

No More Miamis!

Gay

Liberation

TODAY

GAY & LESBIAN ALLIANCE
AT STANFORD

An Exchange of Views

Cheryl Adams

Ann Foreman

Joe Kear

Michael Maggi

Leonard Matlovich

Mary Jo Risher

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Introduction

"Anita Bryant move out of the way/Gay rights are here to stay!" "No more Miamis!" These were two of the chants roared by the crowd of over fifty thousand at the New York City Christopher Street Day demonstration June 26, 1977. It is estimated that a quarter of a million people took to the streets around the country that day to proclaim their support for homosexual rights. The San Francisco march numbered between one hundred thousand and two hundred thousand.

In Barcelona, Spain, on the heels of the first elections there in forty years, ten thousand gays and their supporters demonstrated, calling their action part of a "World Day of Gay Pride."

These actions were marked by a sense of urgency and a new mood of militancy. They came in the wake of the most serious attack on gay rights in recent times—the June 7 repeal of an ordinance which protected homosexuals from discrimination in jobs, housing, and public accommodations in Dade County, Florida.

Anita Bryant, a singer who appears in TV ads for the Florida citrus industry, led the charge. She and her organization—cynically named "Save Our Children"—whipped up a frenzied, slander-ridden campaign against gays which succeeded in placing a referendum against the gay rights law on the June 7 ballot. The referendum passed, repealing the civil rights ordinance.

The "Save Our Children" "crusade," as Bryant called it, was a scare campaign based on the slander that gays are "child molesters." Liberally mixed with such reactionary lies were ludicrous statements like Bryant's "revelation" that the 1977 California drought was God's punishment for repeal of the state's antisodomy law.

After the vote, Bryant called the referendum results a "victory for God and decency in America." Pledging to continue her campaign, she said, "If God says go, I will go to another part of the country."

Green light or no, Bryant has proceeded to spread her poison nationwide, making it clear that the attacks on gay rights will not stop in Florida.

The referendum defeat has put wind in the sails of the "Save Our Children" crusade and other right-wing forces. Their drive jeopardizes the rights not only of gays, but of women, labor, Blacks and other minorities. Most of these antigay bigots would just as soon carry signs against the Equal Rights Amendment and abortion, against busing to achieve equal education for Blacks, and for reactionary union-busting laws.

Such right-wing activity is not taking place in a vacuum. It is being spurred on by a general offensive of the ruling rich against the living standards and democratic rights of all working people. Through the institutions the corporate heads and finance capitalists control—Congress, the Supreme Court, the Democratic and Republican parties—decisions are being made, one after the other, dissolving hard-won gains of Blacks, women, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, and labor, as well as gays.

In May of this year, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld seniority systems which discriminate against minorities and women, opening the door for the destruction of affirmative-action plans everywhere. A month later, the high court upheld state laws which outlaw publicly funded abortions. The U.S. Senate quickly followed with passage of a version of the Hyde Amendment (already approved by the House) banning Medicaid funds for abortions.

These actions will drive an estimated 300,000 poor women who depend on government funds for abortions to accept unwanted pregnancies or face the dangers of self-induced or back-alley abortions.

Similar setbacks have occurred in other arenas. In state after state, Democratic and Republican legislatures have voted against ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment for women. The rights of Black, Chicano, and Puerto Rican children to an equal education have come under increasing attack as court-ordered busing plans and bilingual education programs have been whittled away.

The repeal of the gay rights law in Florida has not been the only recent loss for gays. On March 29, 1976, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld as constitutional a Virginia law that banned homosexual acts between consenting adults. Without even hearing oral argument on the issue, the court let stand a Bible-thumping lower court decision that branded homosexual conduct "a contribution to moral delinquency." It brushed aside arguments, endorsed by the American Civil Liberties Union, that

antigay laws violate the constitutional rights to privacy, freedom of expression, and due process.

The right of lesbian mothers to retain custody of their children emerged as a central issue for the gay liberation movement with the case of Mary Jo Risher. A Dallas, Texas, jury refused Risher custody of her nine-year-old adopted son in December 1975. She has appealed the decision and written a book describing her ordeal called *By Her Own Admission* (Dutton, New York, 1977).

In March 1975, former Sgt. Leonard Matlovich was discharged from the air force after he informed his superior officer that he was gay. Others who have challenged the military's ban on gays have met with similar treatment. Two WACs, Pfc. Barbara Randolph and Pvt. Deborah Watson, upon refusing to cover up their sexual preference, were given general discharges from the army in July 1975.

Since 1970, the gay movement in New York City has pressed for passage of a gay civil rights law similar to the one knocked down in Dade County. Year after year, it has failed to pass.

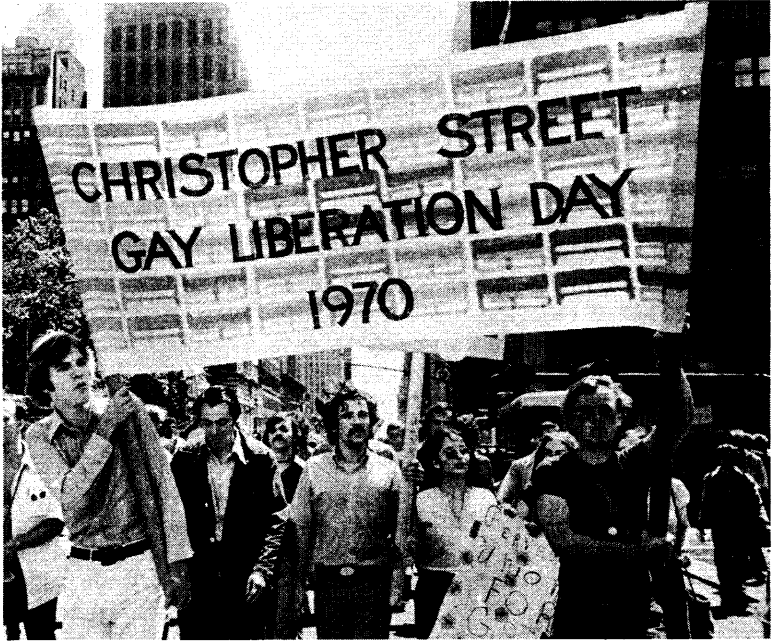
However, under the impact of the gay liberation movement and the movements for social change which emerged in the 1960s, sweeping changes have taken place in public attitudes toward homosexual rights. An opinion poll taken by the *New York Daily News* after the Supreme Court's ruling outlawing homosexual acts found that 58 percent disagreed with the court's decision while only 18 percent supported it. The same poll found that 63 percent felt that "homosexuals should be accepted in society and treated the same as everyone else."

One important sign of these changing attitudes has been the variety of organizations and institutions which have taken stands in support of gay rights. The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA) have done so on a national level.

In 1973, the American Psychiatric Association voted to moderate its longstanding view that homosexuality constituted a psychiatric disorder. This was an important symbolic victory for the gay rights movement. In 1975 the Federal Civil Service Commission reversed an earlier ruling that branded gays unfit for public service.

Eighteen states have repealed sodomy laws, including California, which abolished a 103-year-old statute that punished homosexual behavior with up to life imprisonment and even castration in some cases.

These gains have been won as a result of the determined efforts of a new generation of homosexuals. Inspired by the demands for justice of the civil rights and women's movements



Liberation News Service

The first Christopher Street Gay Liberation Demonstration, June 28, 1970, in New York City.

and by the youth radicalization and the worldwide anti-Vietnam War movement of the 1960s and early 1970s, gays, too, began to rise up to demand their rights and proclaim their dignity.

For centuries, homosexuals have been forced to live in shame and fear, hiding their sexuality. From the all-pervasive “queer” jokes to exclusion from employment and housing, gays have faced a range of discrimination and ridicule which has kept millions of lives stifled and anguished.

The first Christopher Street Liberation Day demonstration in New York City on June 28, 1970, challenged the written and unwritten laws that keep gays down. The march marked the first anniversary of the “Stonewall Riot”—the night when a spontaneous mass demonstration occurred in response to a routine police raid on a Greenwich Village gay bar. Such open demonstrations of gays were previously unheard of.

No longer. Today the movement for gay rights is of national significance. The recent upsurge in gay rights activity, which includes some of the largest demonstrations seen in this country in recent years, serves as an inspiration and powerful example to all those fighting for social justice and human rights.

Winning gay rights depends on the continued building of such actions—actions which can inspire and mobilize ever increasing numbers to stand up and fight. That is the kind of power it will take to force the government to pass and enforce gay rights legislation. Rather than making quiet, behind-the-scenes, back-room deals with Democratic or Republican party politicians, the lesson we can learn from all movements for social change in this country is that we must depend on our own numbers and the support we win from our allies in the fight for our rights.

In the wake of the referendum defeat in Dade County, the gay movement is discussing what to do next. This pamphlet is a contribution to that discussion.

Diane Wang's article from the June 24, 1977, issue of the *Militant*, a socialist newsweekly, analyzes the vote on the referendum and proposes a strategy aimed at winning allies in the fight for gay rights.

Included also are excerpts from speeches by Miami activist Joe Kear and New York activists David Thorstad and Cheryl Adams delivered at a July 1, 1977, *Militant* Forum in New York. The forum was entitled "How to Fight for Gay Rights—An Exchange of Views."

Prominent gay rights advocate Leonard Matlovich responds to the Dade County defeat in an interview with Ike Nahem which has been reprinted from the *Militant*.

Mary Jo Risher and Ann Foreman describe their struggle to regain custody of Risher's nine-year-old son, Richard, in an interview with *Militant* reporter Diane Wang. Custody was denied Risher by a Dallas jury in 1975 on the grounds that she is a lesbian.

The stakes in the battle for gay rights are high. Our movement has given tens of thousands of homosexuals the courage and self-confidence to live more open lives, and to *stand up and fight* for their human rights.

We must counter the Anita Bryants who aim to shove us back into the closets and lock the doors, by building a massive movement for gay rights that cannot be ignored. Our struggle can expose our enemies for what they are: opponents of all movements for social justice and democratic rights. It can set an example for all victims of racist, sexist, and anti-working class attacks.

Michael Maggi



Human rights molester Anita Bryant.

No More Miamis! Winning Allies for Gay Rights

by Diane Wang

“All America and all the world will hear what the people have said, and with God’s continued help we will prevail. . . .”

It was the night of June 7. Anita Bryant was claiming victory for her “Save Our Children” coalition. This reactionary crusade had succeeded in repealing a Miami law that outlawed discrimination against gay people in jobs, housing, and public accommodations.

But at the same time, in San Francisco and New York, thousands of human rights supporters poured into streets to answer her. “No more Miamis! Gay rights now!”

The Miami referendum and gays’ refusal to accept defeat without a fight have dramatically projected the question of gay rights into the national political spotlight. The experience of the Miami referendum and the national gay rights campaign it has sparked is significant—and not just for gay men and lesbians.

The right-wing drive against the Miami antidiscrimination law emerged as part of a broader assault on all human rights. The targets are Blacks and other minorities, women, undocumented workers—all those who suffer discrimination.

These attacks occur in the context of a general offensive against the rights and living standards of all working people waged by this country’s ruling rich, their government, and their two political parties. It is this offensive that creates a favorable climate for reactionary efforts such as Anita Bryant’s crusade.

The real stakes in the clash over gay rights were explained by Arlie Scott, national vice-president of the National Organization for Women, at a recent NOW meeting:

“In attacking gay people and lesbians in Dade County they are attacking a very vulnerable section of society,” Scott explained. “They attack them first, get them first. . . . It’s not very far from that to attacking abortion. . . . These are the same people who are against busing, the same people against affirmative action.”

To fight the attack on gay rights and to defend ourselves from this general assault, we need to analyze the Miami experience.

One dismal fact stands out from the Miami vote tally: voter turnout was as high as 80 percent in “Save Our Children” strongholds. It was low in most places where support for gay rights was expected.

Miami’s “Little Havana,” where tens of thousands of counter-revolutionary Cuban exiles live, had a high voter turnout, and 86 percent voted against gay rights.

In contrast, the Black community gave more support to the antidiscrimination law than many other precincts, with almost half of the voters backing gay rights. But barely 10 percent voted in the Black districts.

Gay Rights Support Unmobilized

The support for gay rights that did exist was not mobilized to save the antidiscrimination law.

In fact, leaders of the Dade County Coalition for Human Rights deliberately put the brakes on attempts to organize a mass-action campaign which could have posed the issues clearly and mobilized supporters of the gay rights ordinance.

They discouraged leafleting until the last weekend before the vote. They even canceled a public rally initially scheduled for May 28.

Instead, the coalition hired several Democratic Party “pros.” And these engineers of defeat told gay men and lesbians to leave the work to them.

The politicians did put on a lavish effort. The Dade County Coalition for Human Rights raised \$350,000—about twice what “Save Our Children” raised. It hit Miami with an expensive media blitz designed by professionals. There were news conferences by celebrities.

But human rights cannot be “sold” in an ad campaign like toothpaste.

There were no massive actions to give *all* supporters of human rights the chance to publicly answer the slanders against gay men and lesbians.

We needed more than ads and a few leaders answering the bigots. We needed to show the massive support that exists in Dade County for human rights. We needed actions that could publicly demonstrate our power in numbers. We needed an education campaign focusing on the real issue of human rights.

But the official leaders of the gay movement in Miami looked to Democratic Party politicians and their methods. Because of their

support to capitalist politicians they were hostile to any attempts to mobilize supporters of gay rights in action independent of the Democratic Party.

Bryant wasn't hampered by any such problems. The ultraright waged a powerful and visible offensive. "Save Our Children" campaigners were on street corners and at shopping centers everywhere. While a fund-raising event for gay rights drew 700 people (those who could pay five dollars), Bryant mobilized 10,000 at the Miami convention center.

With that kind of aggressive backing, the right-wing coalition called the shots in the debate. They twisted the issue from gay rights to whether students were going to be "molested" in the classroom by gay teachers. The issue was not human rights, Bryant claimed, but "human rot." "It's Satan on the move." "There is no 'human right' to corrupt our children."

Without a strong, visible, massive movement defending gay rights, the bigots got bolder, and those who could have been won to support human rights were intimidated or confused. Some who could have been won to support the ordinance were persuaded that the antidiscrimination law was unnecessary.

This is similar to what happened to state Equal Rights Amendments in New York and New Jersey in 1975, when referenda were on the ballots. Polls had shown that the overwhelming majority supported the ERA.

But the right wing mobilized and dominated the debate, convincing many people that the real issue was unisex bathrooms and military conscription of women.

Women's rights supporters failed to counter the right wing by organizing a powerful response. As a result, the state ERA bills lost in the referenda.

Reaching Out to Allies

Gay rights defenders did little to effectively appeal to their potential allies. Bryant openly sided with the most reactionary, anti-Black, antiwoman, and antilabor forces.

The Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan labeled homosexuality part of the "vast conspiracy" of communism. Gay rights defenders should have made every effort to mobilize Black support against this common enemy.

The week before the referendum, several Black leaders did issue an appeal on behalf of the antidiscrimination law at a news conference. Gay rights defenders should have used that appeal to organize massive leafleting, speaking engagements, and soap-boxing in the Black community.

Bryant joined forces with Phyllis Schlafly against the ERA and with Robert Brake, a notorious anti-abortion bigot in Florida.

Gloria Steinem and NOW vice-president Arlie Scott went to Miami. This was a positive step. But again, much more than news conferences and benefits was needed to organize all women's rights activists in defense of gay rights.

Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, sent a letter of support for the Miami ordinance on gay rights. But teacher unionists were not organized to campaign for the referendum.

The local AFL-CIO took no position. A local leader of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees claimed the union had not been called upon to take a stand.

Gay rights defenders should have made a powerful appeal to organized labor, saying, "Look, democratic rights—ours and yours—are at stake. These so-called Save Our Children forces are the same union-busting forces behind right-to-work laws and other reactionary stands."

And on Miami-area campuses students, who so many times have provided major forces for progressive causes, should have been enlisted in the defense of gay rights.

Democratic Party 'Friends'

These potential allies of the gay movement, however, were not brought into the struggle in a major way. Leaders of the National Gay Task Force and the Dade County Coalition for Human Rights were willing to subordinate defense of the antidiscrimination law to the tactic of relying on their "friends" in the Democratic Party.

But what did gay rights supporters get in return?

The Dade County Democratic Party finally gave its verbal support to the antidiscrimination law only one week before the vote. It did nothing to mobilize support for gay rights.

Meanwhile, Florida's Democratic Governor Reubin Askew sided with Bryant and the Bible-thumping bigots.

And Democratic President Carter—for all his smiling platitudes about human rights in other countries—refused to speak on the human rights issue so urgently raised in Miami.

National Gay Task Force leaders point to their meeting at the White House last March as evidence of Carter's concern for gay rights. But that so-called concern does not translate into support when the chips are down.

Asked at a news conference last week whether he thought homosexuals should be allowed to teach school, Carter answered,

“This is a subject I don’t particularly want to involve myself in. I’ve got enough problems without taking on another.”

Gays have enough problems, too, without betrayal by “friends” like Carter.

There is more support for gay rights than ever before in this country. And more support can be won. The June 25-26 actions around the country dramatize that fact.

We need a united campaign to educate the public, to expand and rally support for human rights.

We must continue organizing this kind of visible, massive movement so we can fight to ensure there will be “No more Miamis!”

How to Fight for Gay Rights —An Exchange of Views—

The presentations below are based on excerpts from speeches delivered by three leaders of the gay liberation movement at a Militant Forum in New York City on July 1, 1977. The panel included Joe Kear, Cheryl Adams, and David Thorstad. Joe Kear is a Miami activist who worked with the Dade County Coalition for Human Rights. His talk represents the views of the Socialist Workers Party. Cheryl Adams is the coordinator of the National Organization for Women (NOW)'s Lesbian Rights Committee and its Legislative Committee in New York City. She is also NOW's representative to the New York Women's Lobby and is a member of the Lesbian Feminist Liberation Legislative Committee. David Thorstad is a leader of the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights in New York. He is the former president of the Gay Activists Alliance and co-author with John Lauritsen of The Early Homosexual Rights Movement: 1864-1935.

Adams and Thorstad presented their views as individuals.

Excerpts from the question-and-answer period follow the presentations of the three speakers.

Joe Kear

She says she'd rather see her children dead than gay. Her pastor says he'd first see his church school in flames before hiring a gay teacher. Her organization claims that gay men, if given civil rights, will rape children.

This not-so-famous entertainer, a bit more famous orange juice pitchwoman, and now America's *most* famous antigay bigot has become a standard-bearer for the right wing.

Anita Bryant's "Save Our Children" crusade aims to deny us our rights. It is a vicious movement built on lies. Like the lie that gays are violent. Like the lie that being gay is a fate worse than death. These lies have had their effect:

Robert Hillsboro is dead. He was beaten and stabbed on June 23, 1977, in San Francisco, by four young bigots, who, according to eyewitness reports, shouted "Faggot, faggot," and "This one's for Anita." If that isn't sufficient to point the finger of blame at this newly organized movement of hatred and prejudice, consider this.

Our first Gay Pride Day Celebration in Miami last Sunday was scheduled to conclude with a street dance. But another event was added to the schedule. When John Ward left the dance to wait for a cab on Main Highway, within yards of the dance site, he noticed three men in a red station wagon staring at him. The car drew closer, and a man in the back seat pulled out a rifle and shot John in the chest. Here's a picture of John in the hospital at a news conference after the attack. He reported that his left lung had collapsed. He called for a full-scale investigation by the police. The Dade County Coalition for Human Rights has put up a reward of \$5,000 for information leading to the arrest of the thugs who attacked him.

These are not the first incidents of violence inspired by the hate campaign of "Save Our Children." Such attacks have been occurring in Miami since "Save Our Children" began organizing in January.

Ovidio Ramos, the chairperson of the Latin Committee of the Dade County Coalition for Human Rights, committed suicide last March. This happened, no doubt, as a result of the extreme hostility toward gay rights among the large right wing of the Cuban community in Miami. His successor as chairperson was Manuel Gómez. Gómez's car was firebombed. The same thing happened to the car belonging to one of the leaders of the coalition. He resigned from the coalition as a result.

I had the experience of having my car window shot out while the car was parked outside a meeting of the Dade County Coalition for Human Rights.

So you can see that Anita Bryant's movement has produced an atmosphere of hysteria which has encouraged violent acts against the gay community.

These hypocrites are not interested in saving children. They're not interested in opposing violence. Have you heard Bryant and the "Save Our Children" gang speak out against child abuse? Statistics show that it is widespread. Those are *heterosexuals* who beat, maim, and at times kill their offspring.

Have you heard these hypocrites speak out on the problem of battered wives? Last Monday the press reported a new composite survey based on six sociological studies showing that the *majority* of married women in the United States suffer physical

abuse of one kind or another from their husbands. And who is responsible? Isn't it male heterosexuals?

What of the problem of fathers sexually assaulting their daughters? The frequency of these incidents is just now being reported.

What about rape? Women live in fear of rape based on the



Howard Petrick

Demonstrator at San Francisco June 26, 1977, march protests murder of Robert Hillsboro.

reality of growing incidents of sexual assault. By whom? Straight males.

And Anita Bryant isn't concerned about saving children, either. What about the children of lesbian mothers, who are being forcibly removed from their homes by homophobic courts. Mary Jo Risher and her son don't want to be separated. Where is Anita Bryant's concern?

Where is her concern for Mrs. Ward's son John, and Mrs. Hillsboro's son Robert?

Bryant peddled the slander that gays are child molesters and shouldn't be allowed to teach or be anywhere near children. What an outrage! The truth is that the gay movement is *against* the abuse of children whether sexual or of any other sort. Any decent person would be. The exploitation of children through such things as "kiddie porn" is an abomination. We must answer Bryant in the strongest possible way on this question.

This right-wing antigay movement and the violence which has accompanied it must be taken on and opposed by all supporters of human rights. We must keep in mind, though, that the most serious attacks on our rights and the rights of others are being carried out by the *government*. It is the government which does the beckoning of the capitalist class in our society today, and this minority class is bound and determined to rob all segments of the working population of our democratic rights and to drive down our standards of living.

Through the legislative and judicial bodies they control, the ruling class has the *power* to take away our rights. That power is the source of the string of reactionary laws and decisions which have come out of legislative bodies and the courts in the past few years.

Right-wing groups like "Save Our Children" and "Restore Our Alienated Rights" (the antibusing group based in Boston), are given encouragement by these governmental actions. The government, in turn, winks an "institutional eye" at them—at any legal infractions or violent activities they engage in. Compare that attitude with the outright offensive the government launched against the Black civil rights movement or the anti-Vietnam War movement.

In order to continue its drive against our rights, the government needs a conducive political climate. One which will approve or, at least, not oppose its attacks. Neither the right wing nor the government has been successful in creating such a climate. The American people want *more*, not fewer human rights. They want *better*, not worse standards of living.

Our job is to mobilize that sentiment in *action*—action which

will be powerful and massive enough not only to defend the rights under attack but to win still more. That is the context around which we should develop a strategy for the gay rights movement.

I would like, now, to give you a firsthand report on the Miami situation to date.

The struggle of gay people for civil rights received a terrible blow at the polls on June 7, in the special election in Dade County, Florida. By a two-to-one margin, ignorance, fear, and bigotry prevailed over human rights. The wide margin came as a surprise to the gay movement nationally, and was a shock to the many active supporters of the campaign in Miami. What happened?

Activists in the campaign, many from around the country, held an informal discussion to attempt to answer this question at the headquarters of the Dade County Coalition for Human Rights the day after the election. Most people felt that the media campaign organized by the Dade County Coalition had been excellent. Full-page ads for the coalition appeared daily in the major newspapers, and the television ads were so numerous that every viewer was expected to have seen several.

But buying media time and newspaper space obviously wasn't enough to get the message across.

Polls prior to the election had shown that people who favored the ordinance giving gay people equal rights to jobs, housing, and public accommodations outnumbered those who opposed it.

But the opposition was a determined opposition, a mobilized one. Many of those who favor human rights for gays weren't yet convinced that an ordinance was necessary to protect those rights. At least, they weren't convinced enough to vote.

Both major newspapers, the *Miami News* and the *Miami Herald*, editorialized that the ordinance was unnecessary. The *Miami Herald's* editorial was a reversal of an earlier position supporting the ordinance. In the meantime, "Save Our Children" had illegally, under nonprofit religious status, sent a mailing to every Dade County voter. "Save Our Children" canvassed shopping centers and street corners. It organized several rallies, including one which drew 10,000 people on May 29 at the Miami Convention Center.

Every Catholic churchgoer heard instructions on Sunday, June 5, to vote against gay rights. Many other churches and temples offered the same appeal that weekend.

An antigay movement had been organized to get out the vote.

THERE IS NO 'HUMAN RIGHT' TO CORRUPT OUR CHILDREN

Governor Meubon Askew has joined the tens of thousands of parents who are FOR the repeal of Metro's dangerous homosexual ordinance.
"I do not want a known homosexual teaching my child," Governor Askew said recently, adding "I've never viewed the homosexual lifestyle as something that approached a constitutional right. So, if I were in Miami [in Dade County], I would find no difficulty in voting to repeal the ordinance."
Nevertheless, many parents are confused, and don't know the real dangers that are posed by many homosexuals—and perceive them as all being gentle, non-aggressive types. THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HOMOSEXUAL COIN IS A HAIR-RAISING, PATTERN OF RECRUITMENT AND OUTRIGHT SEDUCTION AND MOLESTATION... A GROWING PATTERN THAT PREDICTABLY WILL INFLUENCE IF SOCIETY APPROVES LAWS GRANTING LEGITIMACY TO THE SEXUALLY PERVERTED.
The stories above, gathered from the nation's press, speak for themselves...

What the homosexuals want:

The following demands are from the February 1972 convention platform of A National Council of Gay Organizations, in Chicago:

- Repeal of all laws governing the age of sexual consent.
- Federal support for sex education courses prepared and taught by gay women and men.

preparing homosexuality as a valid, healthy preference and lifestyle as a viable alternative to heterosexuality.

- Enactment of legislation so that child custody, adoption, marriage rights, lease agreements, and the like shall not be denied because of sexual orientation...

Platform and address information from the Save Our Children, Inc., San Diego, Treasurer

**Vote FOR repeal
of Metro's dangerous
homosexual ordinance June 7!**

CONTRIBUTIONS TO SAVE OUR CHILDREN MAY BE MAILED TO BOX 40-107, MIAMI BEACH, FL 33140

Part of a slander-filled "Save Our Children" ad, which appeared in the *Miami Herald*, urging repeal of Dade County's gay rights ordinance.

Yet the gay movement in Dade County and its supporters had only just begun to organize.

It is helpful to view the June 7 election in the context of the history of the gay movement and the course of the pro-ordinance campaign prior to the vote.

Since the Christopher Street Rebellion in New York in 1969, the gay liberation movement has burst forth and grown. Because lesbians and gay men have dared to be visible and assertive of their rights—organizing rallies and other public events—a new awareness about gays has developed. People now know that gays exist in large numbers in our society, and many believe we deserve legal rights.

The gay liberation movement created the climate which made it possible for gay rights ordinances to be passed in thirty-five cities and two counties to date. It is that climate which allowed for the passage on January 18, 1977, of Dade County's short-lived ordinance.

But the gay movement had not yet been organized in a visible way in Miami. Miami had never seen a gay pride march, or gay rights meetings that were publicized widely. Passage of a gay rights ordinance was bound to produce a backlash, but unfortunately, there was no viable gay liberation movement mobilized to counter it.

The activity of the Dade County Coalition for Human Rights was focused almost solely on an extensive media campaign. What was lacking in the campaign was the mobilization of large numbers of gay people and their supporters in visible activity defending the ordinance. Gay people passing out literature on street corners, holding meetings on the campuses, and organizing public rallies would have convinced thousands of people that we

deserve legal protection against discrimination. It would have helped to counter the myth of the homosexual lurking in dark places, waiting to recruit children.

Speakers at publicly advertised rallies could have taken up the "Save Our Children" lies and exposed them for what they are.

Support in the Black community would have been more apparent if gay people had been seen in visible activities in their own behalf. And it would have been harder for Democratic and Republican party politicians to skirt the issue of gay rights or oppose it.

As it was, the Democratic Party in Dade County didn't take a stand in favor of the ordinance until the week of the election, in a move timed to be only a paper endorsement. The Republican Party was able to oppose the ordinance without fear of repercussions.

The membership of the Dade County Coalition had at one point decided to hold a public rally in May. In fact, invitations to speakers had gone out around the country. But the leadership of the coalition squelched the rally plans, taking the position that rallies and any other visible activities, including leafleting, would damage the campaign. The coalition leadership supported the tactic of relying only on a "controlled message," that is, on buying media time and newspaper ads.

It wasn't until the last week of the campaign that volunteers were finally encouraged to go leafleting at apartment houses and street corners.

The American Civil Liberties Union and the National Organization for Women held sizable public meetings, but the organized gay movement abstained from such activity.

The media-oriented campaign left out canvassing of the Black community and seriously appealing to this potential ally. As it turned out, the vote tallies from the Black areas of Miami showed that although the voter turnout was small, nearly half of those who voted supported the ordinance. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) released a statement supporting the ordinance. This statement should have been distributed door-to-door and on street corners in the Black community. The coalition should have publicized the fact that the Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan endorsed "Save Our Children." This kind of campaign would have graphically demonstrated the connection between the fight for Black rights and gay rights.

The one community which *was* approached seriously, with consistent phone calling and door-to-door canvassing was the Jewish community. This resulted in a favorable turnout and a

large margin against repeal. The Jewish community was one of the only communities to vote in favor of gay rights.

Things would be different in Miami if an attempt had been made to involve large numbers of gay rights supporters in an action campaign. If we had publicly demonstrated our power in numbers, if we'd had large and well-advertised meetings. I don't think we can say that we surely would have won the election. That's only a possibility. But we definitely would have been much further along in building a movement to secure our rights. We would have had a much larger number of people willing to continue our campaign beyond the election.

Despite the narrow perspectives of the pro-ordinance leadership in Dade County, the beginnings of that movement are there. For the first time, Miami had a Christopher Street Day march and rally on June 26. Two hundred and fifty people took part. It was sponsored by the Dade County Coalition for Human Rights. The Miami Victory Campaign, which is a smaller organization, sponsored a street dance later that day which drew another three hundred. I think these activities were an impressive show of our determination to continue the struggle.

Now is not the time to run for cover. Now is not the time to wait on Democratic and Republican party politicians to speak out in our behalf.

Now is the time for a visible answer to the violence and the lies of the antigay bigots.

Two hundred and fifty thousand people demonstrating in the streets last weekend was a powerful statement that gay men and women *will* fight for our rights. And with the examples of the Black civil rights movement, the movement against the Vietnam War, and the women's liberation movement in mind, we know we, too, can win demands by organizing an ever-growing and visible movement. We will get our message across! No more Miamis!

Cheryl Adams

It's interesting that of the five major issue areas of the National Organization for Women, all five are under attack. The main issue areas of the organization are: ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment; defending every woman's right to choose a safe, legal abortion; child care; full employment; and gay rights. We need three more states to ratify the ERA if it is to become an amendment to the federal Constitution. This year, only one

state—Indiana—ratified. In every other state where the ERA came up, it was either killed in committee or voted down. The ERA is in trouble.

On the abortion issue—nine states have passed resolutions calling on Congress to convene a constitutional convention. The purpose of this convention would be to rewrite the federal Constitution to extend its coverage to fetuses. In other words, to rewrite the Constitution in so-called right-to-lifers' terms. The New York State Senate has passed such a resolution, and it's now in the State Assembly.

And of course, we all know about the recent Supreme Court decision upholding state laws which ban public funds for abortions unless the woman's life is in danger. In other words, you have to be on your deathbed to get an abortion under Medicaid. And two days ago, on June 29, a version of the Hyde Amendment was passed in the U.S. Senate. The Hyde Amendment has already been approved in the House. When it becomes law it will ban Medicaid abortions for women and will drive women who would use Medicaid funds, i.e., poor and minority women, to the back-alley butcher shops for their abortions.

Another of the issues that NOW deals with is child care. In New York City, Governor Carey has threatened to close down over one hundred day-care centers, and there are already cutbacks all the time, right and left.

We all know the situation on employment. Matter of fact, this is my first day unemployed. I'm an unemployed biologist, if any of you want a biologist. So, the issue of unemployment strikes very close to home for me.



Susan Ellis

Lesbian contingent at the New York Christopher Street demonstration on June 26, 1977. One-third of the marchers at the demonstration were women.

Another thing that strikes even closer is gay rights. The defeat of the Dade County referendum doesn't just take civil rights away from the gay people in Dade County when they thought they had their civil rights in the areas of employment, housing, public accommodations, and so on. It threatens the passage of gay rights legislation everywhere else for the future—at all levels: local, state, and federal.

People like Anita Bryant, even if they speak half-truths, instead of outright lies (and she speaks outright lies)—if they speak half-truths, they reinforce the homophobic fears that we grow up with.

I remember as a kid in grade school, other kids pointing people out and sneering “homo,” “faggot,” “homo.” This has a tremendous effect on you as you grow up. And if you think that you might be one, you become very defensive, and very closeted about it. This can warp your whole personality.

On legislation—*We need gay rights legislation*. So what do we do to get this legislation? I believe that using only one strategy won't result in victory. The answer of what we should do to defend gay rights is *everything* in capital letters and underlined. Everything we can do.

We've had reports from the members of NOW's national board, who travel all over the country speaking in defense of human rights, that they see the same individuals, well-funded and well-organized, from one end of the country to the other, opposing the ERA, opposing abortion rights, and now opposing gay rights. So we have to realize that the opponents of gay rights are the same people—in some cases literally the same individuals—who oppose the rights of many groups of people who are oppressed in society. (We're referring to it now in NOW as “the new right.”)

We as gay people must form coalitions with these women's rights groups—NOW, as well as others. We have to realize that the opponents of gay rights are also against other minorities in this country like Blacks and Chicanos. So we have to form strong coalitions with these groups to fight our common oppression. I think we can win our rights by using both educational and legislative methods. We must have educational activities to present the necessary facts to dispel the lies by people like Anita Bryant.

We must stage marches and rallies, not only to publicize our issues, but also to back up our lobbying efforts by showing the strength we have, both in our numbers and in the breadth of our support.

It's estimated that there are 20 million gay people in this coun-

try—one tenth of the population. That's a Kinsey estimate. Relatively speaking, that's not a very large bloc. But if you add the *supporters* of gay rights—of human rights—to that, we could be a tremendous political force. Political both in the sense of traditional lobbying as well as street actions—demonstrations.

I am a lobbyist, and as a lobbyist I can tell you that it's much easier to convince a legislator to support an issue if thousands of people are in the streets *screaming* about that issue. If a legislator gets up in the morning and looks at his newspaper, or her newspaper in the case of nine women who are in the New York legislature, and sees that there were 100,000, or however many thousands of people demonstrating in support of that issue, I believe they're going to think twice or three times before they vote against it.

David Thorstad

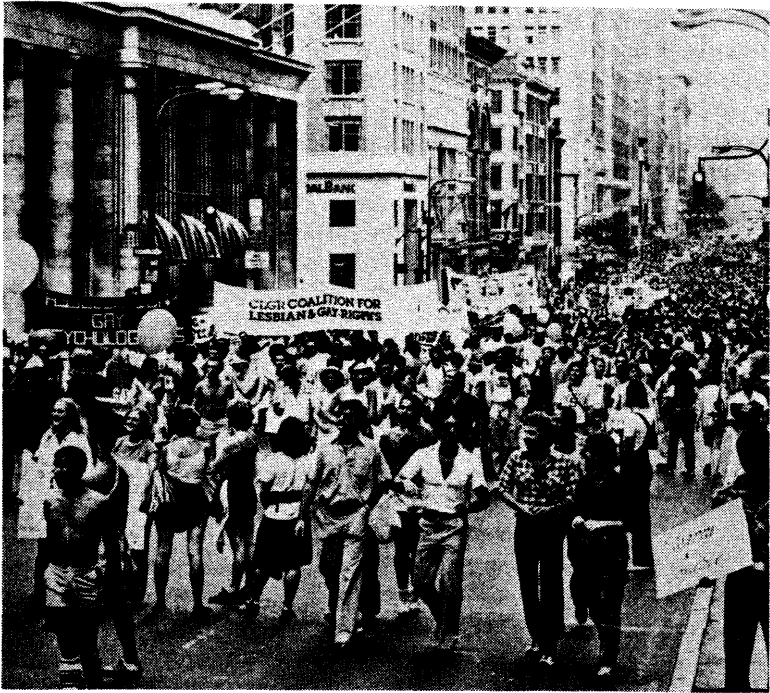
Throughout history, homosexuals have been used as scapegoats for the ills of society—ills which homosexuals have not been responsible for. This is what is happening in the United States today.

American society and the American economy are in a state of seemingly permanent decay, creating all kinds of social problems. The response of many people who are ignorant victims of this situation is: "Blame it on the gays!" If Jenny and Johnny are not learning how to read in school—blame it on the gays. If children are departing earlier than usual from the sexual restrictions imposed upon them by their parents—blame it on the gays. If traditional and outmoded moral values are crumbling (thanks to the women's and gay liberation movements)—blame it on the gays. If women are demanding freedom from slavery, and control of their own bodies—blame it on the lesbians.

Anita Bryant even goes so far off the deep end as to blame this year's California drought on male homosexuals. According to her pathological explanation, God sent the drought to punish San Francisco for allowing so many "sperm eaters" in its midst.

This time, however, gay men and lesbians have no intention of allowing ourselves to be used again as scapegoats for the evils of the white, male, capitalist, heterosexist dictatorship. We have other plans.

The present situation provides fertile ground for fascist movements, of which we see the embryo in the anithomosexual campaign launched by Anita Bryant. She and her right-wing backers are not merely confused and misguided—though they



Fred Murphy

The New York City Christopher Street demonstration of June 26, 1977, stretched twenty-seven blocks down Fifth Avenue. It was the largest gay rights march ever in that city.

certainly are that. Their aim is to crush any indication of discontent on the part of the oppressed with their oppression. Their movement is anti-women's liberation, anti-Black, anti-Puerto Rican, antilabor, antisocialist, anti-children's rights, antifreedom. They are consciously seeking to whip up a backlash against homosexuality because homosexuals are the only ones in society that have been singled out with impunity in the past. But we are no longer the pariahs we once were. We no longer value Christian "virtues" like meekness and humility. The consciousness of millions of gays and our supporters has been deeply stirred by this campaign of hate and hysteria. We know that it is our very existence, not to mention our liberation, that is at stake—and we intend to fight back. The Gay Pride marches this year showed that very dramatically. If one message could be heard from the hundreds of thousands who marched last week, it was "Don't Tread on Us!"

In 1933-34, the Nazis first went after the homosexuals of

Germany and their organizations. In 1935, they strengthened their sodomy law to ban not only homosexual acts but homosexual kisses, homosexual embraces, and even homosexual fantasies. They exterminated our people, our movement, and, until recently, even our history. They developed and implemented a final solution to homosexuals first, and then extended it to Jews, communists, gypsies, and other "social undesirables." Millions of lesbians and gay men already see efforts to repeat this scenario in the United States. But we do not intend to allow ourselves to be led to the slaughter without first putting up a ferocious fight. And the rest of society—the straight segment of society—must be made to see the necessity of actively supporting us in this struggle. Our rallying cry must be that of the IWW [Industrial Workers of the World] and the early American labor movement: "An injury to one is an injury to all!"

For the past few weeks, the issue of lesbian and gay rights has become a key issue in national politics. For this we can give some credit to our enemies. But a lot of the credit goes to us. In response to Anita Bryant's hate campaign we have stood up in greater numbers than ever and said: "Enough!" It would be criminal for anyone who cares about human rights to remain aloof from this struggle.

We have focused our struggle on the demand for lesbian and gay rights *now*—not until some other group has fought its struggle, and not until after some phony election is staged, but now. In this struggle, we must also be prepared to defend against frame-ups and victimizations *all* the various aspects of our community—gay prisoners, gay teachers, lesbians, lesbian mothers, gay children and children's right to choose their sexuality freely, male homosexuals, Third World gays, pederasts, cross-dressers, and leather-drag. We cannot afford to tailor our struggle for survival to the ignorance and prejudice either of heterosexuals or of our own people. To all the lies about homosexuality spouted by Anita Bryant and her cohorts, we have a clear and simple answer: Gay Is Good!

In the face of these attacks on gay rights and homosexuality, the lesbian and gay male communities have responded with unity, anger, solidarity, confidence, and a new recognition of the need to organize a counteroffensive. Not only have we taken to the streets—and have we ever taken to the streets!—but we have rallied together to form larger and stronger fists with which to deal the enemy a body blow.

In a number of cities, coalitions have been formed to mount such a counteroffensive. In New York City, that group is the

Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights. This group was initiated by the Gay Activists Alliance, with the active help of Lesbian Feminist Liberation and the Church of the Beloved Disciple. In the two weeks since it was born, it has won the support of most gay and lesbian groups in the city, as well as some nongay groups, including many of you here. It has a promising future, and a difficult task: to mobilize the active support of all those committed to human rights for lesbians and gay men, and indeed for *all* people.

I'd also like to mention here a phone call I received two days ago. It was from a union called the National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians. This is a union I didn't know, and I didn't know anyone in it. But they are on strike against ABC and have been for seven weeks. They called because they wanted the Gay Activists Alliance to adopt a statement that the union could use in pressuring both the ABC network and the Florida Citrus Commission, which is one of the sponsors of advertising on ABC. So, the union automatically saw the connection between its strike and our struggle. And GAA did do that last night, and I would like to read to you, very briefly, our statement:

"The Gay Activists Alliance strongly supports the members of the NABET in their efforts to secure a union contract and maintain benefits they have fought many years to obtain. We urge you [that is, the chairman of the board of ABC] to make every effort to negotiate in good faith a settlement with the NABET. Our supporters are being asked not to purchase or seek the services of ABC sponsors, particularly the Florida Citrus Commission, both as a sign of solidarity with the members of NABET, and to demonstrate our outrage at the use of the antigay bigot Anita Bryant in commercials for Florida orange juice."

The union is going to be asked to support the coalition also, and I'm sure that at some time the coalition will also be able to make such a statement. We are hoping that this incident is an indication of the kinds of possibilities we have to really reach out into the community, into other segments of the community that we have not been reaching too well before, and to try to enlist their support in our struggle. I think it's a very encouraging sign.

Virtually the entire lesbian and gay movement in New York wants to see this coalition mount the kind of aggressive struggle that we need at this time. We are determined to let nothing and nobody distract us from these goals, which are: to defend lesbian and gay rights; to fight for passage of a New York City gay rights bill; and to build a mass movement and a lesbian and gay

community to fight for our liberation. Anyone who agrees with us and is willing to work to advance these goals is welcome to join us.

I want to say a few words, now, that may seem at first off the topic, but actually, I think you'll see that they're related. There's been a kind of love affair between certain segments of the gay movement and the Carter administration. It's pretty hard to deny it. Anybody who reads the gay press knows that it's pretty hard to find anything at all critical about the Carter administration. And yet the fact is that the Carter administration refuses to say anything positive about gay rights, let alone speak out against bigotry in Miami. This romance is lurching to an end, and I think it's high time it did.

An example of it is the demonstration that the Gay Activists Alliance organized at the Waldorf Astoria on June 23 when President Carter came to town to collect a lot of money from a lot of bigwigs at a fundraising dinner. GAA put out a call to the gay community to come to this demonstration and show our anger at the Carter administration for being hypocritical and playing games with our rights. The turnout was 300 people, which was very good for a first demonstration anywhere in the United States by gay people against this president. It was a very militant one, and it even forced Carter to talk about gay rights when he got inside, although he didn't say anything worth repeating, of course.

The Carter administration consists in large part of members of an outfit called the Trilateral Commission, a kind of think-tank of world capitalism centered in the United States, Europe, and Japan. The Trilateral Commission was created by David Rockefeller, president of the Chase Manhattan Bank. For the past few years before the elections, Rockefeller was grooming Carter to become president. Carter went to many sessions in New England to learn how to be president. It was Rockefeller who taught him.

Some important members of Carter's administration who are also members of the Trilateral are: Carter himself, his vice-president (this explains why he chose Fritz Mondale to run with him), his secretary of state, his secretary of defense, and his national security adviser, Brzezinski, who also served as the head of the Trilateral Commission from its founding until last summer.

One of the main concerns of the Carter presidency is to reconcile the American people to an end of economic growth. (This is where all the ongoing cutbacks in social services fit in.) Needless to say, such a prognosis also has very dangerous



Howard Petrick



Howard Petrick

San Francisco: Women's contingent (top) and Latino contingent (bottom) at Gay Freedom Day march on June 26, 1977. Estimates of the size of the demonstration were as high as two hundred thousand.

implications in the political sphere. The Trilateral's 1975 report on the governability of democracies (entitled *Crisis of Democracy*) written by Professor Samuel Huntington of Harvard states: "We have to recognize that there are potentially desirable limits to economic growth. There are also potentially desirable limits to the indefinite extension of political democracy." So where do gays come in? Well, one of the things we are demanding is an *extension* of democratic rights, certainly not their curtailment. And the game plan of the Carter administration makes no room for that.

Huntington says further: "In the past, every democratic society has had a marginal population, of greater or lesser size, which has not actively participated in politics. In itself, this marginality on the part of some groups is inherently undemocratic, but it has also been one of the factors which has enabled democracy to function effectively. Marginal social groups [and get this], as in the case of the blacks, are now becoming full participants in the political system. Yet the danger of overloading the political system with demands which extend its functions and undermine its authority still remains. Less marginality on the part of some groups thus needs to be replaced by more self-restraint on the part of all groups."

Obviously, the appropriate candidate here for "self-restraint," if not for the straitjacket, would be the enemies of equal rights for homosexuals, not those of us who are struggling to take what is rightfully ours. We lesbians and gay men have had only a small taste of freedom, and we cannot turn back until we have achieved our ultimate goal of complete emancipation.

We welcome the support of all those who share our vision of a world that is truly free.

Questions and Answers

Question: I read that there was a demonstration in Spain in support of gay rights. Could you tell us about it, and the gay movement there?

Thorstad: It just happens that I had a meeting yesterday with the head of the gay liberation front of Barcelona in Catalonia. He attended the Christopher Street demonstration here in New York last weekend. I wouldn't know anything about the movement in Spain except for this meeting. Very briefly, it seems that the main group is in Barcelona, although there are other groups in other cities in Spain. The group in Barcelona has a peculiar character: it is both a gay liberation organization and a

nationalist organization. It stands for the independence of Catalonia. It was this group that organized the march on Sunday which took place in Barcelona. The police broke it up with rubber bullets. All I know, and all the head of the group knew, is that 4,000 people were supposed to have marched, according to the *New York Times*. I have no idea how many more actually did.

As to the way the group is organized, the interesting thing to me is that it is not only illegal, but it's also clandestine. It's a completely underground organization. And yet they are able to obtain interviews on radio, they are able to organize demonstrations which the police sometimes allow and usually don't, and they also have a legal arm that is an aboveground social service type group. It's called the Lambda Institute.

According to the person I spoke with, the group has obtained all kinds of support from other segments of society. For instance, neighborhood committees (I guess you'd call them block associations here) have invited them to set up gay caucuses within these committees. They also have apparently gotten quite a bit of support from anarchists and some of the communist and socialist groups, as well as from trade unions.

This interested me, especially because here this has generally not been the case. The explanation, according to him, was that all of these people have gone through forty years of fascism, and now that fascism is over, everybody is delighted to see anybody doing anything that stands in opposition to the old order—such as homosexuals demonstrating, or women organizing, or whatever. There's a great sense of solidarity.

Question: [A member of the Spartacist League, a small sectarian left-wing group, made a long statement which deprecated the importance of the June 26 demonstrations for gay rights around the country, objected to the use of the term "human rights" by the gay movement, and asserted that nothing short of fighting for a socialist revolution was worthwhile.]

Thorstad: The trouble with you is that your point of view is wrong. Your point of view is that gay people don't matter. Gay people should not organize and fight back against oppression. Gay people should join your organization. *This is absolute nonsense*, because what it means is that we should stop fighting right now and do something else. And we can't do that! No oppressed group should do that! And any so-called left-winger who gets up in a gay organization and urges gay people to stop fighting for their rights, and automatically accept everything in their program, is going to be very isolated. I suspect, and I



Lou Howort

Members of the Front d'Alliberament Gai de Catalunya (FAGC—Gay Liberation Front of Catalonia in Spain) brought this banner to the June 26, 1977, annual Christopher Street Gay Liberation Day demonstration in New York City. In Barcelona, the FAGC organized a demonstration of ten thousand the same day.

predict, that that is exactly the future that awaits the Spartacist League so long as they keep your point of view.

Kear: The gay rights issue *is* a human rights issue. We're not stealing anything from Carter. Carter's on the wrong side. Carter's in the Democratic Party. Carter refuses to speak out against gay oppression. Neither he nor his party did anything to support the ordinance in Miami. The only thing Carter did was allow one of his aides to go to an unpublicized meeting to tell gay rights supporters that Carter was on their side but could do nothing public. It's exactly the same tactic that George McGovern used when he ran for the Democratic nomination in 1972. He said, OK, fine, I support you, but cool it, I can't do it publicly.

Politicians like Carter use the term "human rights," but they don't lift a finger when it comes to supporting them.

You raise an important point regarding whether human rights can be won under capitalism. They can't be, entirely. The existing system protects a certain minority of the population which has an interest in maintaining the status quo because it's profitable for them to do so.

Why is there such a struggle around the question of a simple matter as civil rights? Things like equal access to housing, public accommodations, and the right to a job? Why is it that the Democratic and Republican parties, which are in the state legislatures, the city councils, the national Congress—why is it that they can't pass legislation around the country which will protect our human rights? There's nothing stopping them except that their hearts are with defending the existing system. Not only their hearts, but their purse strings, and the purse strings of the rich they represent.

That's something the Young Socialist Alliance and the Socialist Workers Party explain. But that's not the only thing we explain. The other important thing to say is that *we can win rights*, we can win legislation, we can force changes, we can stop violence by mobilizing and organizing a movement. And it's beginning to happen. A quarter of a million people cannot be ignored.

Question: Anita Bryant has threatened to turn the defeat for gays in Miami into a national campaign. Is she succeeding in going national?

Kear: One of the problems in Miami is that we'd like to picket Anita Bryant. But we can never find her; she hasn't been in town lately because she's been traveling all around the country. She is promoting the idea of her organization—"Save Our Children"—being a national organization. Their intention is to involve other groups that oppose gay rights, like the Family Lobby in California.

Thorstad: I don't know of any groups formed in New York yet, but the point here is that the last time the gay rights bill came up in New York City—that was two years ago—the Roman Catholic church, and particularly the Roman Catholic Archdiocese, did set up a committee. They've had several of these front groups for the Catholic church. One was called the Emergency Committee to Defeat Intro 554. The other was called the Committee for the Protection of Family Life in New York City. This was the main group, sort of an umbrella-type organization. It was founded at 1011 Fifth Avenue, which, if you go up there, is the New York Roman Catholic Center. Still another one was called the Committee to Protect Our Youth. All of these groups sound similar, and I'm sure they are. They're very much like the Anita Bryant group—"Save Our Children." If such organizations do resurface here, it would surprise me if the Roman Catholic church was not the main force in them.

Interview With Leonard Matlovich

by Ike Nahem

“In Germany, they came for the communists and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a communist. Then they came for the trade unionists and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a trade unionist. Then they came for me, and got me, and it was too late.”

That’s how Leonard Matlovich paraphrases a famous plea for unity among the oppressed as he speaks around the country in defense of gay rights. The former air force sergeant gave the keynote speech at a June 18 demonstration of nearly four thousand here in New Orleans protesting the defeat of the Miami-area gay rights ordinance.

I talked with Matlovich the next day when he addressed the Militant Forum.

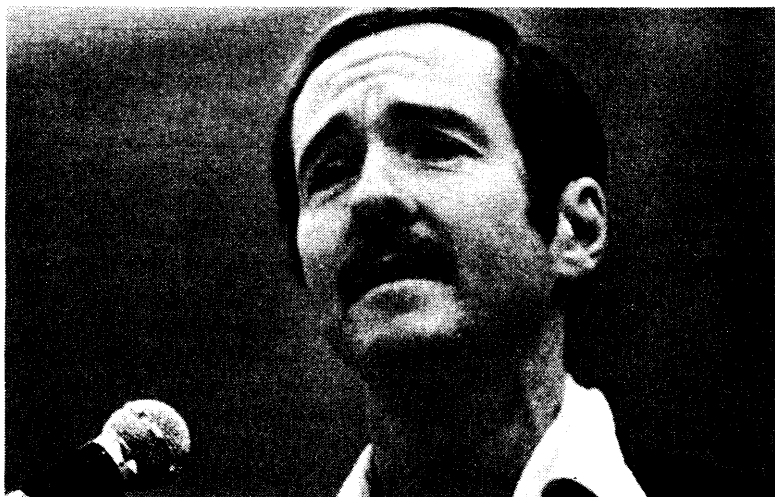
We discussed how antigay forces have also lashed out against abortion rights, the Equal Rights Amendment, and school desegregation. He told me that he thought all the victims of this right-wing movement should stand together.

“I call it patchwork majority,” he said. “If all the minority groups patch ourselves together, then we become the majority and we get the political power we need to gain our rights.”

For years, Matlovich, like so many other gays, bore society’s antigay prejudices in silence and isolation. “I hated homosexuals,” he has said. “I hated what I knew I was but could not admit. When other officers cracked ‘faggot’ jokes, I cracked ‘faggot’ jokes while inside I fell apart.”

One day Matlovich almost ended it all by putting a shotgun to his head. But instead, he turned his desperation into a new resolve. In March 1975 he informed his superior officer that he was gay.

This led to his discharge from the air force. Since then he has waged an ongoing fight for reinstatement, and has become a well-known public defender of human and civil rights. I first heard Matlovich speak in late 1975 at a school desegregation conference in Boston.



Leonard Matlovich

Lou Howort

I asked him why he had decided to fight back. As a race relations counselor in the air force, he replied, "I told students to get involved in their country and make it a better place. . . . I felt like a hypocrite, because I was telling my students to do something that I wasn't willing to do myself."

In his rally speech the day before, Matlovich explained, "When I saw Martin Luther King marching for the rights of Blacks, I began to slowly look at my own oppression and say, 'No. I'm gay and I'm proud.'"

I asked him how he thought people should respond to the stepped-up antigay attacks.

"We've got to organize," he began. ". . . We must be very aggressive. We must go after those politicians who don't support us and expose them as the racists and bigots they are."

As for the importance of ongoing demonstrations, he said, "Not only are they important, they are necessary. Without those demonstrations, without that legwork, there will be no movement. And I hope that all these actions that are happening throughout the country are dress rehearsals for what will happen in Washington, D.C., some day in the future."

Matlovich emphasized this point to a cheering crowd the day before: "The Blacks showed us the way forward. If a vote was taken in Selma, Alabama, in 1965 on civil rights, the Blacks would have lost.

"But they kept marching. After our defeat in Miami, we must keep marching. We must march toward our national march in Washington, D.C."

“We Could Move Mountains” —Interview with Mary Jo Risher and Ann Foreman—

by Diane Wang

*In December 1975 a Dallas jury ruled against Mary Jo Risher's right to maintain custody of her nine-year-old son, Richard. Their sole basis for doing so was that Risher is a lesbian. The following interview with Risher and Ann Foreman was obtained by Militant reporter Diane Wang on July 15, 1977. Risher and Foreman were in New York to speak at a rally sponsored by the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights. The two women have been conducting a national tour to publicize Gifford Guy Gibson's book about Risher's custody case, *By Her Own Admission*. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1977. 276 pp. Hardcover, \$8.95.)*

A nurse with two sons, former president of her local Parent-Teacher Association—that's a thumbnail sketch of Mary Jo Risher. Her friend Ann Foreman used to work in a bank. She has a daughter.

Now—because of a vindictive ex-husband, a narrow-minded jury, and the two women's personal courage—Risher and Foreman have become what they call “reluctant symbols” of the fight for lesbian rights.

Just before Christmas in 1975, a Dallas jury ruled that Risher was no longer a fit mother for her nine-year-old son Richard. The jury ignored the testimony of neighbors, friends, relatives, teachers, doctors, and professional psychologists—all of whom described the stable, loving, and wholesome home Risher provided her son.

Because Risher has established her household and shared her life with Ann Foreman, the jury placed Richard in his father's custody.

Risher's was the most prominent case in which homosexuality

was used by the courts to take the custody of a child away from its mother.

Risher and Foreman are appealing the court's ruling and fighting not just to get Richard back, but to score a victory for all lesbian mothers. Their effort has won the support of lesbian and gay groups, as well as the National Organization for Women (NOW).

Just before a rally for gay and lesbian rights in New York I talked to the two women. What do they think of Anita Bryant's antigay crusade, the "Save Our Children, Inc."?

"Well, we make no bones about it," answered Foreman. "We're on a campaign to save *our* children."

Risher agreed, "Don't let the courts take our children."

Of course, the issues in the case go beyond child custody. The jury based its decision solely on her homosexuality, Risher explained. So, her legal defense must challenge the use of homosexuality as a classification for victimizing people, she told me. "This case is not only going to help protect the rights of parents, but the rights to jobs and housing."

Were you feminists before this happened to you? I asked.

"I've always been a feminist by nature," Foreman said. "We've both always felt people should have their rights."

"I believe in equal rights for women," Risher answered. "I wasn't out in the feminist world. But as this case has been thrown on us, I've become more in tune with the rights, or lack of rights, of all minorities—Blacks, Chicanos—"

"—women," Foreman added. "You could go on and on and on."

"Ann and I are not only getting Richard back, but the case is making people aware of all the alternative lifestyles and of minorities," Risher said.

"Human rights," Foreman summed it up. "What Mary Jo and I want are human rights."

Risher and Foreman are visiting some twenty cities to publicize Gifford Guy Gibson's book about their case, *By Her Own Admission*.

Have you noticed a change in attitude since the defeat of the gay rights ordinance in Miami? I asked.

Radio and TV commentators and other people they've met during their current tour have seemed friendly and supportive, the two said.

The stopovers in cities have been so brief that it's been difficult to know exactly what local gay and lesbian rights groups have been doing, Foreman said. But her general impression is that what has happened in Dallas is happening elsewhere—"gay



Ginny Hildebrand

Ann Foreman (left) and Mary Jo Risher (right) at July 15, 1977, gay rights rally in New York City.

groups are uniting and trying to get together with the feminists.”

“If we could bottle up all this energy, we could move mountains and finally have human rights,” Foreman said, “because I think the bigots would be a minority.”

Nearby, Barbara Love, co-author of *Sappho Was a Right-on Woman*, was soliciting support for Risher’s case. “If they lose, we all lose,” she pointed out. “They’re putting their lives on the line for us. If we don’t stand behind them, who will?”

If you want to “stand behind” them, write to Mary Jo Risher and Ann Foreman, Post Office Box 3141, Dallas, Texas 75221.

**GAY & LESBIAN ALLIANCE
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