

We fight: all forms of discrimination and persecution based on sex, or directed against the free expression of sexual preference.

The beginnings

In Australia, it has always been against the law for male homosexuals to physically express their love. Vicious laws exist in all States and have in the past been executed with what could be termed a degree of zealotry verging on manic. That this has eased extremely slightly must be due in some measure to the activities of a group that came into being in July 1970 in Sydney. 'Camp Inc' as it was first called, as the idea of a group of homosexuals who were crapped off with being at worst persecuted legally and socially, and at best, totally ignored. The group, headed by John Ware and Christobel Poll, but including many others, felt

knowing quite what, or who to expect by the end of the evening, enjoying themselves and infected with a "the fight is on" spirit that was quite unbelievable. We had got it together, and were going to keep it together. Our oppression of ourselves lifted a little that night, and has been gently ascending ever since.

One of the aims at the start had been to eventually acquire clubrooms so that we could have regular meetings, provide a clearing house for information, and an office for the editors of our official voice 'CAMP INK'. We moved into 393 Darling St, Balmain in April 1971.

Balmain and beyond

It was like a hit. Or an explosion. After the initial house warming party, the whole place was simmering for months afterwards. People began to

readers, typists, envelope lickens and coffee makers).

With John and Michael living upstairs, the telephone on, there was a centre from which the Campaign could be run. During that first year, a lot of people worked hellishly hard, for very little obvious return. But the return was there. People began talking about us, the media began to ring us instead of vice versa and our membership grew. Branches were formed in other States: Victoria, Queensland, W.A. and all over. Australia wide membership climbed to the 2000 mark. But, out of all this, there arose something which most of us have never experienced before. An incredible almost undefinable feeling of brotherhood, of being-a-part-of-something-that-is-part-of-all-of-us. There was no inward aggression, except maybe over strategy and methods of campaigning, which was

CAMP, Gay Lib was spawned and began to go it along. The Uni groups, CAMPus CAMP at Sydney and NSW grew too and began their own campaigns and social activities. We were all seen more often; selling CAMP INK on Saturday mornings to the shopping crowds, leafletting the bars and dances, part of the 1972 Womens March, supporting Wendy Bacon and Paul Cox in a rally in Martin Place. And we were always there as homosexuals. We had gained the confidence necessary to accept ourselves, and were no longer afraid to tell the world what we were, and to demand our right to be what we were. In July '72 came CAMP-SEX-LIB week. With Gay-Lib, Womens Lib and just about every other Lib (except the parliamentary ones) we marked the fifth anniversary of the passing of the Sexual Offences Act in England, with a week of lectures, marches, parties

is to it. Our eradication of prejudice and social oppression will take on even greater importance. Laws, or the lack of them, should be the expression of the feelings of the people. Adverse reactions are generally rooted in ignorance or fear, hostility toward the unknown. Our aims are to overcome these fears, to create an informed, educated society where we are accepted for what we are, and not merely tolerated like errant children. We will continue to attack at the roots of our oppression; those people and institutions who are responsible for dissemination of information and teaching. Doctors, clergy, social workers, teachers, journalists etc, and the many others who are called upon to guide and direct. Educate the educators.

To make our campaigning effective requires manpower, money and effort. At present, we have no permanent

State Houses

(c) invite M.P.'s, psychologists, social workers etc to meet and discuss relevant issues with us

(d) make speakers available to talk to other groups, organisations and societies about homosexuality

(e) provide legal advice or referral to a qualified lawyer or solicitor

(f) provide a counselling service in co-operation with psychologists and social workers exchange ideas and information with other homosexual groups and organisations both here and overseas

(g) organise social activities and entertainment in the form of non-explosive dances, barbecues, ferry trips

(h) provide a meeting place and headquarters open for discussion, topical groups, and socialising

(i) FIGHT ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AND

CAMPAIGN AGAINST MORAL PERSECUTION:

THE FIRST TWO YEARS

by Brian Woodward

that it was time 'to redefine the homosexuals place in society' and that the only way this was likely to be satisfactorily done, was to involve homosexuals like themselves in doing it. And involve them they did!

An article in 'THE AUSTRALIAN' of September 19th, '70, brought a flood of applications, letters asking for further information and a few crank replies too. It also showed us something else. Something very surprising. There were homosexuals in the community who were prepared to come out, to fight for what they believed was right and just, to work together, and above all, who believed that Camp Inc would succeed in its aims.

After a month or so, there were 300 members. A meeting party was arranged at St Johns Church Hall in Balmain - would anyone turn up, would the vice squad or ASIO be there? These fears were proved groundless with a vengeance. Over 100 came, somewhat timidly at first, not

pour in every night, some coming just for a look, others working on the house itself, and others becoming part of the groups which met in one of the many rooms each week. Those who were into the social side of the organization met under the guise of the 'House Group' to arrange the day-to-day running of the premises and to plan parties, barbecues, ferry trips etc. The law reform group planned their strategy for an assault on our M.P.'s; began collecting data from those unfortunate enough to have fallen foul of the laws, and worked on a manifesto calling for the abolition of legal discrimination against homosexuals. The Church group began investigating the problems existing in the Churches' attitudes to homosexuality and homosexuals. People with particular interest got together and talked to each other. The magazine, CAMP INK moved into the upstairs office, along with its editors and assorted paraphernalia, (and a steady stream of volunteer proof

good because it resulted in more thought and action about our oppression of ourselves and our oppression by society. The whole atmosphere of the movement was, to use a somewhat overworked but nonetheless apt word, cool.

An unheard of event. Homosexuals demonstrating in the streets as homosexuals, and unashamedly so. Support for the then Attorney General, Hughes (who had made some encouraging noises in Parliament on homosexual Law reform) in his pre-selection fight for the seat of Berowra. Balloons, posters, banners, T.V. and press coverage for the national News, policemen reading copies of Camp Ink and no arrests or violence. As one newspaper said 'CAMP (by now we'd dropped the 'Inc) enters the political fray'. Twelve months previously, the only poofers who made the papers were those who were arrested for molesting children, or Les Girls.

We kept on growing. From within

and as much press coverage and reporting as we could get. Everyone in Sydney must have thought about homosexuality or homosexuals that week, they were confronted by us everywhere. It was a bitter reminder that Australia today is still at least 5 years behind England and most other countries in its attitudes to sexuality and sexual freedom.

The Present

It hasn't all been roses. And when it has, there have been thorns to remind us that we cannot afford to get complacent. An ABC TV documentary is made about two Sydney members - after screening, one of them is sacked. Prejudice is still with us, oppression lurks in the myriad corners of the establishment. This coming year, with a new federal government which is slightly more likely than the last one to raise the subject of HLR in the House. CAMP will be working harder to convince our politicians that it is time - for a change in the law. And we do not fondly imagine that this is all there

headquarters (as of Dec '72) but this should not deter anyone from joining us. We can, and do, work from members' homes or anywhere that we can get a few people with ideas and energy together. The various groups within CAMP still meet, CAMP INK is still produced every month (approximately), newsletters serve to keep members informed of important events, and we continue to receive write-ups in the press and coverage on radio and TV. In the new year, we will be providing new services. A rapid telephone service for flat finding, job hunting etc, and a 'Phone A Friend' service; a cross between lifeline and the Alternative Community Telephone. We will continue to:-

(a) collect evidence of discrimination by employers, the police, landlords etc.

(b) present our views to Members of Parliament, particularly to new Members who won their seats in the last election and to prospective and sitting members of the Senate and

PERSECUTION BASED ON SEX

CAMP is now over two years old. But still we are only reaching about one in twenty of the 'one in twenty'. We aim to reach them all. Males and Females. We are concerned that we are unjustly labelled middle class and conservative. Crap!! Our members come from every conceivable section and age group within Australia.

We are fighting, and a plan of campaign ensures that we get maximum results from our efforts. We can't afford to waste any of our energy. Each State branch is autonomous, and we are all linked through CAMP INK. We can mobilise on a State or national scale as the issue requires. There is a constant flow of information between State Executives, and branch members. The addresses of the various State branches are listed under our 'Camp Everywhere' ad elsewhere in this issue. We urge you to join us, support us and help in the campaign. CAMP is for people. Like you.