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What they said at the GayLib Conference

300 delegates turn up for last week's N.U.S. first National Gay Rights Conference , with Liverpool's bringing back this report of some of the speakers.

Alistair Stewart – NUS Executive member responsible for Gay Rights.

“THE GAY RIGHTS CAMPAIGN”

The NUS is now committed to the idea of a gay movement. The main idea central to this movement that love between persons of the same sex should be socially acceptable in all its expressions; therefore the gay movement is one of civil liberties and social change. The initial conference passed a 2,000 word motion with 31 amendments – and it meant nothing. The gay movement is served in no way by liberal attitudes. People's attitudes must change if the gay movement is to progress. The only vantage gained is the open discussion of the gay movement. Whereas previously those for homosexual equality had to operate 'underground' the situation was now reversed and it is those people who are anti-gay who were in this position. Alistair Stewart called on those who are opposed to the gay movement to come out into the open and debate their position.

Gays are apart from the mainstream of society, but nevertheless it is a society into which gays are born and into which they have to integrate. We must change that society which refuses admittance into itself. It is important that gay students make contact with other groups. It is important to stress that they must not see their struggle in isolation. If this con-compact is not made the whole thing becomes a student ego trip and nothing else.

Mary Mackintosh – Nuffied College, Oxford.

“BISEXUALITY, HOMOSEXUALITY, SEXUAL IDENTITY”

The distinction drawn between innate and acquired factors which he went on to talk about the need for homosexuality to be cause homosexuality was dismissed as now being reactionary. We are dealing with social constructs, and not with biological or

psychological givens. There are many differences in cultural constructs and once this is realised one can begin to analyse the situation.

Gender roles – it is true to say that there is general differences between men and women, particularly between adults. What is not clear is the part played by biological factors and that played by the socialisation process. It is clear that these biological differences are not sufficient for the wider differences in adult social behaviour. What is seen as 'natural' in social behaviour in one society is seen as 'unnatural' in another.

Mary Mackintosh then went on to talk about how some gays had 'taken over' the deviant gender roles allocated by society (e.g. the assumption that within a relationship that there must be a 'male' and a 'female' partner, hence the effeminate man and the 'butch' woman). However, all conceivable variations of sexuality are possible outside the normal gender roles and bisexuality should be seen in this context.

Rose Robertson – Parent Enquiry

“GAY CHILDREN AND THEIR PARENTS

The age of the children that come into contact with Parent Enquiry is the 15 – 22 year olds. These children have either told their parents or their parents have found out. Because of the present publicity, many are reached and helped. The society depends on the family for its economic vitality and the incidents of homosexuality in a family therefore becomes more than just a family situation. Rose summed this up with “It does seem to me that we have a perfect right to say to society ‘You who consider the family pattern so important, are now confronted with a part of the family situation which is a valid alternative. It is therefore your responsibility through your own Social Services to do something about a large part of society which you have pretended doesn't exist’.”

Liz Stanley

“GAY WOMEN”

Women have a very disadvantaged position in society. They are less aware, and indeed made less aware of their own sexuality. Many women does not realise under their 40's, 50's and sometimes even 60's that they are homosexual. Even for those women that consider that they may be gay in their adolescence, society's pressures to marry are so strong that they repress their homosexuality and marry, thinking that marriage will 'cure' them. Some women do not even realise that it is possible for women to be homosexual, thinking it is the male prerogative.

Because of the family commitments many of them have, it is difficult for them to attend meetings of any kind, or take an active campaigning role.

Peter Righton

Gave a talk on “counselling homosexuals”. “The real problems” he said, were societies attitudes, and the law – the need is for these to change.

Glenys Parry

“THE C.H.E. EDUCATION CAMPAIGN”

Talked of the need for gay issues to be brought out into the open, and discussed in schools as part of a rational sex education programme.

David Bell

“SEX EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS”

David gave a mind blowing account of his own experiences as a homosexual teacher who has openly admitted his gayness and appeared on T.V. He has been able to argue his case at school, without being castigated as a ‘dangerous subversive corrupting deviant’, recognised as an integral part of our culture and therefore should not be confined to the perversions and diseases section of the sex education course, but should find its place in history, English and science lessons. E.g. Why can’t it be openly admitted that James I’s ‘favourites’ were gay men instead of hiding such notions under euphemistic clouds.

Tony Cross

Addressed the conference about the work of ‘Intergroup’, which was established to help integrate gay people into ‘non-gay’ society. He covered a wide range of topics, some of which met with hostility from some of the other delegates. For instance some delegates felt that there was no point in gay people ‘begging’ to be let into (allowed to function in) a society already corrupt in so many ways. Far better perhaps to remain “outside”, and wait for change, than to be admitted with condescending and patronising tolerance.

Raymond Lightbrown

Ray (formally from Liverpool University, Psychological Department) drew attention to the recent survey on ‘Doctors Attitudes to Homosexuality’ compiled by the Office of Health Economics to ascertain whether general medical opinion concerning homosexuality was parallel to the opinion of the general public – that homosexuality is an abnormality, justifying medical treatment. It was found that “unfortunately, only a minority of psychiatrists and G.P.s regarded homosexuality as a disease, the majority still regarded it as abnormal or abhorrent.” The overall impression from the investigation is that most doctors are willing to fall in with the patient’s wishes and that offers of help and treatment are available on request.

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The conference ended with the reports back from the various workshops, which had taken place during the afternoon. The workshops were discussion groups on special subjects, and these included politics, the church, teachers, and gay socs.

In the evening, a disco was held in Bristol Union was well attended by people from the conference, who were also entertained by the group “Pink Fairies” with support from “Axe”.

This rounded off a fruitful and eventful day.

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Jointly written by Cathy, Dave, and John from Gay Soc – Liverpool delegates at the conference.

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