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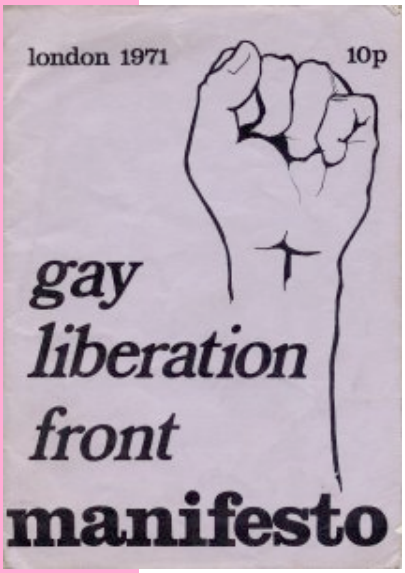
gay liberation front

manifesto



Introduction

Throughout recorded history, oppressed groups have organised to claim their rights and obtain their needs. Homosexuals, who have been oppressed by physical violence and by ideological and psychological attacks at every level of social interaction, are at last becoming angry.

To you, our gay sisters and brothers, we say that you are oppressed; we intend to show you examples of the hatred and fear with which straight society relegates us to the position and treatment of sub-humans, and to explain their basis. We will show you how we can use our righteous anger to uproot the present oppressive system with its decaying and constricting ideology, and how we, together with other oppressed groups, can start to form a

new order, and a liberated lifestyle, from the alternatives which we offer.

HOW we're oppressed

FAMILY

The oppression of gay people starts in the most basic unit of society, the family. Consisting of the man in charge, a slave as his wife, and their children on whom they force themselves as the ideal models. The very form of the family works against homosexuality.

At some point nearly all gay people have found it difficult to cope with having the restricting images of man or woman pushed on them by their parents. It may have been from very early on, when the pressures to play with the 'right' toys, and thus prove boyishness or girlishness, drove against the child's inclinations. But for all of us this is certainly a problem by the time of adolescence, when we are expected to prove ourselves socially to our parents as members of the right sex (to bring home a boy/girl friend) and to start being a 'real' (oppressive) young man or a 'real' (oppressed) young woman. The tensions can be very destructive.

The fact that gay people notice they are different from other men and women in the family situation, causes them to feel ashamed, guilty and failures. How many of us have really dared by honest with our parents? How many of us have been thrown out of home? How many of us have been pressured into marriage, sent to psychiatrists, frightened into sexual inertia, ostracised, banned, emotionally destroyed – all by our parents?

SCHOOL

Family experiences may differ widely, but in their education all children confront a common situation. Schools reflect the values of society in their formal academic curriculum, and reinforce them in their morality

and discipline. Boys learn competitive ego-building sports, and have more opportunity in science, whereas girls are given emphasis on domestic subjects, needlework etc. Again, we gays were all forced into a rigid sex role which we did not want or need. It is quite common to discipline children for behaving in any way like the opposite sex; degrading titles like 'sissy' and 'tomboy' are widely used.

In the content of education, homosexuality is generally ignored, even where we know it exists, as in history and literature. Even sex education, which has been considered a new liberal dynamic of secondary schooling, proves to be little more than an extension of Christian morality. Homosexuality is again either ignored, or attacked with moralistic warnings and condemnations. The adolescent recognising his or her homosexuality might feel totally alone in the world, or a pathologically sick wreck.

CHURCH

Formal religious education is still part of everyone's schooling, and our whole legal structure is supposedly based on Christianity whose archaic and irrational teachings support the family and marriage as the only permitted condition for sex. Gay people have been attacked as abominable and sinful since the beginning of both Judaism and Christianity, and even if today the Church is playing down these strictures on homosexuality, its new ideology is that gay people are pathetic objects for sympathy.

THE MEDIA

The press, radio, television and advertising are used as reinforcements against us, and make possible the control of people's thoughts on an unprecedented scale. Entering everyone's home, affecting everyone's life, the media controllers, all representatives of the rich, male-controlled world, can exaggerate or suppress whatever information suits them

Under different circumstances, the media might not be the weapon of a small minority. The present controllers are therefore dedicated defenders of things as they stand. Accordingly, the images of people which they transmit in their pictures and words do not subvert, but support society's image of 'normal' man and woman. It follows that we are characterised as scandalous, obscene perverts; as rampant, wild sex-monsters; as pathetic, doomed and compulsive degenerates; while the truth is blanketed under a conspiracy of silence.

WORDS

Anti-homosexual morality and ideology, at every level of society, manifest themselves in a special vocabulary for denigrating gay people. There is abuse like 'pansy', 'fairy', 'lesbo' to hurl at men and women who can't or won't fit stereotyped preconceptions. There are words like 'sick', 'bent' and 'neurotic' for destroying the credence of gay people. But there are no positive words. The ideological intent of our language makes it very clear that the generation of words and meanings is, at the moment, in the hands of the enemy. And that so many gay people pretend to be straight, and call each other 'butch dykes' or 'screaming queens only makes that fact the more real.

The verbal attack on men and women who do not behave as they are supposed to, reflects the ideology of masculine superiority. A man who behaves like a woman is seen as losing something, and a woman who behaves like a man is put down for threatening men's environment of their privileges.

EMPLOYMENT

If our upbringing so often produces guilt and shame, the experience of an adult gay person is oppressive in every aspect. In their work situation, gay people face the ordeal of spending up to fifty years of their lives confronted with the anti-homosexual hostility of their fellow employees.

A direct consequence of the fact that virtually all employers are highly privileged heterosexual men, is that there are some fields of work which are closed to gay people, and others which they feel some compulsion to enter. A result of this control for gay women is that they are perceived as a threat in the man's world. They have none of the sexual ties of dependence to men which make most women accept men as their 'superiors'. They are less likely to have the bind of children, and so there is nothing to stop them showing that they are as capable as any man, and thus deflating the man's ego, and exposing the myth that only men can cope with important jobs.

We are excluded from many jobs in high places where being married is the respectable guarantee, but being homosexual apparently makes us unstable, unreliable security risks. Neither, for example, are we allowed the job of teaching children, because we are all reckoned to be compulsive, child molesting maniacs.

There are thousands of examples of people having lost their jobs due to it becoming known that they were gay, though employers usually contrive all manner of spurious ‘reasons’.

There occurs, on the other hand, in certain jobs, such a concentration of gay people as to make an occupational ghetto. This happens, for women, in the forces, ambulance driving, and other uniformed occupations: and for men, in the fashion, entertainment and theatrical professions, all cases where the roles of 'man' and 'woman' can perhaps be underplayed or even reversed.

THE LAW

If you live in Scotland or Ireland; if you are under 21, or over 21 but having sex with someone under 21; if you are in the armed forces or the merchant navy; if you have sex with more than one other person at the same time - and you are a gay male, you are breaking the law.

The 1967 Sexual Offences Act gave a limited license to adult gay men. Common law however can restrict us from talking about and publicising both male and female homosexuality by classing it as 'immoral'. Beyond this there are a whole series of specific minor offences. Although 'the act' is not illegal, asking someone to go to bed with you can be classed as 'importuning for an immoral act', and kissing in public is classed as 'public indecency'

Even if you do not get into trouble, you will find yourself hampered by the application of the law in your efforts to set up home together, to raise children, and to express your love as freely as straight people may do.

The practice of the police in 'enforcing' the law makes sure that cottagers and cruisers will be zealously hunted, while queer-bashers may be apprehended, half-heartedly after the event.

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

On 25 September 1969 a man walked onto Wimbledon Common. We know the common to be a popular cruising ground, and believe the man to have been one of our gay brothers. Whether or not this is the case, the man was set upon by a group of youths from a nearby housing estate, and literally battered to death with clubs and boots. Afterwards, a boy from the same estate said: 'When you're hitting a queer, you don't think you're doing wrong. You think you're doing good. If you want money off a queer, you can get it off him - there's nothing to be scared of from the law, cause you know they won't go to the law'. (*Sunday Times*, 7/2/71).

Since that time, another man has been similarly murdered on Hampstead Heath. But murder is only the most extreme form of violence to which we are exposed, not having the effective rights of protection. Most frequently we are 'rolled' for our money, or just beaten up: and this happens to butch looking women in some districts.

PSYCHIATRY

One way of oppressing people and preventing them getting too angry about it, is to convince them, and everyone else, that they are sick. There has hence arisen a body of psychiatric 'theory' and 'therapy' to deal with the 'problems' and 'treatment' of homosexuality.

Bearing in mind what we have so far described, it is quite understandable that gay people get depressed and paranoid; but it is also, of course, part of the scheme that gay people should retreat to psychiatrists in times of troubles.

Operating as they do on the basis of social convention and prejudice, NOT scientific truth, mainstream psychiatrists accept society's prevailing view that the male and female sex roles are 'good' and 'normal', and try to adjust people to them. If that fails, patients are told to 'accept themselves' as 'deviant'. For the psychiatrist to state that homosexuality was perfectly valid and satisfying, and that the hang-up was society's inability to accept that fact, would result in the loss of a large proportion of his patients.

Psychiatric 'treatment' can take the form either of mindbending 'psychotherapy', or of aversion therapy which operates on the crude conditioning theory that if you hit a person hard enough, he'll do what you want. Another form of 'therapy' is chemically induced castration, and there is a further form of 'treatment' which consists in erasing part of the brain, with the intent (usually successful) of making the subject an asexual vegetable.

This 'therapy' is not the source of the psychiatrist's power, however. Their social power stems from the facile and dangerous arguments by which they contrive to justify the prejudice that homosexuality is bad or unfortunate, and to mount this fundamental attack upon our right to do as we think best. In this respect, there is little difference between the psychiatrist who says: 'From

statistics we can show that homosexuality is connected with madness', and the one who says: 'Homosexuality is unfortunate because it is socially rejected'. *The former is a dangerous idiot – he cannot see that it is society which drives gay people mad. The second is a pig because he does see this, but sides consciously with the oppressors*.

That psychiatrists command such credence and such income is surprising if we remember the hysterical disagreements of theory and practice in their field, and the fact that in formulating their opinions, they rarely consult gay people. In fact, so far as is possible, they avoid talking to them at all, because they know that such confrontation would wreck their theories.

SELF-OPPRESSION

The ultimate success of all forms of oppression is our self-oppression. Self-oppression is achieved when the gay person has adopted and internalised straight people's definition of what is good and bad. Self-oppression is saying: 'When you come down to it, we are abnormal'. Or doing what you most need and want to do, but with a sense of shame and loathing, or in a state of disassociation, pretending it isn't happening; cruising or cottaging not because you enjoy it, but because you're afraid of anything less anonymous. Self-oppression is saying: 'I accept what I am', and meaning: 'I accept that what I am is second-best and rather pathetic'. Self-oppression is any other kind of apology: 'We've been living together for ten years and all our married friends know about us and think we're just the same as them'. Why? You're not.

Self-oppression is the dolly lesbian who says: 'I can't stand those butch types who look like truck drivers'; the virile gay man who shakes his head at the thought of 'those pathetic queens'. This is self-oppression because it's just another way of saying: 'I'm a nice normal gay, just like an attractive heterosexual'.

The ultimate in self-oppression is to avoid confronting straight society, and thereby provoking further hostility: *Self-oppression is saying, and believing: 'I am not oppressed'.*

WHY we're oppressed

Gay people are oppressed. As we've just shown, we face the prejudice, hostility and violence of straight society, and the opportunities open to us in work and leisure are restricted, compared with those of straight people. Shouldn't we demand reforms that will give us tolerance and equality? certainly we should - in a liberal-democratic society, legal equality and protection from attack are the very least we should ask for. They are our civil rights.

But gay liberation does not just mean reforms. It means a revolutionary change in our whole society. Is this really necessary? Isn't it hard enough for us to win reforms within the present society, and how will we engage the support of straight people if we get ourselves branded as revolutionaries?

Reforms may makes things better for a while; changes in the law can make straight people a little less hostile, a little more tolerant - but reform cannot change the deep-down attitude of straight people that homosexuality is at best inferior to their own way of life, at worst a sickening perversion. It will take more than reforms to change this attitude, because it is rooted in our society's most basic institution - the Patriarchal Family.

We've all been brought up to believe that the family is the source of our happiness and comfort. But look at the family more closely. Within the small family unit, in which the dominant man and submissive woman bring up their children in their own image, all our attitudes towards sexuality are learned at a very early age. Almost before we can talk, certainly before we can think for ourselves, we are taught that there are certain attributes that are

'feminine' and other that are 'masculine', and that they are God-given and unchangeable. Beliefs learned so young are very hard to change; but in fact these are false beliefs. What we are taught about the differences between man and woman is propaganda, not truth.

The truth is that there are no proven systematic differences between male and female, apart from the obvious biological ones. Male and female genitals and reproductive systems are different, and so are certain other physical characteristics, but all differences of temperament, aptitudes and so on, are the result of upbringing and social pressures. They are not inborn.[1] Human beings could be much more various than our constricted patterns of 'masculine' and 'feminine' permit - we should be free to develop with greater individuality. But as things are at present, there are only these two stereotyped roles into which everyone is supposed to fit, and most people - including gay people too - are apt to be alarmed when they hear these stereotypes or gender roles attacked, fearing that children 'won't know how to grow up if they have no one to identify with', or that 'everyone will be the same', i.e. that there will be either utter chaos or total conformity. There would in fact be a greater variety of models and more freedom for experimentation, but there is no reason to suppose this will lead to chaos.

By our very existence as gay people, we challenge these roles. It can easily be seen that homosexuals don't fit into the stereotypes of masculine and feminine, and this is one of the main reasons why we become the object of suspicion, since everyone is taught that these and only these two roles are appropriate.

Our entire society is build around the patriarchal family and its enshrinement of these masculine and feminine roles. Religion, popular morality art, literature and sport all reinforce these stereotypes. In other words, this society is a sexist society, in which one's biological sex

[1] Paragraph line-space missing in the original.

determines almost all of what one does and how one does it; a situation in which men are privileged, and women are mere adjuncts of men and objects for their use, both sexually and otherwise.

Since all children are taught so young that boys should be aggressive and adventurous, girls passive and pliant, most children do tend to behave in these ways as they get older, and to believe that other people should do so too.

So sexism does not just oppose gay people, but all women as well. It is assumed that because women bear children they should and must rear them, and be simultaneously excluded from all other spheres of achievement.

However, as the indoctrination of the small child with these attitudes is not always entirely successful (if it were, there would be no gay people for a start), the ideas taken in by the young child almost unconsciously must be reinforced in the older child and teenager by a consciously expressed male chauvinism: the ideological expression of masculine superiority. Male chauvinism is not hatred of women, but male chauvinists accept women only on the basis that they are in fact lesser beings. It is an expression of male power and male privilege, and while it's quite possible for a gay man to be a male chauvinist, his very existence does also challenge male chauvinism in so far as he rejects his male supremacist role over women, and perhaps particularly if he rejects 'masculine' qualities.

It is because of the patriarchal family that reforms are not enough. Freedom for gay people will never be permanently won until everyone is freed from sexist role-playing and the straightjacket of sexist rules about our sexuality. And we will not be freed from these so long as each succeeding generation is brought up in the same old sexist way in the Patriarchal family.

But why can't we just change the way in which children are brought up without attempting to transform the whole fabric of society?

Because sexism is not just an accident - it is an essential part of our present society, and cannot be changed without the whole society changing with it. In the first place, our society is dominated at every level by men, who have an interest in preserving the status quo; secondly, the present system of work and production depends on the existence of the patriarchal family. Conservative sociologists have pointed out that the small family unit of two parents and their children is essential in our contemporary advanced industrial family where work is minutely subdivided and highly regulated - in other words, for the majority very boring. A man would not work at the assembly line if he had no wife and family to support; he would not give himself fully to his work without the supportive and reassuring little group ready to follow him about and gear itself to his needs, to put up with his ill temper when he is frustrated or put down by the boss at work.

Were it not also for the captive wife, educated by advertising and everything she reads into believing that she needs ever more new goodies for the home, for her own beautification and for the children's' well-being, our economic system could not function properly, depending as it does on people buying far more manufactured goods than they need. The housewife, obsessed with the ownership of as many material goods as possible, is the agent of this high level of spending. None of these goods will ever satisfy her, since there is always something better to be had, and the surplus of these pseudo 'necessities' goes hand in hand with the absence of genuinely necessary goods and services, such as adequate housing and schools.

The ethic and ideology of our culture has been conveniently summed up by the enemy. Here is a quotation, intended quite seriously, from an American psychiatric primer. The author, Dr. Fred Brown, states:

Our values in Western civilisation are founded upon the sanctity of the family, the right to property, and the worthwhileness of 'getting ahead ' The family can be established on/y through heterosexual intercourse, and this gives the woman a high value. (Note the way in which woman is appraised as a form of property.) *Property acquisition and worldly success are viewed as distinctly masculine aims. The individual who is outwardly masculine but appears to fall into the feminine class by reason . . . of his preference for other men denies these values of our civilisation. In denying them he belittles those goals which carry weigh t and much emotional colouring in our society and thereby earns the hostility of those to whom these values are of great importance.*

We agree with his description of our society and its values – but we reach a different conclusion. We gay men and women do deny these values of our civilisation. We believe that the society Dr. Brown describes is an evil society. We believe that work in an advanced industrial society could be organised on more humane lines, with each job more varied and more pleasurable, and that the way society is at present organised operates in the interests of a small ruling group of straight men who claim most of the status and money, and not in the interests of the people as a whole. We also believe that our economic resources could be used in a much more valuable and constructive way than they are at the moment – but that will not happen until the present pattern of male dominance in our society changes too.

That is why any reforms we might painfully exact from our rulers would only be fragile and vulnerable; that is why we, along with the women's movement, must fight for something more than reform. We must aim at the abolition of the family, so that the sexist, male supremacist system can no longer be nurtured there.

WE CAN DO IT

Yet although this struggle will be hard, and our victories not easily won, we are not in fact being idealistic to aim at

abolishing the family and the cultural distinctions between men and women. True, these have been with us throughout history, yet humanity is at last in a position where we can progress beyond this.

Only reactionaries and conservatives believe in the idea of 'natural man'. Just what is so different in human beings from the rest of the animal kingdom is their 'unnaturalness'. Civilisation is in fact our evolution away from the limitations of the natural environment and towards its ever more complex control. It is not 'natural' to travel in planes. It is not 'natural' to take medicines and perform operations. Clothing and shoes do not grow on trees. Animals do not cook their food. This evolution is made possible by the development of technology – i.e. all those tools and skills which help us to control the natural environment.

We have now reached a stage at which the human body itself, and even the reproduction of the species, is being 'unnaturally' interfered with (i.e. improved) by technology. Reproduction used to be left completely to the uncontrolled biological processes inherited from our animal ancestors, but modern science, by drastically lowering infant mortality, has made it unnecessary for women to have more than two or three babies, while contraceptives have made possible the conscious control of pregnancy and the freeing of sexuality from reproduction. Today, further advances are on the point of making it possible for women to be completely liberated from their biology by means of the development of artificial wombs. Women need no longer by burdened with the production of children at their main task in life. and need be still less in the future

The present gender-role system of 'masculine' and 'feminine' is based on the way that reproduction was originally organised. Men's freedom from the prolonged physical burden of bearing children gave them a privileged position which was then reinforced by an ideology of male superiority. But technology has now

advanced to a stage at which the gender-role system is no longer necessary.

However, social evolution does not automatically take place with the steady advance of technology, The gender-role system and the family unit built around it will not disappear just because they have ceased to be necessary. The sexist culture gives straight men privileges which, like those of any privileged class, will not be surrendered without a struggle, so that all of us who are oppressed by this culture (women and gay people), must band together to fight it. The end of the sexist culture and of the family will benefit all women, and gay people. We must work together with women, since their oppression is our oppression, and by working together we can advance the day of our common liberation.

A NEW LIFE-STYLE

In the final section we shall outline some of the practical steps gay liberation will take to make this revolution. But linked with this struggle to change society there is an important aspect of gay liberation that we can begin to build here and now - a NEW, LIBERATED LIFE-STYLE which will anticipate, as far as possible, the free society of the future.

Gay shows the way. In some ways we are a/ready more advanced than straight people. We are already outside the family and we have already, in part at least, rejected the 'masculine' or 'feminine' roles society has designed for us. In a society dominated by the sexist culture it is very difficult, if not impossible, for heterosexual men and women to escape their rigid gender-role structuring and the roles of oppressor and oppressed. But gay men don't need to oppress women in order to fulfil their own psycho-sexual needs, and gay women don't have to relate sexually to the male oppressor, so that at this moment in time, the freest and most equal relationships are most likely to be between homosexuals.

But because the sexist culture has oppressed us and distorted our lives too, this is not always achieved. In our mistaken, placating efforts to be accepted and tolerated, we've too often submitted to the pressures to conform to the straightjacket of society's rules and hang-ups about sex.

Particularly oppressive aspects of gay society are the Youth Cult, Butch and Femme role-playing, and Compulsive Monogamy.

THE YOUTH CULT. Straight women are the most exposed in our society to the commercially manipulated (because very profitable) cult of youth and 'beauty'- i.e. the conformity to an ideal of 'sexiness' and 'femininity' imposed from without, not chosen by women themselves. Women are encouraged to look into the mirror and love themselves because an obsession with clothes and cosmetics dulls their appreciation of where they're really at . . . until it's too late. The sight of an old woman bedizened with layers of make-up, her hair tortured into artificial turrets, provokes ridicule on all sides. Yet this grotesque denial of physical aging is merely the logical conclusion to the life of a woman who has been taught that her value lies primarily in her degree of sexual attractiveness.

Gay women, like straight men, are rather less into the compulsive search for youth, perhaps because part of their rebellion has been the rejection of themselves as sex objects-like men they see themselves as people; as subjects rather than objects. But gay men are very apt to fall victim to the cult of youth-those sexual parades in the 'glamorous' meat-rack bars of London and New York, those gay beaches of the South of France and Los Angeles haven't anything to do with liberation. Those are the hang-outs of the plastic gays who are obsessed with image and appearance. In love with their own bodies, these gay men dread the approach of age, because to be old is to be 'ugly', and with their youth they lose also the right to love and be loved, and are valued only if they can pay. This obsession with youth is destructive. We must all

get away from the false commercial standards of 'beauty' imposed on us by movie moguls and advertising firms, because the youth/beauty hang-up sets us against one another in a frenzied competition for attention, and leads in the end to an obsession with self which is death to real affection or real sensual love. Some gay men have spent so much time staring at themselves in the mirror that they've become hypnotised by their own magnificence and have ended up by being made unable to see anyone else

BUTCH AND FEMME. Many gay men and women needlessly restrict their lives by compulsive role playing. They may restrict their own sexual behaviour by feeling that they must always take either a butch or a femme role, and worse, these roles are transposed to make even more distorting patterns in general social relationships. We gay men and women are outside the gender-role system anyway, and therefore it isn't surprising if some of us - of either sex - are more 'masculine' and others more 'feminine'. There is nothing wrong with this. What is bad is when gay people try to impose on themselves and on one another the masculine and feminine stereotypes of straight society, the butch seeking to expand his ego by dominating his/her partner's life and freedom, and the femme seeking protection by submitting to the butch. Butch really is bad-the oppression of others is an essential part of the masculine gender role. We must make gay men and women who lay claim to the privileges of straight males understand what they are doing; and those gay men and women who are caught up in the femme role must realise, as straight women increasingly do, that any security this brings is more than offset by their loss of freedom

COMPULSIVE MONOGAMY. We do not deny that it is as possible for gay couples as for some straight couples to live happily and constructively together. We question however as an ideal, the finding and settling down eternally with one 'right' partner. This is the blueprint of the straight world which gay people have taken over. It is inevitably a parody, since they haven't even the

justification of straight couples – the need to provide a stable environment for their children (though in any case we believe that the suffocating small family unit is by no means the best atmosphere for bringing up children.[2]

Monogamy is usually based on ownership – the woman sells her services to the man in return for security for herself and her children – and is entirely bound up in the man's idea of property furthermore in our society the monogamous couple, with or without children, is an isolated, shut-in, up-tight unit, suspicious of and hostile to outsiders. And though we don't lay down rules or tell gay people how they should behave in bed or in their relationships, we do want them to question society's blueprint for the couple. The blueprint says 'we two against the world', and that can be protective and comforting. But it can also be suffocating, leading to neurotic dependence and underlying hostility, the emotional dishonesty of staying in the comfy safety of the home and garden, the security and narrowness of the life built for two, with the secret guilt of fancying someone else while remaining in thrall to the idea that true love lasts a lifetime–as though there were a ration of relationships, and to want more than one were greedy. Not that sexual fidelity is necessarily wrong; what is wrong is the inturned[3] *emotiona*l exclusiveness of the couple which students the partners so they can no longer operate at all as independent beings in society. People need a variety of relationships in order to develop and grow, and to learn about other human beings.

It is especially important for gay people to stop copying straight – we are the ones who have the best opportunities to create a new lifestyle and if we don't, no one else will. Also, we need one another more than straight people do, because we are equals suffering under an insidious oppression from a society too primitive to come to terms with the freedom we represent. Singly, or isolated in couples, we are weak – the way society wants

[2] The bracket is not closed in the 1979 edition.
[3] 'inturned' is the word and spelling used in the original.

us to be. Society cannot put us down so easily if we fuse together. *We have to get together, understand one another, live together.*

Two ways we can do this are by developing consciousness-raising groups and gay communes.

Our gay communes and collectives must not be mere convenient living arrangements or worse, just extensions of the gay ghetto. They must be a focus of consciousness-raising (i.e. raising or increasing our awareness of our real oppression} and of gay liberation activity, a new focal point for members of the gay community. It won't be easy, because this society is hostile to communal living. And besides the practical hang-ups of finding money and a place large enough for a collective to live in, there are our own personal hang-ups: we have to change our attitudes to our personal property, to our lovers, to our day-to day priorities in work and leisure, even to our need for privacy.

But victory will come. If we're convinced of the importance of the new life-style, we can be strong and we can win through.

AIMS

The long-term goal of Gay Liberation, which inevitably brings us into conflict with the institutionalised sexism of this society, is to rid society of the gender-role system which is at the root of our oppression. This can only be achieved by eliminating the social pressures on men and women to conform to narrowly defined gender roles. It is particularly important that children and young people be encouraged to develop their own talents and interests and to express their own individuality rather than act out stereotyped parts alien to their nature.

As we cannot carry out this revolutionary change alone, and as the abolition of gender rotes is also a necessary condition of women's liberation, we will work to form a strategic alliance with the women's liberation movement,

aiming to develop our ideas and our practice in close inter-relation. In order to build this alliance, the brothers in gay liberation will have to be prepared to sacrifice that degree of male chauvinism and male privilege that they still all possess.

To achieve our long term goal will take many years, perhaps decades. But attitudes to the appropriate place of men and women in our society are changing rapidly, particularly the belief in the subordinate place for women. Modern conditions are placing increasing strain on the small nuclear family containing one adult male and one adult female with narrowly defined roles and bound together for life.

The way forward

FREE OUR HEADS

The starting point of our liberation must be to rid ourselves of the oppression which lies in the head of every one of us. This means freeing our heads from self oppression and male chauvinism, and no longer organising our lives according to the patterns with which we are indoctrinated by straight society. It means that we must root out the idea that homosexuality is bad, sick or immoral, and develop a gay pride. In order to survive, most of us have either knuckled under to pretended that no oppression exists, and the result of this has been further to distort our heads. Within gay liberation, a number of consciousness-raising groups have already developed, in which we try to understand our oppression and learn new ways of thinking and behaving. The aim is to step outside the experience permitted by straight society, and to learn to love and trust one another. This is the precondition for acting and struggling together.

By freeing our heads we get the confidence to come out publicly and proudly as gay people, and to win over our gay brothers and sisters to the ideas of gay liberation.

CAMPAIGN

Before we can create the new society of the future, we have to defend our interests as gay people here and now against all forms of oppression and victimisation. We have therefore drawn up the following list of immediate demands.

— that all discrimination against gay people, male and female, by the law, by employers, and by society at large, should end.
— that all people who feel attracted to a member of their own sex be taught that such feeling are perfectly valid.
— that sex education in schools stop being exclusively heterosexual.
— that psychiatrists stop treating homosexuality as though it were a sickness, thereby giving gay people senseless guilt complexes.
— that gay people be as legally free to contact other gay people, though newspaper ads, on the streets and by any other means they may want as are heterosexuals, and that police harassment should cease right now.
— that employers should no longer be allowed to discriminate against anyone on account of their sexual preferences.
— that the age of consent for gay males be reduced to the same as for straight.
— that gay people be free to hold hands and kiss in public, as are heterosexuals.

Those who believe in gay liberation need to support actively their local gay group. With the rapid spread of the ideas of gay liberation, it is inevitable that many members of such groups have only partially come to terms with their homosexuality. The degree of self-oppression is often such that it is difficult to respect individuals in the group, and activists frequently feel tempted to despair. But if we are to succeed in transforming our society we must persuade others of the merits of our ideas, and there is no way we can achieve this if we cannot even

persuade those most affected by our oppression to join us in fighting for justice.

The preceding paragraph read as follows in the 1971 edition:

London Gay Liberation Front has already been active in some of these areas, and plans to start activity soon in others. The GLF youth group is involved in working for a liberated sex education in schools, and for the lowering of the age of consent. The counter-psychiatry group is fighting against institutions and doctors who daily torture gay people with aversion therapy. The action group is co-ordinating activity against harassment and entrapment by queer-bashers and the police. GLF has held demonstrations against publishers and bookshops who distribute anti-gay literature. GLF holds regular gay-ins in the public parks to develop our solidarity as gay people, to encourage others to join us and to show that we will no longer allow ourselves to be confined to 'safe' ghetto areas. Our paper *Come Together*, our street theatre and other propaganda activities are designed primarily for gay people, but they are also aimed at winning support from our friends in the straight community and at exposing and attacking our enemies. Within a few months of our existence we have confronted millions of straight people with our homosexuality; these people will find it increasingly difficult to 'protect' themselves and especially their children from our ideas.

We do not intend to ask for anything. *We intend to stand firm and assert our basic rights.* If this involves violence, it will not be we who initiate this, but those who attempt to stand in our way to freedom.

This manifesto was originally produced collectively by the Manifesto Group of GLF. We recognise that it leaves many questions unanswered and open-ended but hope it will lead to the furtherance of a scientific analysis of sexism and our oppression as gay people.

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For information by telephone ring London Gay Switchboard 01-837 7324 (24hrs).[4]

The 1979 edition of this pamphlet was originally printed over twelve A5 pages, set in 9pt in a sans serif font. It was centre stapled with a pink paper cover with blank end papers.

[4] **In 2007 the London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard number is 020 7837 7324 and the website of the Switchboard can be found at: http://www.llgs.org.uk/**