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### C.A.M.P. GOES TO PARLIAMENT

The many C.A.M.P and Committee members present in the Visitors' Gallery during the W.A. Parliamentary debate and vote on homosexuality, I think, must have felt as I did, that what we were witnessing was the equivalent of years of complex human experiences compressed into a very few simple hours.

Here, first of all, was the Democratic Tradition, living and breathing before us, its roots visibly reaching back to Westminster, to King John, to the Roman Senate, to the Areopagetic in Athens, tempered somewhere along the way by the French and American Revolutions. Here, in action, a sovereign state was to consider and decide, utilizing the best means humanity has yet evolved, and if some of us feel that this is still not good enough, we must admit we have not yet come up with anything better.

Not good enough because here, too, we witnessed that inherent abuse of democracy known as politics, dirty politics, where considerations prevail that have nothing whatever to do with the subject at hand, homosexuality, with right or wrong, with the will of the people, leadership or what have you, but only with cronyism, cant, raw power, personal empire-building, vilification of opponents at all costs, and so on.

Representatives of one million people were going to legislate and perhaps liberate the lives of a minority category of human beings from within its own body politic, a category morally persecuted throughout almost all of history, our category. It was high drama, and a very human drama.

And perhaps most human in its display of that most universally human of traits, unsuspected ignorance. Speaker after speaker rose to enunciate such blather that we could only suck in our breath and marvel. How could grown men be such babies? Stupidity so vast that it does not even suspect its own stupidity, I submit, is stupidity indeed.

Whatever side one plonks down on politically, it has to be admitted that on this issue the Government came out infinitely better than the Opposition. One suspects that if old John Tonkin does not know anything whatever on this subject (and he clearly does not), at least he knows he does not know, and that is already a lot. He seems to sense that he's a bit of a maladroit anachronism in such new-fangled disclosures, and he's willing to listen to reports from those who pretend they do know, and by gum he is sincerely determined at least to try to do what's right. I'm not sure that one can ask more from any

politician anywhere, at any point in history, even back when mediocrity was not the norm.

How strange, nonetheless, that every single speaker had to underline somehow or other that he himself was not homosexual by any stretch of the imagination. This verifiable fact alone ought to have proven to the legislative body how far out of its depth it was on this particular subject. It must surely have occurred to some Parliamentarians that the "feelings of guilt" being so bandied about were wrongly attached therefore to ... shall we say "non-Parliamentarians"?

But the arch-villain was Charles Court. Obviously, any doubts as to human suffering, or that he might just conceivably be wrong on this issue, never passed through his mind. How could they? His entire being is focussed on one unique subject to the exclusion of all else: the next elections. If anything slips from the mouth of any Government speaker, Sir Charles must pounce upon it, must twist it into vilification, must wave the Bible, must raise the flags of Respectability, Law and Order, Motherhood, Decency, I don't know, let's say Purity (and if a few poor cocksuckers get bashed or blackmailed he couldn't care less). We have seen such men before. They condemn Henry VIII's wives to the scaffold without batting an eyelash so long as it pleases the King. They burn witches at stakes, and Jews in ovens. They would line us homosexuals up and shoot us down if that would win favour with the powers that be. Their voices break when they speak on television of their grandmothers and dogs, and then, off camera, they coolly perpetrate Watergates. I wondered where, in fact, I had developed such familiarity with this easily-read character, and it occurred to me afterwards that it had been at the cinema, played by Edward G. Robinson or Lino Ventura, the single-minded stereotype politician (or gangster) who was going to succeed, no matter what. Ultimately, there can be no greater enemy to the democratic process.

Anyway, suddenly, homosexual law reform was voted in, twenty-eight to seventeen. Despite all, truth had won. I glanced at the C.A.M.P President. He seemed not to have taken it in. After all that effort (and C.A.M.P. Members are perhaps not aware of how very much parliamentary canvassing has been done on their behalf by D.M. and R.W., speechifying by H.B., your Editor, and thousands of other efforts by X. Y., and Z.), suddenly here it was, even if it yet had to go before the Legislative Council where it might or might not fail. It was almost anti-climax. Then Parliament went on to discuss fuel oil. We did not have to listen to this next debate to know that it would be irrelevant for each speaker to state whether or not he personally drove a car ...

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Before the debate I thought that if Homosexual Law Reform were voted in, that had to be the end of C.A.M.P., for its purpose would be fulfilled. But with all that stentorian ignorance still ringing in my ears, I realized that no, as with all human perfectibility, whatever the upper chamber decided, the real battle was only now to begin.

-- Leslie Alexander.

