 1993) which was reporting attacks on gay men.

Behind these attacks (as with racist attacks) has been increased activity of fascist groups like the British National Party (BNP). 60 years ago, their predecessors carried out the mass genocide of lesbians and gay men in Hitler's concentration camps. The badges which lesbians and gay men had to wear, have become the symbols of gay pride today - the pink and the black triangle.

Fascists today do all they can to whip up anti-gay prejudice. Piero Buscaroli, a member of the Italian fascist party, MSI, recently announced his beliefs that "Homosexuals lead terri-

• ble lives. If it was up to me I'd send them all to concentra-
• tion camps." Here in Britain, the BNP wants to completely
• ban homosexuality. The BNP's Dagenham leaflet for the June
• 1994 By-election attacked the Labour Party complaining that
• it "gives priority to ethnic minorities and homos".

• Last year, gay men on Clapham Common were threatened by
• a group of BNP supporters. A student from Guildhall
• University was attacked by six BNP thugs watched by Derek
• Beackon (who for a few months held an East London council
• seat for the BNP). A year earlier, London gay clubs were
• threatened, but were protected by a picket including mem-
• bers of *Militant Labour*.

• On 8th April this year, a gay pub in Derby was attacked.
• Swastikas, "queers out", and the letters "BNP" were sprayed
• on its doors. The next night a gallon of petrol was poured into
• the beer cellar and two men were seen running away. It
• would have been a disaster if they hadn't been disturbed.

• Fascists pretend to be for working-class people but they
• attack the rights not just of ourselves, black, Asian and
• Jewish people but also women, disabled people and trade
• unionists. The division they try to sow between working-class
• people helps only the Tories and the bosses. Their real aim,
• as was Hitler's, is to establish a dictatorship. The only way
• they can achieve this is to smash the organisations of the
• working class.

• However, recent anti-racist/anti-fascist demonstrations have
• been massive (50,000-150,000), and show the strength of
• opposition the fascists face. With the threat of the BNP gain-
• ing another few council seats, working-class people have
• responded, sweeping the one councillor they had from office.
• The fight of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals against the fas-
• cists must not be separated from the rest of the labour move-
• ment. It is only through the unity of all working-class people
• that the fascists will be defeated.

• We campaign for:
• ▼ **Jobs not racism**
• ▼ **No platform for fascists**
• ▼ **Trade union and community action to defend against fas-**
• **cist attack**

THE SOCIALIST WAY FORWARD

This pamphlet has tried to show how prejudice and discrimination against lesbians, gay men and bisexuals are rooted in the system under which we live. This is why traditionally our struggle has allied itself with the struggle for socialism.

We celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Stonewall uprising this year - the uprising that gave birth to the Gay Liberation Front, with its slogans of 'gay pride', of 'coming out', and for the common struggle of all oppressed people to achieve liberation through socialism.

In the years immediately following this, lesbians and gay men forged links with the labour movement on the mass demonstrations and strikes which brought down the Tory Heath government. Their banners proudly proclaimed "Gays are on this march". This tradition continued on in the 1980s, with "Lesbians and gays support the miners", and similarly during the printworkers strike.

By the end of the 1970s, this huge trade union movement had found its reflection in the development of a radical left wing within the Labour Party which was prepared to advance positive policies for minority groups, including lesbian, gay and bisexual rights.

Over the course of the decade that followed, however, we saw this left wing bow under the pressure of the Tories' all out assault on the rights and living standards of working-class people. The right wing of the Labour Party and trade unions were left without opposition, to throw out one by one the socialist programme of the labour movement. As they turned their back on socialism, they increasingly distanced themselves from the struggle for lesbian, gay and bisexual rights. A notorious letter from Labour Party headquarters was circulated during the 1986 Greenwich by-election, advising that the party distance itself from such issues in order to win. This heralded the dumping of all positive steps that had been made during the early 1980s. When Clause 28 was first introduced, Labour failed to vote against it. Since then they've sat with arms folded allowing a Tory to put herself at the head of the campaign to equalise the age of consent.

However, it's not just on the question of lesbian, gay and bisexual rights that the right wing have stayed silent. Increasingly their policy has been, rather than lead a fight-back against the Tories, to let the Tories hang themselves. On the strength of the anger and hatred that exists towards the Tories, Labour could get elected at the next election, but in the meantime, we've had to endure four Tory governments which have trampled underfoot our rights, as well as those of all other working-class people.

In the absence of any resistance by the right-wing leaders of the labour movement, lesbians, gay men and bisexuals have been left to fight alone. The links to the rest of the movement have loosened. A confusion of other ideas have leapt to fill the gap, from the lobbying strategy of Stonewall, to the 'direct action' of Outrage, to illusions in the bargaining power of the 'pink pound'. Whilst these may all have their place, none of them on their own provide a way to achieve full equality for lesbians, gay men and bisexuals.

Some of these ideas even hold our struggle back. Our job is to get rid of the Tories, not to offer them a fig leaf behind which they can hold onto power and continue their attacks. Yet this is precisely what Stonewall and other organisations who support the cross-party alliance for legal reform are doing. We need to build an independent movement which links itself to the labour movement and socialism, not to the Tories and their anti-gay, anti-working-class policies.

On the other hand, Outrage are offering direct action, high profile publicity stunts and heroic acts to embarrass the government into legal reform. They take their inspiration from the Pankhurst's suffragette movement. But they have looked at only one side of history. The pressure to concede the vote to women came not from the Pankhurst's campaign to grab press headlines, but from the organisation of the hundreds and thousands of ordinary working-class women who saw the vote as a way of improving their horrendous conditions of work and as a way out of poverty. They saw that mass pressure was needed and that could only be built by seeking unity with male workers in a fight for better conditions.

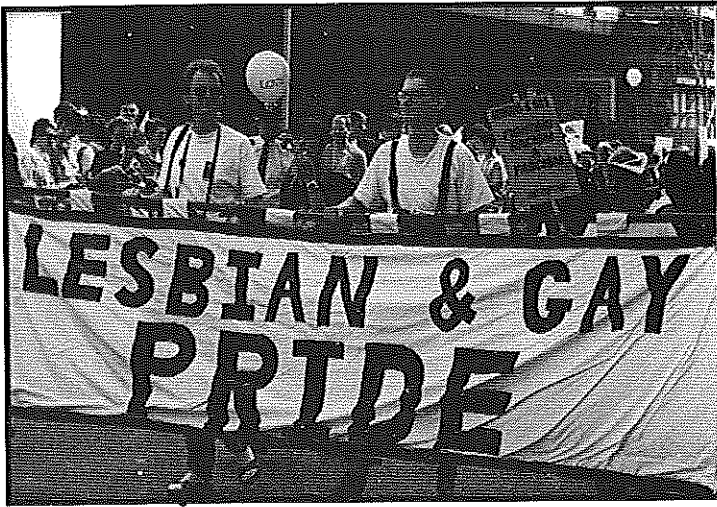
The lesson for our struggle is surely that to achieve genuine equal rights, we need to build mass pressure. This means taking our argument into the unions, Labour parties, work-



places and community, to show how the divisions which prejudice and discrimination create, advantage the Tories and bosses, and damage the interests of working-class people as a whole.

Our struggle needs to go beyond getting rid of the Tories. Their policies and ideas reflect the needs of the system they represent - the needs of the capitalist system which is based on preserving the privileges of the rich at the expense of everyone else. A system based on inequality has to find ways to justify it, and divert opposition. Prejudice and discrimination are one such way of doing this.

If everybody had a decent place to live, a decent job with good wages, if there were enough properly funded school places so everyone's child was given the opportunity of a decent education, there would be no basis for the Tory bigots to foster prejudiced ideas that "the blacks" or "the gays" are all to blame. Ignorance could be tackled and eventually eliminated through education by schools, trade unions, and through a democratically controlled media. The resources to do all these things exist, but are hoarded by the rich. Look, for example, at British Telecom's profits: £250million per month, £3billion per year. Simply by re-nationalising just this one industry (with compensation only on the basis of proven need), we could build a quarter of a million houses per year,



or put £3billion into the NHS. Instead, the profits go to line the pockets of the rich. Think what would be possible if the top 150 monopolies that control 85% of the economy were brought into public ownership and run as part of a

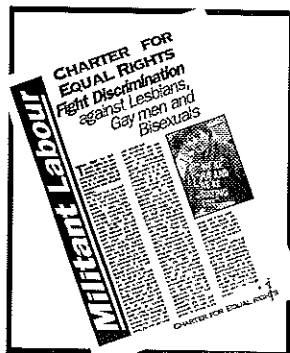
democratically worked-out plan of production which would aim to provide for all the needs of society.

Our role must be two-fold. Like any other section, we cannot wait for the rest of the movement to fight back when we're under attack. We must organise to defend ourselves, and to win the demands of our movement. But how much more realisable will these demands be if linked to a struggle by the movement as a whole for decent jobs, housing, and services, against police harassment and so on. At the same time, therefore, we need to participate in the rebuilding of a strong labour movement, which will unite the struggles of all oppressed sections into one struggle - to take power away from the rich and to give it to ordinary working-class people. Only then would we be able to begin the job of re-organising society along socialist lines, making possible for the first time in human history, a society freed from oppression and the prejudice that goes with it - a society which would make lesbian, gay and bisexual liberation a reality.

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▼FOR A NEW SOCIETY▼

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- ▼ No platform for fascists

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