

The Red Butterfly feels the necessity to oppose certain of the "gay demands" which have been circulated at the R.P.C.C. Plenary Session in Philadelphia, and subsequently. We do not feel those demands are in the interest of the Gay Liberation movement. As revolutionaries, we cannot support them on a principled basis.

Most of the things we disagree with center around what we call "gay nationalism", and around basic definitions of what is meant by "gay" and "homosexual". Unfortunately, we can offer here only a brief definition of these terms. Basically, the problem lies with (I) stereotyped concepts of who/what is "gay" or "homosexual" and (II) a segregationist tendency, gay nationalism, which is based upon these stereotypes.

I. Stereotypes. These would include a whole slew of concepts that have nothing to do with sexual behavior: traits and attributes which are linked to sex or sexual behavior. These definitions are handed down by the oppressor culture, and are part of the system of sexism which oppresses all of us. A "gay" lifestyle, "gay" clothes, "gay" physical types, "gay" mannerisms, "gay" language -- all of these represent stereotyped thinking. Every conceivable lifestyle is found among those who engage in homosexual behavior. Using stereotyped traits and attributes to define a person as gay is just as invalid as the reactionary stereotyped definitions of a "real" man or a "real" woman. The ridiculous extreme to which this type of thinking can lead was found in the 1950's in America, when every variety of nonconformity was considered a sign of sexual deviation.

II. Gay Nationalism. Stereotyped thinking together with ignorance of or resistance to the continuum theory\* of human sexuality have led to a tendency within the "homophile"/Gay Liberation movement which we refer to as "gay nationalism". By gay nationalism we mean the extreme segregationist attitude which presents as its ideal the lifestyle based upon the stereotypes of the oppressor culture.

#### CRITIQUE:

Our objections to gay nationalism and other varieties of stereotyped and reactionary thinking can best be demonstrated by offering our evaluations of some "gay demands" we find especially objectionable.

THE RIGHT TO BE GAY ANYTIME, ANYPLACE. This demand is meaningful only if we know what it means to "be gay". Does this mean affecting the stereotyped roles of the "gay world" subculture? If so, we oppose this demand. These roles are created and defined by the oppressor culture and serve to keep people in place and divided. To fit into these stereotypes is to side with the oppressor.

Does this mean having sex "anytime, anyplace"? If so, this could include impractical and anti-social behavior; we feel sexual behavior should take into account the rights of others.

THE RIGHT TO FREE PHYSIOLOGICAL CHANGE AND MODIFICATION OF SEX UPON DEMAND. Stripped of the above-mentioned stereotyped role-playing, we see this demand as advocating the mutilation of the human body -- and at the expense of the State! "Modification of sex" is a false concept, inasmuch as modern surgery can do no such thing as "modify" sex. No physician has ever surgically changed a man into a woman, or a woman into a man. The only change which has been known to take place so far is to "modify" a man into a eunuch. The euphemisms, "physiological change" and "modification of sex" cover up a lack of real concern for the ethics involved. We are philosophically materialists, rejecting the theological concepts of soul-body dualism, and therefore, we consider an injury to the body an injury to the real person. We are opposed to surgical mutilation. Medicine should serve the people.

THE RIGHT OF FREE DRESS AND ADORNMENT. We support this demand if it means that the State should not dictate mode of clothing. However, we anticipate a future culture where human beings relate to more important things than clothing, and the word "adornment" suggests a certain pre-occupation with the embellishments of fashion. If this demand means the State should supply free jewelry, this demand is frivolous.

THAT ALL MODES OF HUMAN SEXUAL SELF-EXPRESSION DESERVE PROTECTION OF THE LAW, AND SOCIAL SANCTION. Freedom of human sexual self-expression must be in the context of responsibility, i.e., limited by a respect for other people's rights.

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\*For those of us in the struggle for Gay Liberation to participate on a basis of equality, certain objective knowledge is required. Ignorance of the continuum theory of human sexual behavior, relevant anthropological studies, etc. causes a distorted view of sexual behavior, and consequently, incorrect politics. We would recommend reading: Homosexual Behavior Among Males by Wainwright Churchill; Patterns Of Sexual Behavior by C.S. Ford and F.A. Beach; the two Kinsey studies; and the four Red Butterfly pamphlets.

THAT ALL PEOPLE BE TRIED BY MEMBERS OF THEIR PEER GROUP. (with the explanation that all gay people are peers of all other gay people) This demand is blatant gay nationalism. All gay people are of course not our peers. People should be judged by their actions, and a gay pig is still a pig. Obviously, enemies of the people should not be judged by juries of other enemies of the people.

THAT GAYS BE REPRESENTED IN ALL GOVERNMENTAL AND COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS. This should mean no discrimination, not a quota system based on a forced definition of people as gay or straight.

THAT GAYS DETERMINE THE DESTINY OF THEIR OWN COMMUNITIES. This demand could reasonably be interpreted as meaning either a gay nationalist ideal for a future society, or as a strategy for liberation based upon control of allegedly existing gay communities. Given either interpretation, we oppose it.

If control of existing "gay communities" is meant, this demand would appear to be the result of a facile and unthinking analogy between black and other communities (or ghettos) and supposed "gay communities". A closer examination shows that this analogy does not hold true. The success or failure of this approach as a technique of organizing the masses of "gay" people in this country might be indicated by a comparison of the structure of "gay communities" with that of black ghettos. Three points emerge:

I. Isolation. (A) The masses of blacks reside in ghettos. Indeed, they are the ghetto. The masses of "gays" on the other hand (1) do not reside in ghetto areas (2) do not ever relate to ghettos, or (3) relate to them only casually, as on weekends. (B) Black ghettos exist in every major city and many, if not most, towns. "Gay communities", in contrast, exist in only a few cities, and those the very largest.

II. Divisiveness. Even within the "gay communities", gay people, unlike blacks, remain a minority. We should not expect gays as a minority to govern fairly over the entire area of the so-called "gay community".

III. Sexism. We know of not one single lesbian ghetto in the entire country. It is axiomatic that a program for Gay Liberation should include women as well as men.

In short, ghettoized gay people are in no way representative of the masses of human beings who have experienced homosexual responses. The great majority of these do not reside in ghettos, do not relate to ghettos, and do not identify with the stereotyped life-styles of "gay" ghettos.

If this demand be intended as a future ideal, then we must ask: would this mean all-male and all female communities? (which we would not oppose, by the way, as one option among others for those who wanted it) Further, how would one qualify for entry into a "gay community"?

Our oppression largely consists of being forced into exclusive heterosexual or homosexual categories, with stereotyped traits assigned on these bases. The ideal of exclusively gay or straight communities carries forward this oppression to the extreme of separate (i.e., segregated) living quarters. It is reactionary to make someone define his or her personhood entirely in terms of sexual behavior at one particular time in life. What if a "gay" person preferred to live in a "community of scholars", or a "community of musicians", or a "community of athletes", or a "community of farmers"?

We advocate a society where people of all degrees of gayness or straightness relate to each other in community. Therefore, we do not foresee "gay communities", "gay peers", "gay life-styles", or any such ghetto concepts in a free and humane culture.

We must strongly urge that all these demands be remanded for further discussion. Setting forth the politics of Gay Liberation should not be undertaken thoughtlessly.

In the spirit of fraternal criticism in our common struggle --

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The Red Butterfly is an association of gay men and women who as revolutionary socialists see their liberation linked to the class struggle.