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MONTHLY

NUMBER 5 JANUARY 1972

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A RESURGENCE OF ACTIVITIES

Having called ourselves the Campaign for Homosexual Equality, it seems ironic that we should have allowed ourselves an indulgent relapse, in London at least, into a 'Social Club' organisation.

Not that one objects to the provision of social facilities that have for so long been desperately needed. But in concentrating our activities and energies into having a 'Good Time' many seem to have forgotten that we are a political organisation intent on seeing political change. Many more find their campaigning zeal frustrated by reluctant group committees who who remain unaware, or discourage the proselytizing ambitions shown by many members, who then find other organisations in which their talents are made more welcome.

We have been bustling along for 18 months with very few items of evidence that we are a 'campaigning' group; possibly this is due to trying to deal with an enormous influx of new people, but soon we will exhaust our present recruiting sources, membership numbers will settle on a plateau. CHE's finances dictate a dynamic expansion of membership if we are not to be forced into a position of retreating from the modest positions we have already taken up.

Fortunately this has been realized by a National Executive that shows a little more sensitivity to reality than some others whose acquaintance with the facts is less than adequate to assess the situation. The National Executive now has an image and Action sub-

committee which is to make a major effort in the new year - details of the members are given elsewhere in this issue, and looking at the list we can be assured that CHE will become the force it ought to be in the near future.

In addition, the youth of CHE is making its own bid for fame. A radical students group is to be formed, the purpose of which is to give a co-ordinated voice to those who have in the past found themselves to some extent an ignored minority.

All this points to the fact that CHE is heading for a resurgence of activity that augurs well, not just for 'activists' but for the whole membership, who will benefit from the sea of new faces and the additional facilities their presence and money will provide.

Not So Much an Organisation, More a Way of Life

Laurence Collinson
on the GLF.

This is the first of a series of occasional articles in which, as an active member of the Campaign for Homosexual Equality and a staunch supporter of the Gay Liberation Front, I shall be acting as a kind of liaison columnist to bring LUNCH readers an account of what GLF is presently doing and thinking, in so far as any one person can cover such an extremely large field.

I do this gladly, as there seems,

4 from my own reading and experience, to be a considerable lack of understanding, if not downright ignorance, among many CHE members as to what GLF is and does - ranging from the gratuitous insult in the first released draft of PEOPLE NOT PAPER to many snide and unkindly comments made at various functions by CHE members whose knowledge of GLF is based, at most, on one or two visits to one of the overcrowded, often uncomfortable, and usually noisy weekly 'general' meetings.

When one tries to point out the irrationality of prejudices based on such tenuous 'evidence', one is faced with the same kind of incomprehension as that displayed by many heterosexual 'moralists' towards homosexuals when they are told that the latter comprise a fairly wide cross-section of the population and their thoughts and feelings - except in regard to their sexual orientation - are not so very different from their own. One expects - but one is frequently disappointed - that homosexuals, who must on innumerable occasions have suffered because of the 'straight' world's hostility based on ignorance and fear, would hesitate to offer blanket condemnation of a body of people about whom they know so little. Or could it be that GLF is to CHE what homosexuals are to 'straights' - a reminder that the values by which people live are not necessarily to be found in religion or codes of law or educational precepts, but must often be redefined from day to day in the light of one's continuing experience. An attachment to middle-class ethics does give one a kind of security - until one looks closely into the way our Western society is run, which is rarely according to the ethical principles which that society postulates. Perhaps GLF makes your sense of security wobble...?

CHE is an organisation; GLF

is a way of life.

That, at least, is how I see it. I know that there are numerous dedicated CHE members who spend every possible moment in attempting to further the aims of CHE; nevertheless, CHE remains an organisation to which one can devote oneself to a greater or lesser degree without it essentially affecting one's life-style. On the other hand, to accept any of GLF's philosophical tenets (and to accept one implies accepting them all) means that one has started to question one's basic assumptions about life and how it is, or ought to be, lived; and one's whole life begins to change in consequence.

At the risk of oversimplifying, I am rather arbitrarily dividing GLF's quite complex philosophy into two fundamental premises. One is that the authoritarian structure of society is not only unnecessary but also harmful. The other is that we are conditioned by society into the acceptance of gender roles that distort our personalities, colour our thoughts and feelings, and make us the target of much hostility and aggression if we fail or refuse to conform.

As can be seen, while both these propositions have relevance for gay people, neither is specifically homosexual: each can be applied to society as a whole.

The first premise:

From infancy on, we are taught to respect and surrender to authority, whatever form it takes. At first Authority is our parents and teachers. They in turn make sure that we acquiesce with little or no dissent to later authorities whose orders may be forced on us but whom we have been so conditioned to accept that we do, indeed, take it as 'natural' that the Law, the Church, the Army, the State, and our rulers generally possess some sort of divine, unquestionable right and know much better than we do what is best

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6 for us, even when their rules appear to run counter to our personalities or desires. Authority's decisions are rarely if ever questioned. "It's always been that way..."

The extreme example of a modern authoritarian society was, of course, that of Nazi Germany in the thirties and forties of this century where, to put it bluntly, the actions of private man had to coincide with - not public good, a coincidence with which we might have some sympathy - but with the demands, whether good or evil, of the State. All the apparatus of education, propaganda, and coercion led the citizen to believe that he was acting in the State's best interests, whereas he was in reality a cog in a machine handled by unscrupulous men. The West has still not fully emerged from the disasters of that appalling period.

It would be obviously untrue to suggest that the kind of society in which we are now living in England resembles that of Nazi Germany, and yet to suppose that our 'democracy' is the most perfect system yet devised, or, even if it is not, that progress must be made slowly and through the 'correct' channels, is to reveal the extent of our conditioning. There are innumerable fallacies that we grow up believing are ultimate truths and, consequently, never question: for example, women are passive, emotional creatures and men aggressive and logical; judges are unfailingly wise; public demonstrations are ill-suited to the English temperament; we have a 'free' press; the English government (in contrast to that of 'foreigners') acts always from honourable motives; in a 'free' society employers have the right to decide whether we shall or shall not have jobs; the politicians we elect to parliament are truly our representatives.

None of these assumptions requires much in the way of refu-

tation: a little serious reading and thinking will soon give them the lie. What is, however, especially interesting is that so many homosexuals, who, for many years now (and their predecessors for centuries) have borne society's lies, prejudices, and condemnation, are now beginning to realise that society has been wrong - stupid and ignorant where not hypocritical - and yet fail to extend this realisation through to its ultimate conclusion: that maybe society is stupid or ignorant or lying in many other areas as well.

It is here, I think, that GLF parts from CHE. In adopting radical attitudes towards society's condemnation of the homosexual, GLF carries through its criticism to all the structures of society. Where CHE says: we must work within the existing framework, GLF says: society has told us for as long as we can remember that we are sick or vicious or criminal, yet what can be more sick, vicious, or criminal than a society that tolerates wars, massive unemployment, oppression of coloured people and of women and children, working lives of unspeakable drudgery for millions of men and women, miserliness towards the elderly poor (side by side with fat profits and enormous incomes for the favoured few), and disgusting sub-standard housing for millions? These - says GLF - are not eternal factors of civilisation, certainly not in today's technological era. A rationalisation of resources could improve life for everyone; why is this not being done? No, the ordinary processes of change are not working, or not working sufficiently quickly; we must adopt radical alternatives.

GLF uses a number of 'radical alternatives' in its attempt to get things done. One is street theatre, to try and make immediate points to spectators; another is the forma-

tion of communes; a third is the counter-psychiatry group (while not denying the value of various aspects of psychology, psychiatry, and psychoanalysis in helping many people whose 'unconventional' behaviour presents difficulties in living in our society, GLF has come to recognise that many, if not most, psychiatrists are far more ignorant about homosexuality than homosexuals themselves, and that in most cases their advice is geared toward making the individual conform to society's 'norms' rather than helping him live a fuller, happier life according to the dictates of his or her own 'nature'; in addition, the psychiatrist often appears as an extended arm of the Law, if not of the State itself); a fourth is public demonstration. The fifth, and perhaps the most basic, is GLF's rejection of a hierarchical organisational structure.

Not for GLF the interminable discussions on points of order, the endless constitutional wrangles, the jockeying for power, the bureaucracy that frequently hinders rather than helps important activity. One does not 'join' GLF; one is not 'vetted' to ensure that one is a 'suitable' person unlikely to present an awkward or embarrassing image of homosexuality to the 'straight' world. One participates, partly by attending the regular weekly meetings and voting on issues as they arise (subjects are almost always fully thrashed out at the big meeting, or at the smaller groups, or at the fairly regular 'think-ins' - all of which are open to any gay person to attend), and partly by working in one or more of the now numerous sub-groups through which GLF carries on its work. Money is raised in various ways, but primarily by collections at meetings.

I must confess that when I first went along to GLF almost a year ago, I was extremely sceptical of the idea of what might be termed an

'unstructured' organisation, but I have since been completely won over. Inevitably some time is wasted in argument and repetition, but it is always argument about action, and not about semantics or rules of procedure; there is no deference to authority because there is no authority; everyone votes, so that agreement is reached by a thoroughly democratic process; decisions cannot be vetoed by small groups nor can decisions be made by small groups and passed down to the ranks to be executed; there is no rank and file, there are no elected representatives - everyone is GLF.

Meetings can be fractious, sometimes bitter, but always there is the feeling among those present not only of kinship, of common goals, but of what one might, at the risk of seeming sentimental, describe as love. This is, to me, in utter contrast to the CHE meetings I attend, where cliquishness, an exaggerated respect for and an unwarranted submission to the orders, decisions, and 'suggestions' of the London Committee and our other near or far 'representatives', as well as a sort of horrible interest in the sayings and doings of these people or of 'well-known' homosexuals, make such occasions not only frustrating but also somewhat absurd.

The second premise:

What many homosexuals do not realise, and what I suspect most members of CHE do not realise, is that, no matter what laws are changed, what reason and logic we can bring to bear against prejudice and irrationality, Western society, as it is now constituted, is never going to hug us to its manly bosom. Tolerate us, maybe; accept us, never.

In our society, a society dependent on male domination in almost every area: employment, education, religion, medicine, the army, and sport, the present concepts of masculinity and femininity are essen-

8 tial to maintaining the status quo. Anything that might deal a body blow to these concepts is dangerous. If, for example, men have the possibility of being tender and loving (like Christ) toward other men, who is going to be persuaded to go to war to fight and maim and kill other men? If women have the possibility of properly using their intelligence, drive, and business acumen, what women are going to be satisfied to continue as bored underpaid workers on the factory floor or in the office or as unpaid domestics? Our assumptions regarding the gender roles of men and women bolster not only our competitive/monopolistic economy and our culture but also pervert our deepest and most intense emotions, but other, greater, writers have written whole books on the subject: Germaine Greer's THE FEMALE EUNUCH, Juliet Mitchell's WOMAN'S ESTATE, and Simone de Beauvoir's magnificent seminal work, THE SECOND SEX, to name just three authors of the flood of works that are emerging from research into gender roles.

The homosexual is a threat to our present society because his or her existence is irrefutable proof that no man is wholly male and no woman is wholly female, that there is a whole spectrum of sexual colours, shades, and combinations. The homosexual who is aware of the power he or she has to force society to question its most fundamental, always-taken-for-granted values must of necessity become part of the gay liberation movement (whether that is the name used, or some other), and then will recognise the need to ally himself or herself with the Women's Liberation Movement, for it is there that the most startling research is being done and the most significant social and personal changes are being made. As Juliet Mitchell, a spokesman for Women's Lib, writes: "...our solidarity with Gay Liberation - gay sisters

and brothers - is of paramount importance, as is their solidarity with us." From that point it is not a distant step to Black Liberation, to the struggles of workers, students, and the Third World. It is in this process of identification with the liberation movements throughout the world that the homosexual really becomes one with the rest of humanity.

But the homosexual who wants to be integrated into this sick, savage society, who wants or needs to look up to someone who comes from 'the upper echelons of society', who wants to avoid overt politics (as if such neutrality were remotely possible!), who thinks tremendous progress is going to be achieved 'behind the scenes' or by the influence of 'distinguished' pressure groups, who is unaware that his or her very existence poses a threat to 'straight' society - that sad, blinkered, ineffectual homosexual will cause CHE to remain the cautious, humble-pie organisation that it is.

No doubt someone will ask: If you feel like that, why do you continue to be a member? The answer is that I believe in the old adage of hope persisting while life remains. I still believe in the campaigning for homosexual equality, and want to participate in it, but I hope that CHE, in its campaigning, will at the same time attempt to create a society that is worth being equal to.

LETTERS COLUMN

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*The Editor,
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You Too Can Be Aware...

OR, MAY I RAISE YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS?

John Levinson

This article is based on, but very freely adapted from "Gay Dealer", the newspaper of the Philadelphia Gay Liberation Front. It was reproduced by London GLF and acknowledgements are due to both organisations; originally it was a collective effort by a New York consciousness-raising awareness group who adopted the process from the Women's Liberation Movement.

It is becoming increasingly evident that homosexuals should organise because it is the only way in which a substantial minority of the community, which has been cut adrift by society, can deal with their oppression. Everywhere they find hostility, prejudice and condescension, even at times, paradoxically, among themselves. In self defence, most homosexuals accept the heterosexual mythology which says that they are sick, immature, perverse, or deviant and that they must, therefore, hide away their love for one another in special bars, in special clubs and even in less salubrious surroundings. But in most democratic countries there are organisations to which homosexuals can attach themselves for the purpose of influencing parliamentary and public opinion towards equality of status and social acceptance and for other meritorious purposes designed to defeat fear and to encourage social intercourse. By their attachment to one or the other of the two principal organisations in this country (for the entirely



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10 unprejudiced, why not both?), those who feel alienated, rejected and unjustly deprived may provide themselves with the opportunity of emerging from the ghetto imposed upon them by society at large and of freeing themselves from statutory injustices and the (at times) over-zealous harassment by the appointed guardians of the law. Those who set aside the heterosexual mythology and develop positive attitudes towards their homosexuality should not be surprised to find a backlash intensification of their rejection by the heterosexual world at large, which feels threatened and would prefer to keep homosexuals isolated and distrustful of one another. Anonymity is and always has been the easy way out, but it will not forward the cause of liberation from oppression. In the short-term, those who are homosexually orientated should not delude themselves by expecting too much help from those who oppress them; they are very much on their own and, unless they are satisfied with their condition, they must create their own alternative. For the young there is much to hope for. For those who are not quite so young (and whose condition may be all the more urgent and desperate) there is, nevertheless, much satisfaction to be gained by devoting time and energy to the ultimate freedom of the new generation and of the generations yet to come.

London GLF has successfully initiated a large and constantly-growing number of consciousness-raising awareness groups. Michael Brown and I are members of both GLF and CHE and each of us is a member of a different awareness group. We have been profoundly impressed by their value and we believe that the idea may well commend itself to many CHE members. There is nothing to be lost by publicising the project and we feel that there is much to be gained when it is initiated in CHE

early in 1972. As a result of our virtually ad hoc oral advocacy at the CHE mass meeting at Conway Hall, some 20 members handed in their names as potential participants. Subsequently (and largely as a result of Michael's visits to various CHE groups to explain the idea) the number of names has doubled. I hope and believe that, as a result of the clarification produced by this article, very many more will express their interest. A few pilot groups are already being organised (where possible on a geographical basis) and these may already have held their initial meetings by the time this article appears in LUNCH (regrettably, it has been delayed by my own ill-timed ill-health). Do not, I beg you, be put off by the fact that the idea emanates from GLF. Whatever you may or may not think of that organisation, remember that its adherents are our brothers and suffer the same disabilities and discrimination as do members of CHE. Remember also that, even though there is much disparity in method and tactical approach, the two organisations have something of value in common. Very few who have had experience of GLF can fail to have been impressed by the heart-warming enthusiasm, the massive energy and the dynamic drive disseminated by that organisation to its members; it would not, in my opinion, come amiss if some of those qualities were a little more contagious! But there is no need to consume space in LUNCH to commend you to GLF, which is very well equipped to look after itself; I mention it merely to draw attention to the ethos of CRA groups.

CRA groups make a positive effort to step outside the heterosexual myths and institutions, to suspend and ultimately to eliminate the limited way in which homosexuals have become accustomed to relate to others of the same or similar orientation. Within the groups, every-

one's feelings are accepted as valid, even though some of them may seem rather odd at first hearing (chacun etcetera.....). In each subject under discussion, an attempt is made to arrive at consensus and to a solution which is to the interest and benefit of each individual. As part of the collective process, those who are silent are gently urged to make a contribution, but no pressure should be exerted because the rate at which each member develops a sense of mutual trust and confidence in his fellow-members must vary with that individual's degree of inhibition and the measure of his adjustment to his way of life. Some will struggle with their eagerness to dominate and impress their fellow-members but, ideally, everyone should be rather less concerned with his own problems and increasingly aware of the needs of the other members of the group. Those who are more extrovert will struggle with a tendency to intellectualise their own experiences, but they must subdue this temptation in order to allow the more inhibited to expound their own views. Members should avoid the urge to generalise and they must learn the difficult lesson of saying "I" rather than "You" because the views of no two individuals are identical in every respect. Members of the group will have to learn the difficult art of relating to one another with sincere (and not pseudo) tolerance, with respect and with love. CRA provides a format in which this potential can develop and operate. It is used to discover an individual's identity as a homosexual, to recognise oppression in a heterosexually-orientated society and to seek a collective solution to mutual problems.

An awareness group is a serious and long-range effort, but do not but do not misconstrue the word serious in this context; it is serious in the sense that the subjects discussed are vital and valid for every

11 member; it is not serious in the sense that the subjects should be discussed in a dull and pompous manner. Laughter (of the most kindly variety only, please) may and should be both an anodyne and a lubricant to free and lucid exposition. It is well to start each group with some 10-15 members because a few will surely drop out in the opening weeks. Usually groups meet weekly, the venue alternating among the homes of members; atmosphere is all-important and because of time and other more important limitations, meetings should never take place in public places. Ideally, they should be at week-ends so that there is no sense of pressure to close a discussion prematurely because members have to go to work on the following morning. The format of the session consists of each member giving testimony on the chosen topic and, ideally, a closing discussion. When giving testimony, each member relates his personal experiences and feelings about the subject under discussion with complete and absolute honesty, avoiding any tendency to intellectualise or to draw conclusions. Each member speaks for as long as he chooses and he should only be interrupted for clarification of ambiguity; it is as well to remember that the group is essentially democratic and the opinions and experiences of those who have difficulty in expressing themselves with ease and clarity are equally as valid as others who are fortunate enough to be able to speak with lucid fluency and articulate panache. Let charity, therefore, be your guideline and do not allow spoken or unspoken impatience to add to the burden of others who may be experiencing difficulty and suffering embarrassment. The order of testimony is determined by the group, individuals speaking in agreed rotation or at random. The giving of personal testimony may be difficult for many people initially because it

12 means revealing one's innermost thoughts and feelings and discussing very personal experiences with other group members who may well be mostly strangers; it is an act of trust and of courage and should be rewarded with confidence and respect. Very obviously - and this is of paramount importance - testimony must never, in any circumstances, be discussed with others outside the group. I have never had cause to think that this has happened in my own GLF group and my trust is so complete that I cannot believe that it ever will. But human fallibility is infinite. If it ever should happen, either through malice or inadvertence, then the group will undoubtedly disintegrate into chaos and indeed the entire project could be threatened. After everyone has spoken to the chosen theme, the group compares the evidence of their joint experience and consideration is given to the differences and similarities in members' testimony. Generalisations about the conditions of homosexuals in society emerge and the format ensures that the discussion and the conclusions reached will henceforward be firmly implanted in each member's mind whenever he gives consideration to this specific topic.

The range of subjects which may be discussed is virtually unlimited; no list is comprehensive and all lists are subject to infinite emendation. But if your group needs suggestions, the following ideas might be helpful: 1) the problem of the recognition and acknowledgement of one's homosexuality to (a) oneself, (b) one's parents, (c) one's siblings, (d) one's relatives, (e) one's heterosexual friends, (f) one's work colleagues; 2) acceptance or rejection of the male role; 3) pressure to conform to the predominant heterosexual environment; 4) sexual expression or suppression; 5) first experiences in homosexuality and their effect; 6) masturbation and its mythology; 7) sex roles - stabi-

lity or flexibility; 8) sex objectification - do you treat people as sex objects?; 9) "cruising" - the bars and the clubs and the whole "straight-gay" scene; 10) sexual experience with women; 11) sadism and masochism; 12) sexual fantasy; 13) homosexual monogamy or promiscuity; 14) jealousy and permissiveness; 15) dominance or passivity in relationships; 16) what kind of males are attractive and why; 17) approaches to men and reactions to approaches from men; 18) experiences with and feelings about various sex acts; 19) reactions to the various derogatory names which are used by antagonistic heterosexuals (and homosexuals) about homosexuals; 20) non-sexual relations with women; 21) non-sexual relations with heterosexual men; 22) sex-ism; 23) class backgrounds, preferences and prejudices; 24) age-ism and the pressure to be young; 25) the effect of religious background and training et al.

Spontaneously and as they occur, the group should openly and freely examine and discuss personality conflicts which arise among members. It is inevitable and reasonable that conflicts should arise and, if they don't, then there is something wrong or very remarkable about the way your group is working; no conflict, however, should be allowed to smoulder or develop to such a degree that it cannot be solved or soothed by goodwill and open, free discussion. All groups must constantly struggle with resistance to CR; there always seem to be so many other things to do, especially on the night of the group meeting, and more especially when the previously-chosen topic is one which the individual wishes (for a thousand and one motives) to avoid. If, however, a member is serious and enthusiastic about the whole idea or CR, then only a major and serious reason will cause him to miss a session. If there are too

many absentees on too many occasions, then the whole group process is at risk and something positive should be done about it. But even when a group is assembled, there is sometimes a tendency to put off the serious business of CR. Some will try to convert the session into a purely social occasion (which it is not) and others will endeavour to lead their fellow-members up all manner of odd and esoteric garden-paths in order to avoid or at least delay getting on with the matter in hand. Conscious or unconscious sabotage is not entirely unknown, but it can usually be recognised and set aside if the will of the majority prevails. There is not and must not be an appointed, or self-appointed, chairman or leader; democracy must flourish if the group is not to wither and the stronger-minded members must recall their erring brothers to the facts of group-life and its purpose. During testimony, resistance frequently takes the form of intellectualisation and the expression of abstract ideas, negating concrete feelings and experiences. Resistance may also manifest itself by the insidious method of digression. All these manifestations may be symptoms of the fear which people feel when they come into contact with their own oppression; the joint and common aim of the group should be to assist their colleagues to resist and overcome their fears. Of course, the ultimate resistance is leaving the group and all groups will have their failures; you can't win all the time!

A successful group should have no preconceived ideology or strategy for homosexual liberation; it does not exist to deal in abstractions or rhetoric, but to draw ideas from its members' life-situations. A group will normally begin with a number of semi-isolated and semi-alienated individuals and the sharing of experience will bring a collective consciousness to all those who partici-

pate with honesty and integrity. Homosexuals need not be isolated or alienated. Strength comes from the fusion of consciousness and freedom comes from the deliberate destruction of sex-ism. Those who have achieved freedom from sex-ism can express their gratitude by their compassion for their brothers who have not yet attained that state of grace and for those who have still to become fully adjusted to their emotional orientation. In my opinion, awareness groups are infinitely the best way of achieving this end and I cannot commend them too highly. The mutual trust and confidence engendered within the group is of immense value and there is no valid reason why CHE members should be deprived of it.

If I have written about awareness groups in what might be termed evangelistic phraseology, it is because my usage of the language reflects my enthusiasm. My membership of a good awareness group has accomplished a great deal for me in a few short months. But I don't want to keep it to myself and, even if there is no need to use evangelistic language to the Gay Liberation Front, a little flamboyance in terminology may produce converts from among the somewhat less liberated ranks of CHE.

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see page 2

14 At Home with Peter Katin

George Shaw

Peter Katin's Chopin recital on 11th December at his Croydon home in aid of CHE was a sell out. There must have been 60 or 70 people crammed into two rooms, one of which was occupied by Peter Katin, two pianos, and a rather fidgety BBC camera team.

On arrival, guests were given the choice - to sit in the front four rows and be recognizable on camera - or move to the back. Predictably there was a scramble to remain incognito, while other musical eager beavers rushed gratefully for the ringside seats, sweating under boiling arc lights that bathed the audience in such radiance that specks of dandruff dazzled like snowflakes. (Unfortunately the documentary isn't in colour, so you'll miss the gay pink faces and sartorial elegance!)

Peter Katin played beautifully. His programme was varied and well chosen. He avoided the hackneyed pieces and enraptured the audience with his interpretation of Chopin, despite the distinct whirring on and off of cameras, and a certain amount of distracting whispering between director and cameraman. But as the recital went on the music made the audience less aware of such minor irritants. Everyone relaxed and seemed transported. I think it was during the Barcarolle Op. 60 that one of the massive lights began to flicker, then went out. At the same time the rubber plug adaptor started smoking and within seconds caught fire. One or two panicky women rushed for the door, while valiant Tony Ryde fought the flames with suede shoes and rolled up Guardian,

and Michael Launder visualised next day's local headlines "50 Fried Fag-gots so up in Smoke!"

The camera team seemed utterly unmoved by such activity. Peter Katin, with great equanimity, returned to where he'd left off, in dense acrid smoke, which his wife did her best to dispel with a scented aerosol spray. Miraculously their newly-laid carpets were unharmed, the electrician mended the fault and once more we reverted to mock sunshine and Chopin.

The programme continued without further incident, if anything with even greater virtuosity and brilliance. There was something peculiarly privileged and intimate about being a guest in Peter Katin's house that added a firther edge to one's enjoyment. After the recital came wine, a good array of cheeses and CHE chat. The Katins were incredibly hospitable and kind to tolerate such an invasion of CHE, not to mention their generosity in donating the proceeds to our national funds! Altogether one of the more memorable CHE occasions!

CHE and the Beeb

George Shaw

Those of you who went to Peter Katin's recital expecting an innocent evening of Chopin were no doubt somewhat taken aback by the presence of the BBC in all its glory. Since you may well bump into them again, though this time not without some prior warning, you should know a bit about what they are up to.

John Eldinow is producing a series of programmes for BBC 2 looking at how various social issues have passed through a legislative

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16 process. In relation to the 1967 Sexual Offences Act, this means studying how the subject came up in the first place, how in the parliamentary process the original intentions of the bill's proponents were modified, and how the final legislation has worked out. CHE of course fits into the last part and John intends to devote a programme to looking at the extent to which the position of homosexuals in society has been affected, how far the Act answered our perceived needs, and what is happening to continue the work which began before 1967.

CHE's participation in a project such as this is not without its attendant risks, but I believe that it presents by far the most challenging opportunity we have yet had, or are likely to have in the near future, to put across to the public, and to the thousands of gay people who have never heard of us, what CHE believes and is trying to achieve. Of course the project may not materialise, for any number of reasons, but we clearly should not let that stop us putting our hearts into it.

It is just possible that the BBC will shoot some film of the Masked Ball or the Victorian Evening (Feb), more likely the latter. We will also be concocting a special discussion meeting along traditional group lines in the near future. For this we will need at least 40 people who do not mind appearing before the public eye in connection with CHE and I would ask anyone to whom this applies to get in touch with me at the earliest opportunity (405-9729) so that I can ensure this meeting achieves its purpose.

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'them' & 'us'

Jim Herrick

After a recent CHE group meeting, I was chatting to a few members in an adjoining (straight) pub. I noticed that in talking we all frequently used the word 'us'. We could have used the word 'gay' or 'homosexual', but I suppose we were reluctant to commit ourselves to in-words like 'gay', and anxious not to be overheard talking about ourselves as 'homosexuals'.

But this is really more than simply a language problem. Of course, all minorities cling together, develop their own jargon and tend to regard themselves as persecuted. And there's no doubt that, even if we have achieved a degree of legal recognition, there remains for many people a stigma attached to being homosexual. As a solicitor or teacher, for example, there are positive disadvantages in being known to be homosexual; and in the factory or office, while some may be fortunate enough to encounter considerable tolerance, it could still be embarrassing to have your sexual preferences known. And how many homosexuals would like their brothers, aunts, grand-parents or even parents to know of their nature?

So, while we may relax in a 'gay' pub, some may go uneasily to their CHE meeting. And while there, we may assume a false sense of solidarity. There is probably as much difference between 'us' as between any random group of heterosexuals. And while I, for one, am all in favour of the social bridges which homosexual contacts sometimes cross; it must perhaps be recognised that there may be more in common between a homosexual dress designer and heterosexual fashion reporter than between a homosexual electrician and

journalist. A gay Reggae enthusiast might have little to say to a gay Mozart lover. We may be beautiful or ugly, generous or dishonest, just as any random group of people.

Our sexuality does not define our personality. We are complete people, with many aspects to our lives. I don't want to suggest that sex is unimportant: far from it. But surely we must try to put it in the perspective of total relationships. To say a person is homosexual does not really tell you very much: it may predispose sympathy, but it doesn't ensure mutual awareness.

We, - and it is a symptom of our society that I keep using that word - live in a society where we are forced to be defensive. Perhaps this leads us to over-emphasise our homosexuality. The very reason which draws 'us' together could lead us to lay too much stress on that single aspect of ourselves. Paradoxically, I hope CHE groups will not become obsessed with homosexuality.

There is a generally recognised need to break down barriers. How important is that 'them' and 'us' syndrome? By accepting that 'us', aren't we helping to create a separate 'them'? The need is to establish relationships between gay and straight, where both are aware of each other's sexual preferences, but neither see this as all important.

I suppose the long term aim of CHE should be to make itself irrelevant. We should be aiming for a society where to be homosexual or heterosexual is not particularly important. It seems a strange objective for a society to make itself redundant: but I suspect that that day is a long way off.

N.B. I know the use of inverted commas for 'gay' etc. is not consistent; but I've tried to use them only when there was some emphasis on the use of the word.

To the Editor,

17

Dear Sir,

At our last group meeting I was surprised to be attacked for forming and exclusive "Women's Group". This Group is designed for women members of CHE to discuss their role in CHE and what we can do to increase the percentage of women members, and encourage existing members to take an active part in what goes on.

In order to qualify women must attend and belong to an ordinary mixed CHE group.

If anyone wants us to raise any points, or has any queries please get in touch c/o LUNCH.

J. Batterham.

Dear Sir,

Please accept my thanks to you and your staff for helping to make the Group 7 Christmas Dinner a success by giving us the advertising you did.

Please also, could you convey to your readers my thanks to those who helped to make it such a success.

Particularly, Wallace Grevatt (Chairman Group 7) for his "Royal Proclamations"; Roger Baker, for his most pointed wit; Michael Launder, for his impeccable impersonations; the gentleman who gave us the pleasure of his talented piano playing (name unknown?); Miss Peggy Clark (Women's Liberation) for being so brave (she was the only lady present!); Malcolm Martindale (Secretary Group 7) for his invaluable help towards organizing. And finally, most important of all, the members and guests who attended, that made the effort of organizing seem worthwhile,

thank you all
most sincerely,

E. J. Eden,
Treasurer, Group 7.

Dear Sir,
 Peter Conradi in his review of "Maurice" does not remark (nor does any other review I have seen) on the somewhat odd fact that Forster uses the name "Scudder". The name itself is an unusual one: I have searched in over a dozen or so telephone directories, and located it only 20 times (8 in the London book) - but it has lodged in my mind ever since I read John Buchan's "39 Steps". I find that the name has lodged in other people's minds too, from the same source. Where did these two authors get it from, within 2 or 3 years of each other? Unless Forster revised the name into his book, following some reaction to it from Buchan's, Forster's use must come first. The question which then arises is: can it be that Buchan saw Forster's MS in circulation, and thus subconsciously acquired the name? It is a fact that Buchan did use names which must somehow have lodged in his subconscious: for one example amongst a number, Hilda von Einem in "Greenmantle": von Einem was the name of the German Military Attache in Rome in 1914. Still, one would not think of Buchan as the type of man who would have read "Maurice" in MS: and the question then remains open, where did each author get it?

Yours,
 Rowland Bowen,
 Helston,
 Cornwall.

Dear Sir,
 However much the Editor might feel himself justified in lambasting the apparent apathy of the majority of CHE members in the third issue, which I did not see in time to reply for the fourth, I am led to wonder how much good such exhortation does, and whether, indeed, such criticism is quite fair.
 It is a sad fact, I admit, of most societies and organisations that the real work devolves upon a

few dedicated people, and always it is difficult for them to know how much support they really have. I belong to a religious organisation where almost all the work, at least locally, is done by unpaid servants for it has as a tenet of its existence no ministry, paid or otherwise. It is a constant worry for nominations committees to find people for service. But basically the Spirit upholds each and all in his service albeit active in the headlines or passive in a worshipping group. If there is this situation in the "normal" world, how much more must it exist, I think, for a group like CHE. To belong in the first place requires a declaration of a condition which so many unfortunately decry, and that declaration for many, especially for such as I in middle age (though still, I hope with a youthful spirit!) is a step that cannot be lightly taken. I for one could not suddenly abandon a life, albeit restricted and sublimating of sex, in which I have found happiness and satisfaction for so long. Joining CHE has liberated me and made me happier in many ways, not least by being able to meet so many pleasant, responsible and compatible people, but I must live my new life in CHE alongside my old and keep the two parts separate. Some may condemn for this, but it is my way and the only one for me at present.

For the young, I feel things are different and the climate of opinion is more liberal to enable them to act in ways I couldn't twenty years ago. I sometimes feel now I have sacrificed twenty years. But there must be many young people too for whom a declaration of gaiety and wholehearted immersion in the affairs of CHE are steps that circumstances do not permit them to take.

The least we can all do is to say "thank you" to every single one of the movement's officers, national and local. I especially thank the Chairman of my group whose steady

guidance and sunny common sense are an example to us all. Beyond that, exhortation will not shake apathy. People should be asked individually, "Can you do this?" If they can't, fair enough, but the fact of being asked might make them feel valued and elicit a voluntary offer of help, however humble, in future. Particularly do I feel, if I may put it bluntly, do the older and perhaps less personable members need to be asked. They have often sacrificed the most against an unsympathetic law and society and they need CHE. But youthful vigour and exuberance can be construed as impatience and dismissal of those so much in need and often with time to spare. They will rarely volunteer but will respond, I'm sure, to a welcoming request for help. Unless it is known after a first request that future requests would not be welcome, further attempts to elicit assistance should be made. The London document is "People, Not Paper", and if people matter, the hard task must be undertaken of tackling everyone individually, drawing each one in, and out, making him or her feel wanted. Few feel wanted if they simply listen to some general request for help from the table.

Nor are we all affluent to contribute generously to funds. No one should personally be out of pocket like the Editor, but let us not try to do too much, to run before we can walk. Make haste slowly; cut the coat according to the cloth. CHE is faced with a management problem - the mobilisation of its resources, human and financial.

I have very little time to spare. I try to attend my local group meetings and other events which attract me, especially the smaller and more intimate types of gathering. I hope I can contribute constructively to discussion and if I can only offer destruction, I shut up. I had a guest for the National Committee in December. I could stick stamps on

or address envelopes if I were free when asked. Perhaps I could do more, I don't know. I only know that I couldn't go demonstrating, lobbying or campaigning on the major issues. All right, I'm a coward. And lastly, as I said before, I can only thank all who feel they can.

But please, let's have no more general wailing and gnashing of teeth. Perhaps we can all assess as I have tried to do above what our contributions could be and tell our officers, but also let them come to us individually with their requests. It's even more hard work for them than exhortation, but I'm sure it would produce more profitable results.

Yours sincerely,
 John Shackleton,
 Hampton Wick,
 Kingston-upon-Thames.

Competition Winner

We are happy to announce the winner of the Lunch Christmas Competition.

Despite the lateness of publication last month, a few people were game enough to try and put words to the photo-montage of our notable PM conducting the buses.

The winning caption is-

"If I hadn't exposed myself to the opposition, I'd never be in this jam now!"

It came from Miss Mary Hill of Blackheath, London, who will be receiving two tickets for the Masked Ball by post.

Lunch will be there, complete with photographer- look out for the photos in the next issue of Lunch out on the 3rd March.

Nationwide Group News & Events

AS A RESULT OF THE UNAVOIDABLE DELAY IN PRINTING THE DECEMBER ISSUE, THERE HAS NOT BEEN ENOUGH TIME FOR ALL GROUPS TO SEND US INFORMATION TO INCLUDE IN THIS COLUMN.

ONLY MATERIAL SENT TO US SPECIFICALLY FOR INCLUSION THIS MONTH HAS BEEN USED. IT IS NOT OUR POLICY TO REPRINT INFORMATION FROM PREVIOUS MONTHS.

CARDIFF GLF

Chairman varies from week to week by general proposal/MEETINGS weekly Mondays at 7.30pm upstairs room Blue Anchor St Mary Street (Monumnet end)/They now have an emergency help service 7 days a week 24 hours a day with transport to provide immediate counsellng. Soon be leading a campaign to have books on homosexuality put on the open shelves of the library instead of. as at present, storing them in the Librarian's office. In February they will be taking a discussion on homosexuality for the Criminology group of the University. A Disco is planned for February.

CHILTERN CHE

CHAIRMAN Roy Saich/MEETINGS first Monday in the month at the Friends' Meeting House High Street Berkhamsted at 8pm. Social activities are held each month- in December a Christmas Party, and in January an Annual Dinner. At a meeting on January 3rd the past year's activities were reviewed, elections were held, and the programme for the coming year planned. INFORMATION

from Roy Saich at Chesham 4538.

LIVERPOOL CHE

CONVENOR Peter Norman/MEETINGS 1st Wednesday in the month. 2 Feb Discussion with local clergy. 16 Feb Vanentines Fancy Dress Party. 1 March Annual General Meeting- Reports on the past year, Election of Committee, Convenor, Future Policy. ALL MEETINGS held in the upper room The Gazebo Coffee Lounge 21 Duke Street Liverpool 1 INFORMATION from Peter Norman at 6B Cathedral Mansions Huskisson Street Liverpool L8 7LP/Pre-Christmas Party at the new regular venue a great success. Local version of FRIEND now in operation.

LONDON CHE - 11 Groups

LONDON GROUP 3

CHAIRMAN Brian Sewell/MEETINGS every Tuesday at 7.30pm/INFORMATION from the Group Secretary Stephen Walker 01-402 4489.

LONDON GROUP 4

CHAIRMAN Len Kelly/MEETINGS Wed 9 Feb 8pm Coachmakers Arms Marylebone Lane London W1. Formal meeting probably with local clergy- yet to finalised at time of going to press Formal meetings every 2nd Wednesday in the month usually at the above venue./INFORMATION from Len Kelly at 01-642 6397/Ian Harvey addressed the December meeting on Public Morality and Private Life-good attendance, lively meeting, many new members and guests.

LONDON GROUP 5

CHAIRMAN David Porter/MEETINGS alternate Tuesdays and Fridays with occasional outings. 1 Feb Dr T Schlicht on The Homosexual, His Family and His Relationships With Women. 11 Feb Michael Butler and Ray MacClelland on The Church and the Gay Person. 25 Feb A member of the National Council for Civil Liberties/MEMBERSHIP of this group is restricted to students and under-25's./INFORMATION from David Porter 3 Somerfield Road Finsbury Park London N4 2JN enclosing SAE please.

LONDON GROUP 7 Croydon

CHAIRMAN Wallace Grevatt/MEETINGS 1st Tuesday in the month. 1 Feb Talk and Discussion led by Bob Sturgess. The Homosexual Approach to Playwriting, Aversion Therapy and Coming Out. Informal events to be arranged/INFORMATION from Wallace Grevatt 'Mill View' Wray Lane Reigate Surrey. Reigate (74) 43555 5.30-7pm.

LONDON GROUP 8

MEETINGS 2nd & 4th Thursdays in the month/7 mile walk in Kent Sunday 26 March- ALL GROUPS INVITED See Knole and the Pencil Tree. Have cheapest beer in the UK at the Bucks Head Godden Green. Climb One Tree Hill (or walk round) Tea at Blighs Hotel Sevenoaks. Total cost about £1.25/INFORMATION from Vivian Waldron at 15 Bolton Gdns London SW5 01-370 1896.

LONDON GROUP 9

CHAIRMAN Richard Stanwell/Social evenings 1st Monday each month.

LONDON GROUP 10

CHAIRMAN John Saxby/MEETINGS 1st & 3rd Mondays in the month at The

Two Brewers Monmouth Street London W61.

LONDON GLF

MEETINGS every Wednesday 7.30pm All Saints Hall Powis Gardens London W11/INFORMATION from GLF, 5 Caledonian Road London N1 01-837 7174./DANCE January 29 at Hammersmith Town Hall 50p GROUPS+SPREADEAGLE+LIGHTS+PLUS.

MANCHESTER

Town Group

About 100 members. Monthly meetings and Socials as advertised in monthly newsletter. Liasing with student group to form befriending service/INFORMATION from The Convenor Barrie Kenyon c/o CHE 21, Kennedy Street Manchester 2 (or 061-225 0058).

MANCHESTER Young Peoples Group

CONVENOR Glenys Parry/MEETINGS every Thursday in the University Union others arranged less formally. Visitors welcome- overnight accommodation available. GLF group meets Wednesdays- ring Anglea Cooper 061-434 3124 for GLF details/Last terms activities included Anti-Reuben leafletting, Pantomime group, (The Pantomime was performed for deprived children) A football team was set up and operative. Awareness group began, but not certain of continuing Befriending Service set up and is flourishing- great need in this area discovered. Debate with Lord Arran- we told him not to pity us, Next Term's activities include more interaction with the local citizens of Manchester, the liberation of the Gay pubs, Snowball Fight, Football matches, Picnics, Swimming, UrbanGay Guerilla Warfare, Gay Dance (in the face of Police opposition we'll

fight for this) etc. etc./INFORMATION from Glenys Parry University Union Manchester 13 061-224 3446.

TRANS-PENNINE

Covering Blackburn-Accrington-Burnley- and Halifax-Huddersfield. MEETINGS 31 Jan Record Evening at Elland. 2 Feb Business meeting: Speaker on A Christian View of Homosexuality at Blackburn (Regular 1st Wednesday in month) 12 Feb (or 13th) Visit to Shibden Hall nr. Halifax. 1 March Business meeting Speaker Glenys Parry at Blackburn. INFORMATION from Trans-Pennine Gp c/o CHE 28 Kennedy Street Manchester 2/The NE Lancs group has been established for more than a year, but the Halifax-Huddersfield group is new, but shows signs of being a very vigorous one. During the Festive season we celebrated very well with a buffet in Blackburn, a superb Christmas meal in Heptonstall, and an Old/New Year Party in Huddersfield: the party went on and on and no one wanted to go home! The new year started well with Glenys Parry addressing a meeting in Elland; a serious discussion with light-hearted interludes, but was made to seriously consider active campaigning rather than simply social events. The following day, a meeting in Blackburn heard of the work of Inter-group and the possibilities inherent in their methods.

WIRRAL

CONVENOR Peter Thrower/ MEETINGS 2nd Monday of the month/We are hoping to arrange other events but are finding difficulty in getting accommodation- and we are still embryonic/INFORMATION from Peter Thrower 29 Kingsland Road Birkenhead LA2 9NN 051-652 8788

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A FEW TICKETS still available for the CHE GRAND MASKED BALL at Fulham Town Hall (Underground to Fulham Broadway) Friday 28 January 8.30-midnight. (Last Underground train to connect with all lines 11.59). £1 in advance or £1.25 on the night at the door. Licensed Bar, Prizes, Live Music, Cabaret. Get your tickets through your group, or by post, sending SAE to Box 29 Lunch Magazine, 25 Upper Montagu Street London W1H 1RQ.

Allen Paul Jones Esq., CHE member M/C, would like to contact someone in the music publishing business please.

TAROT- the life enhancer. Private consultations, and lectures to groups. Tom Clarkson Woking 62866 Young lecturer has room/s to let in terraced Clapham Common house near tube. Has garden. References. Telephone 01-622 0607

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MARCH issue of Lunch magazine out Friday 3rd- bigger and better! Photos of the new Executive Council members, the Masked Ball etc.etc. Order your copy now by post direct from Lunch or through your group or area representative.

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