

Fury as gay Susan gets the sack

A NIGHT attendant at a girls' hostel has been sacked because she is gay. Susan Shell, 30, revealed to a colleague that she had a lesbian lover.

By LINDA MCKAY

She was immediately sacked from her £75-a-week job looking after 16 teenage girls in council care. Barking Council, who run Woodlands Girls' Hostel, in Woodlands, Essex, have accused her of "gross sexual immorality".

understand that a lesbian could have a caring relationship with the girls. "The fact that I am a lesbian is irrelevant."

Now Susan will seek from her MP. A Barking Council spokesman said: "We are taking this action because of the nature of the work."

"They obviously don't understand that a lesbian could have a caring relationship with the girls."

LESBIAN TEACHERS SACKED IN SEXIST ROW



Bosses ready to blow whistle on railway gays

HOMOSEXUAL railway bosses have got their bosses steamed up over a "come out and join us" plea to North-East colleagues. A mystery organisation of homosexuals calling themselves "The British Gay Group" are in the UK magazine Rail News.

Junior Education Minister Rhodes Boyson said: "Teachings of this sort would be a threat to morality and the continuance of society."

Two big town hall members to stop all work on the south London borough of Greenwich.

TWO lesbians have been sacked by a nursery school after complaints of discrimination against boys there.

Child care workers Janet Pearce and Liz Thomas faced a string of allegations from parents.

Ms Pearce was said to have let the boys run wild while she concentrated on the girls.

One mother said that her four-year-old daughter was "ridiculed" by Ms Pearce.

She said the girl was telling her friends at the nursery that she was going to be a bridesmaid when Ms Pearce told her it was "stupid to be a bridesmaid and stupid to get married".

Accused

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Then she put Mother Christmas hand out for the 27 children.

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Lesbians can hop on a bus for advice

A Pink Lady hits the road



Kate Allen: Send off

By ANTHONY DORAN, Home Affairs Correspondent

A PINK and mauve bus designed to help lesbians and other women with social problems was on the road yesterday.

The £55,000 mobile advice centre, aimed at reaching women who cannot get to the town hall, was launched by Ken Livingstone's girl friend Kate Allen, who is chair of Camden Council's Women's Committee, in North London.

The project was criticised by Tory

councillor Cathleen Malnds, a member of the committee, as 'a waste of money on small groups like lesbians which will outrage the feelings of great numbers of ordinary people.'

The double-decker has the words Camden Women's Bus, Mobile Advice Centre painted on the outside in English and five Asian languages—Urdu, Gujarati, Bengali, Punjabi and Hindi,

Greek and Chinese are to be added later.

Inside on the top deck a poster proclaims 'Lesbians are coming out... in full force'. A black cat is passing by with a bubble showing its thoughts: 'Lesbians are everywhere.'

The poster also shows two women kissing, and a woman carrying another woman over the threshold while others declare 'Black People Against State Brutality'.

Three women—an Asian, a West Indian and one white—will run the bus. Their wages bill totals £33,000 a year. Two of them were taught to drive by London Transport.

Second thoughts on jobs for gays

By MIRROR REPORTER

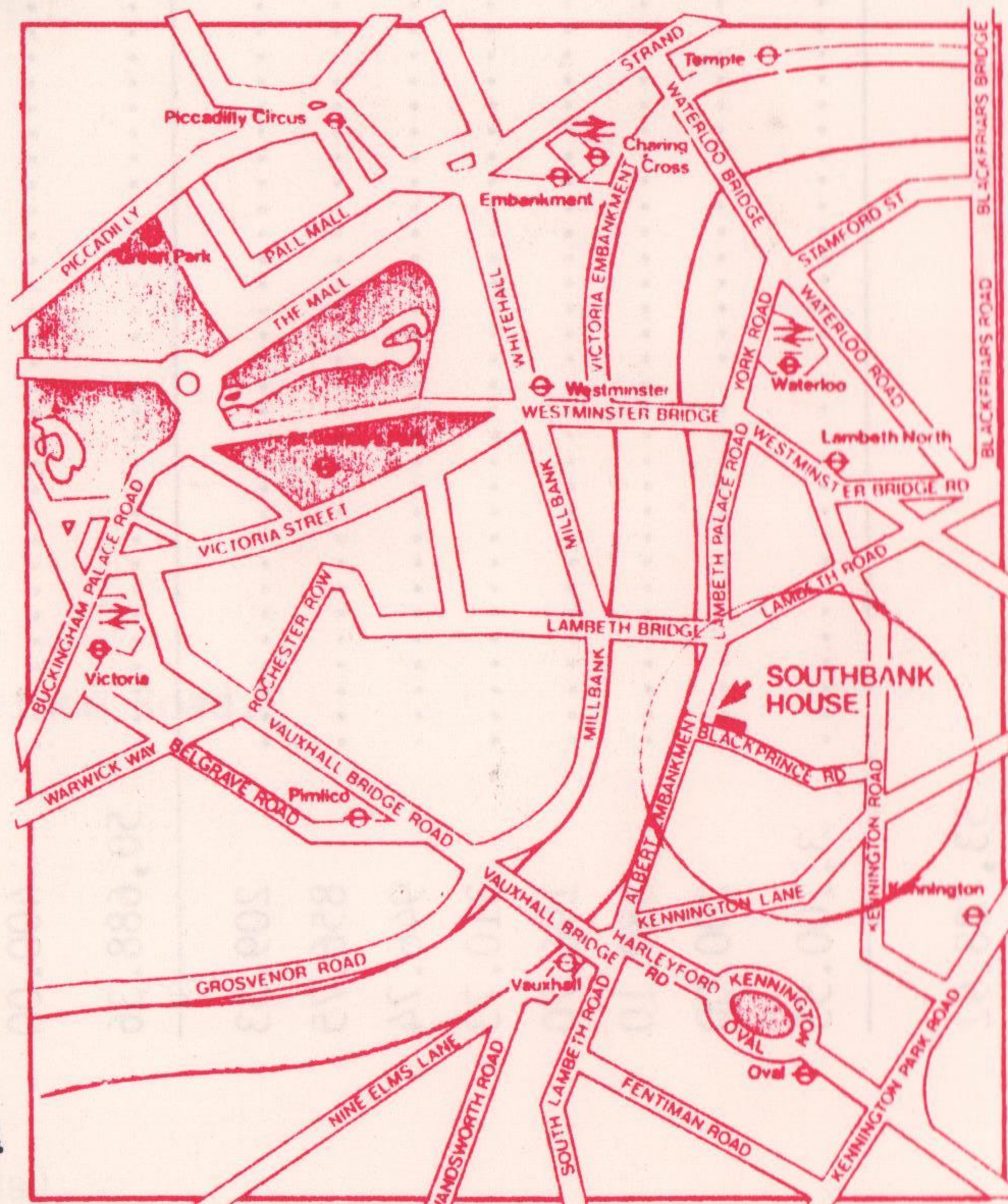
against them of "sexist attitudes and indoctrination with extremist ideas".

NUPE official Bernie Grant, who represented the women at the hearings, said they denied all charges.

He claimed the women were the victims of a witch hunt because they were lesbians.

But Mal Bezan, chairman of the management committee, denied the women were victimised because they were gay.

● Mirror Com Page 2



Room 205, Southbank House, Black Prince Road, London SE1 7SJ
☎ 01 587 1636 (Lesbians only) ☎ 01 587 1643 (General)

Building and office wheelchair accessible. Toilets not, but help available

Sacking 'not unfair'

Jobs plight of gays

Witch hunt

IN almost every society in the world, women have been discriminated against ever since human life began.

Napoleon said they were only machines for bearing children. Even today, the women who reach the top of their professions are exceptions.

That's why the last 20 years has seen a women's revolt against men who would consign them to an inferior rank.

That revolt has been natural and right. But like all revolutions, it has its excesses which cannot be defended.

Fools

Those who spell "wimmin" to eliminate "men" from their description are fools. Those who run women-only restaurants and hold women-only demonstrations are as silly as the men who maintain men-only clubs.

Nor does equality for women mean inequality for men. That would just substitute one privileged class for another.

Two London lesbians have just been sacked from their jobs as child care workers for discriminating against boy pupils.

Victims

One is said to have told a girl of four she was stupid to be a bridesmaid and would be stupid ever to get married.

She was also accused of telling children there was no Father Christmas—and then introduced a Mother Christmas to give presents.

Their defence was that they were victims of a witch-hunt. It never seemed to occur to them that they were behaving like witches.

Mr Cyril Taylor, Opposition Industry and Employment spokesman, said last night: "I am amazed by the Left's pre-occupation with 'gays'. One is almost led to believe that there are literally armies of puffers marching daily through and around London."

Gay fears

HOMOSEXUALS can be sacked from jobs where they meet young people even if they have not committed an offence, an employment appeals tribunal has decided.

MPs demand: Stop this rot

Call to probe case of lesbian midwife

Morning Star Reporter

THE NATIONAL Council For Civil Liberties is asking Social Services Secretary Barbara Castle to investigate an area health authority's discrimination against a midwife active in the Campaign for Homosexual Equality.

Veronica Pickles, a midwife working in Milton Keynes (Bucks), was withdrawn from course for health visitors by the authority because of her public work as a CHE convener.

Ms Pickles had made it known to the authority some time ago that she was a lesbian, and the employers accepted this. However, it seems that public knowledge of Ms Pickles' activities was a different matter.

She had been accepted on a health visitors' course, but the employers blocked this after the appearance of a sympathetic article in the local paper reporting her work as a CHE convener, saying the article might "adversely affect" her acceptability as a health visitor.

According to Ms Pickles, she had given her employers an undertaking that if accepted for the course she would reduce her CHE activities and publicity for the duration.

Union refuses aid again

BURNLEY Twenty-nine year old Mary Winter has been sacked from her job as a bus driver with the Burnley and Pendle Joint Transport company because she refused to take it off. Mr Winter is a member of the TCUU (Transport Workers Union). She has appealed to the union for assistance but Ken Ludlam, the man who reported her, has told her: "She is not being sacked for what she is, she is being sacked for refusing an order."

LER

Lesbian Employment Rights

&

LAGER

Lesbian And Gay Employment Rights

ANNUAL REPORT

YEAR ENDING MARCH 1985

Introduction

This Annual Report covers the period since March 1984 during which LAGER has been funded by the GLC Industry & Employment Committee and during which fundamental changes have occurred both in terms of aims and structure.

These alterations were necessitated by the original Greater London Lesbian and Gay Employment Campaign steering group's failure to contemplate or tackle a number of fundamental issues eg. racism and sexism.

Progress in this first year has not been as rapid as we initially hoped, partly as a result of the above problems, but also due to: difficulties in dealing with a large bureaucratic organisation; a problem of personnel with one (male) member of staff which consumed much energy but which has now been amicably resolved; difficulties of LAGER breaking new ground researching specifically into lesbian and gay un/employment issues; and, finally, attempting to live in the poisoned environment of concerted attacks on local democracy, the voluntary sector, lesbian and gay groups and individuals in particular.

Nina & Ron

pp Management Committee

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to:

Eilís for typing this report

LASSO for typesetting the headings

WOMEN IN PRINT for printing the report.

History

LESBIAN & GAY EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS (LAGER) was originally conceived by a group of white, middle-class gay men. The few white, middle-class lesbians who were involved in the Steering Committee and then the Management Committee, when the initial interviews for workers took place, were only involved in a very tokenistic way. Thus the aims and objectives of LAGER were defined by white, middle-class gay men who saw the organisation as operating as a single issue campaign, combatting anti-gay discrimination in employment, largely through working with the Trade Unions. We are using the term anti-gay advisedly, as looking through the papers produced by the original Steering Committee seeking funding, it is clear that they are written from a very male-defined perspective. An understanding of employment issues relevant to lesbians, both black and white, is totally absent from these papers, as is any discussion of how wider employment issues affect lesbians and gay men.

The original interviews for workers were carried out by three white gay men and two white lesbians, ('token' lesbians one of whom had not been very involved with LAGER but had been drafted onto the otherwise all male gay interviewing panel.)

Three workers were appointed, two white, gentle, gay men, one working-class and one middle-class, and one middle-class Jewish lesbian. The lesbian worker appointed attended one Management Committee meeting where she realised that she was expected to work in a totally male hierarchical structure, where very basic power issues had not begun to be challenged. In response, the lesbian worker made proposals to the Management Committee which resulted in its immediate dissolution. It was replaced by two separate support groups, one for lesbians workers and one for the gay male workers. Together the two support groups would constitute the Management Committee. The lesbians would work autonomously within LAGER answerable only to the lesbian support group. The Management Committee accepted these proposals, the men realising at this point, that they had no alternative if they wanted to ensure a future for LAGER. No lesbians were going to want involvement in the project as it was constituted.

THE PRESENT SITUATION

We are going to be moving to new offices within Southbank House within the next three to four weeks. Our present office, (one room) makes it impossible for the lesbian workers to operate autonomously. This will be particularly true this year as the GLC has now funded us for four time workers. In the previous year, three full-time posts were split three-quarter time between the two lesbian workers and the two gay male workers. The decision has been taken that the fourth post should be filled by a Black gay man.

Our new address will be Rooms 202-203 Southbank House, Black Prince Road, London SE1 7SJ. (The phone numbers will be the same as at present).

Lesbian Employment Rights

Once an autonomous lesbian support group had been established, they advertised for a second lesbian worker with agreement that Lesbian Employment Rights would act affirmatively towards Black lesbian applicants. The lesbian support group was aware that the employment of one Black worker would not redress the imbalance of power that already existed with LAGER, but they felt that LAGER should no longer function as a group of white only workers. In May 1984, an Asian lesbian was appointed.

Once the two lesbian workers were in post, there were discussions with the lesbian support group about the aims and objectives of LESBIAN EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS. It was felt that many of the original aims and objectives of LAGER, as devised by the gay men, had little or no relevance for lesbians. The Trade Union movement does not meet the needs of many women workers, being a male-dominated, white, heterosexist and hierarchical movement. Unemployment that is affecting increasingly large numbers of lesbian workers has not even been identified as a subject for research work. We also discussed in detail the terms 'heterosexism' and 'homophobia' and defined the need to research, analyse and identify all the ways in which heterosexism acts as an institution of oppression towards lesbians in their workplaces, and in their lives generally.

The basis of Lesbian Employment Rights Work

Heterosexism is directed against both lesbians and gay men. It is the form of oppression by which heterosexual women and men, in their assumption that heterosexuality is the norm, exert, through institutional, cultural and economic discrimination, their supposed right to dominance.

As heterosexism manifests itself in all areas of day to day life, it is clear that it is used to oppress lesbians and gay men in relation to employment. Lesbians, in addition to heterosexism, are discriminated against on the grounds of sex. Sexism deeply affects the areas of work open to women and the conditions under which women work; for example sexual harassment in the workplace.

Evidently, the experience of sexism distinguishes lesbian oppression in employment from that of gay men in employment. Consequently, Lesbian Employment Rights works directly in the areas of lesbian rather than 'gay' employment issues, and concentrates on combatting anti-lesbian discrimination.

Whilst dealing with anti-lesbian discrimination as one form of oppression, it is vital to see the link between this and other forms of oppression. The assumption that all lesbians regard anti-lesbian discrimination as the primary form of oppression is wrong. Depending on whether we are, Black, Lesbians of Colour, Irish, Jewish, lesbians with disabilities, lesbian mothers, working-class lesbians, older or younger lesbians, we prioritise differently according to our different positions in society. Treating the challenge of heterosexism as an isolated oppression, ignores the experience and therefore the realities of racism, sexism and discrimination on the grounds of class, disability, status as mother and age. Addressing one form of oppression on its own leaves other forms of oppression unchallenged and is therefore counter-productive.

Areas of Lesbian Employment Rights Work

Outreach

In the Greater London Area, we have established contact with Women's groups, centres, organisations, Employment Projects, Black Women's centres/Groups, lesbian Trade Unionists and individual women. We publicise our existence through mail-outs, leafletting and advertising open meetings that we organise at different venues in London. We have attended and run several workshops on lesbian employment issues at women only conferences and for International Women's Day. Some of the workshops were open to heterosexual women, some were Black women only and others Black lesbians only.

We plan to organise and run a series of open meetings to provide for and collect further information on lesbian un/employment issues. This information would be in relation to lesbians as employers and lesbians with responsibility for staff recruitment as these are key areas to be explored in two of the proposed workshops to date.

These meetings would culminate in a one day conference in which the information gathered would be disseminated and discussed. It would also provide a much needed forum for women involved in various areas of research relevant to womens' un/employment to meet and discuss their work.

Advice/Information

We run a drop-in advice and information service for lesbians in the London area every Tuesday. We have a selection of reference books and pamphlets relating to employment law and employment issues as they affect women and lesbians in particular. Appointments are made with with lesbians both inside and outside office hours, if, for example, our office is not accessible to them. We are involved in individual advice casework where anti-lesbian discrimination has taken place both at job application stage and in actual employment. Whilst we do not act in a legal capacity, we maintain contact with lesbians solicitors experienced in employment legislation, to whom we make referrals when appropriate. We have also established contacts with lesbian workers in several Law Centres in the Greater London area.

We feel that it is extremely important to stress that anti-lesbian discrimination does not only take the form of dismissals or lack of promotion. In the day to day experience of lesbians, it manifests itself in all stages of employment, from recruitment of staff to actual harassment at work. Heterosexist assumptions equally affect lesbians who are not 'out' at work, forcing them to constantly have to cope with the strain of concealing their lesbianism, whilst being subject to anti-lesbian attitudes from their co-workers and employers. Furthermore, it is vital to emphasise that lesbians are also discriminated against on the grounds of race, class, disability and gender. Therefore, being 'out' at work for many lesbians is not the fundamental issue.

Heterosexism Awareness Training

We have held several meetings to discuss with lesbians issues in connection with Heterosexism Awareness Training with the object of setting up a network of potential trainers. A 'Training the Trainers' course for lesbians interested in facilitating and running Heterosexism Awareness Training courses has been conducted by an experienced lesbian trainer.

A follow-up one day course is planned to develop and improve on various training methods. Following this course, we hope that there will be a pool of trainers available who can offer courses in Heterosexism Awareness Training to Local Authorities, Trade Union, the Voluntary Sector and any other interested groups of workers. Already, several Local Authorities, with a commitment to challenging heterosexism, have expressed interest in such courses. We envisage that Heterosexism Awareness Training courses will be under way within the next few months.

Research

To date detailed information specifically relating to anti-lesbian discrimination in unemployment and employment is virtually non-existent.

We have, therefore, carried out a London-wide survey as a means of identifying and researching the various kinds of discrimination faced by lesbians in relation to un/employment and the extent to which anti-lesbian discrimination affects lesbians in all areas of un/employment.

The questionnaire was designed to ensure that all sections of it relate not only to anti-lesbian discrimination but also to discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, class, disability, status as mother and age.

We are planning to produce a detailed report, incorporating the experiences of lesbians from a variety of backgrounds, both unemployed, (e.g. dealing with the D.H.S.S., Job Centres etc.) and employed (e.g. different types of jobs, areas of work, lesbians who are 'out' at work, differing Equal Opportunities policies, how Trade Union do/not relate to lesbians etc.)

The report is to include statistical data as well as information drawn

from the survey. In addition, extracts from more in-depth interviews with lesbians, who were willing to provide more extensive information than that required by the survey, will be included in the report.

We see this report as not only filling an information gap in lesbian un/employment issues, but it will provide a much needed resource for Local Authorities, the public sector and other employers as well as being a resource for the lesbian community in London.

We would like to thank Nina, Jane, Helen and Jo, our support group, for all the time and energy they have put into LESBIAN EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS over the past year, and the support they have given to us, the two lesbian workers.

Unfortunately, both within LESBIAN EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS and on the Management Committee of LAGER, they have had to spend a lot of time dealing with personnel problems arising from the gay male side of the project. These problems have consumed much valuable time and energy, both of the LER workers and the support group, and we are all very relieved that they have now been resolved.



☎ 01 587 1636 (Lesbians only)

Work undertaken by gay men in LAGER

The gay male support group of LAGER at the moment consists of three white men from the Management Committee and one white, gay male worker. We are, at present, advertising for a second gay man to join the project. Despite the problems we have had to deal with in the past year, much valuable work has been initiated and our plans for the next year have been guided by our previous work. Before outlining past and future work, we would like to thank Richard Nurick for the work he has carried out for this project before his resignation, and Bob Cant, whose temporary retirement from the project due to ill-health was deeply regretted.

Survey of gay community

We have compiled a fact finding issue based survey, produced initially in draft form for consultation with the gay male community; it is now in circulation in its final form. We hope to have the results of this survey in by the end of June, 1985, when the information will then be compiled on computer, and a comprehensive report will be published. Future research and information gathering projects will be defined to a great degree by the results of the current survey.

LAGER Newsletter

In the late summer, 1984, a Trade Union Newsletter was produced by a member of the gay male support group of LAGER. It was aimed at sympathetic Trade Unionists and carried articles from Trade Unions whose support for lesbians and gay men had increased in recent years, (mainly due to activism of gay male and lesbian members within those unions.) It was also hoped that it would generate similar developments within other Trade Unions. The Newsletter was widely circulated. The support lesbians and gay men gave to the miners (Lesbians & Gays Support the Miners) over the past year and the reciprocal support they received is an indication of the gains that can be made within Trade Unions which previously had been unsympathetic.

Trade Union work

We have worked to create an awareness within Trade Union structures, of issues affecting gay men in un/employment, by means of contacts made, i.e. through the first newsletter. Future work with Trade Unions will centre on research into Equal Opportunities policies implementation, and advice into contacts within the T.U. movement who could help the project to embark upon Heterosexism Awareness training courses.

Publicising LAGER

We have spent some time attempting to establish a high public profile within the gay male community and the Trade Unions. This has not succeeded to the extent that we would have wished, partly because no money was allocated, in the original budget, to advertise ourselves and the services which we provide and partly because of the lack of previous research in this direction. We were to some extent 'feeling in the dark'. However, we now hope, with the experiences of the past year behind us, to adopt a much higher general profile. By doing so, we can attract and disseminate more information and establish research credibility within the gay male and Trade Union movements. We are concerned to achieve maximum public input so that comprehensive research can be presented to the gay male community for action and campaigning as is deemed appropriate.

An area of work which we would like to initiate in the coming year relates to companies not directly reliant upon public sector money. It is especially specific to those enterprises which figure largely in the 'pink' (i.e. gay male orientated) economy, such as breweries and leisure based companies. This research would centre upon looking at their Equal Opportunities policies, employment practices and their company identification and image.

Work undertaken by gay men in LAGER

Case work

We acknowledge the importance of assisting individuals in a supportive way, but recognise the centrality of the Trade Unions in supporting aggrieved workers. A body of research on individual experiences would, however, prove invaluable in helping those fighting anti-gay male discrimination and it could be used to uncover concerted attacks upon gay male workers. Information gathered on Employment Law is clearly of use to gay men in any dispute and we hope to produce a clear and understandable fact-sheet (similar to bust-cards) outlining procedures and a legal check list.

A.I.D.S. and Employment

An increasing amount of our telephone enquiries over the past year related not only to men being gay, but ,more alarmingly, to having to cope with badly informed colleagues in relation to Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). These calls have reported a range of incidents from taunting at work to situations where men who are gay(or in some cases only suspected of being gay) being asked to use disposable plates and cups and separate toilet facilities. AIDS has been used by some reactionary elements as a stick with which to beat the gay male community. LAGER male support group will become involved in information campaign work to educate the Trade Unions etc on the issues involved as well as continuing to provide individual help. We have sponsored a Labour Movement conference, to be held at the end of May, 1985. We hope that this conference will, not only address the medical affects of AIDS, but will also highlight the jingoistic way in which this has been represented.

Joint Work carried out by LAGER

Most of the joint work carried out by the group so far has been in the field of local government. LAGER was approached as an organisation to work alongside the existing local lesbian and gay male group and Trade Unions within the London Borough of Haringey, in order to help them develop their policies and practices. This was the first time , to our knowledge, that an outside group had been approached to perform such a function. It was also very informative, in that it gave us an insight into the best ways to affect an approach to heterosexism from scratch which importantly involved all the groups in the borough. On another level, Lambeth Employment Services have contacted us with a view to reporting to the local Lesbian and Gay Working Party on the feasibility of us running workshops on employment issues as they affect lesbians and gay men. We have responded with suggestions on both the form that such workshops might take and also on literature which would help initiate discussion. We have also been exploring the possibility of becoming involved in the development of Heterosexism Awareness Training courses which local authorities will be running in the near future. Other independant initiatives on H.A.T. courses have been suggested, with LAGER developing them in co-ordination with certain other voluntary sector organisations (Alcoholics Recovery Service etc) and with individuals who intend to start group therapy sessions along these lines. We have been approached by groups to give advice on interview and selection procedures, the work on which is very much still in its infancy.

Future Work: We intend to develop fully the work which we have discussed in the above section; but we have also pinpointed some other areas where we feel valuable research and groundwork is necessary. We intend to hold a joint conference on important issues affecting lesbians and gay men in the London area some time within the next six months. We feel that it is important to study the many and differing Equal Opportunities Policies which councils and unions have in order to: monitor the groups their EOP is supposed to cover, ascertain the effectiveness of such policies and to identify the gaps in their policies and practices as they affect lesbians and gay men.

On the next page we have printed a list of Trade Union Lesbian and Gay groups. The list is limited only to TU Lesbian and Gay groups and is not conclusive, but it is intended to provide information not normally available in other info/contact sheets.

LAGER - ACCOUNTS

Budget agreed by I&E C'ttee
for financial year ending
18/3/85

Estimated expenditure (subject to audit)
for financial year ending
18/3/85

Salaries.....	31,400	31,709.01
National Insurance.....	3,800	3,404.15
Job Advertisements/interview exps.....	400	657.80
Rent & Rates (incl. heat & light).....	7,000	7,500.00
Telephone.....	900	658.30
Postage.....	800	300.00
Travel/conferences.....	650	1,110.93
Stationery & Office supplies.....	750	1,758.17
Printing.....	3,000	2,400.00
Insurance.....	250	290.00
Audit & legal fees.....	500	500.00
Subscriptions & publications.....	400	400.00
SUBTOTAL REVENUE COSTS.....	50,350	50,688.36
Answerphone.....	150	209.53
2 electric typewriters.....	750	856.75
Photocopier.....	1,000	946.74
Transcribing machine.....	1,000	310.73
2 Interview recorders.....	1,000	196.70
Desks/chairs/filing cabinets, etc.....	125	380.10
Installation of telephone.....	125	200.00
SUBTOTAL CAPITAL EXPENDITURE.....	3,025	3,100.55
TOTAL.....	53,375	53,788.92

LISTING OF TRADE UNION LESBIAN AND GAY GROUPS.

Civil and Public Services Gay Group
Telephone: 01-672-0316 (Evenings only)

Gay Welfare Workers Group
c/o 100c, Knightshill, West Norwood, London SE 27

Gay Teachers Group
BM Gay Teacher, London WC1N 3XX

Teachers in Further & Higher Education Gay Group.
c/o 5, Caledonian Road, London N1.

NALGO Metropolitan District Lesbian & Gay Group
c/o 7 Pickwick Court, London SE9.

N.U.J. Lesbian & Gay Group
BM NUJ LGG, London WC1N 3XX

NUR Lesbian & Gay Group
c/o LCGR 39 Chippenham Road,
London W9 2AH.

Lesbians & Gays in TASS (LEGIT)
c/o LCGR 39 Chippenham Road, London W9 2AH

APEX Lesbian & Gay Group
c/o LCGR 39 Chippenham Road,
London W9 3AH

TGWU Lesbian & Gay Group (LGTG)
c/o LAGER Room 205 Southbank House, Black Prince Road.
London SE1 7SJ.

Lesbians & Gays in B.I.F.U.
C/O Peter Freeman, 2 Gwynfryn Road,
Pntardulais, Swansea SA4 1LG
Telephone: 0792-884-153(evenings and weekends).