

GAYS AND LESBIANS AGAINST THE RIGHT EVERYWHERE (GLARE)

"Police and the Right-Wing"

GLARE Position Paper for the City of Toronto's "Study of Relations between the Homosexual Community and the Police".

August 18, 1981.



This pamphlet was produced by Gays and Lesbians Against the Right Everywhere (GLARE).

GLARE is a group of lesbians and gay men dedicated to fighting the anti-lesbian and anti-gay attacks of the Right through educational work and cultural activities to affirm the pride of our communities. We oppose the sexism and racism of the Right, particularly the recent arrival of the Ku Klux Klan — which combines a heavy dose of anti-gay bigotry with its racism. For further information contact GLARE at Box 793, Station Q, Toronto, Ontario M4T 2N7.

Gays and Lesbians Against the Right Everywhere (GLARE) is a group of lesbians and gay men dedicated to fighting the anti-lesbian and anti-gay attacks of the right-wing through educational and political work and through cultural activities to affirm the pride of our communities.

GLARE responds to this investigation's request for deputations with several reservations. We are angry that the jurisdiction of this investigation does not include examination of the February 5th raids on the baths. It was the extent and brutality of these raids which led the gay community and many other groups to call for an independent inquiry. We reject the argument that these matters will be settled to the satisfaction of all before the courts. In Ontario, the functions of Attorney-General who is responsible for policing and of Solicitor-General who is responsible for the judicial system are the functions of one person. It is impossible to trust such a system.

We are also dismayed that the original intent of the City Council motion passed in March which established this investigation has not been implemented in the way that we understood it would. The person appointed to conduct this investigation, Arnold Bruner, lacks the public profile and wide community credibility which we would expect from a person holding this position. We have serious questions about Mr. Bruner's relationship with the Conservative Party given his background as an employee of William Davis and Allan Grossman.

We are disturbed that the efforts of Metro Council and the Police Commission in the areas of improving 'relationships with the community' are often merely public relations exercises or are perceived as being cynical efforts in intelligence gathering. We are also quite aware of the way in which the Province, Metro Council and the Police Commission have ignored the positive recommendations that came out of the Pitman, Maloney and Morand reports on the police.

We would like to preface our contribution to this investigation with these reservations. Our participation in this process is not intended to lend legitimacy to or in any way validate the process or findings of this investigation. However, there are certain points which GLARE would like to raise at this point.

In this position paper, GLARE would like to focus our concern on the following items: police relations with the gay and lesbian communities; police relations with other minority communities; the blatantly right-wing political role currently being played by the police; and what GLARE would like to see included in the findings of this investigation.

The February 5th raids on the baths by the police constituted the largest mass arrests in Canada since the proclamation of the War Measures Act in 1970. The brutality of the police actions, the abuse inflicted on the 'found-ins' and the senseless destruction

of property causes great alarm, disgust and anger in our community and in the population at large. But, the bath raids are not an isolated incident. Rather, they are part of a much larger pattern of police harassment and persecution of lesbians and gay men in this city. Hundreds of gay men are arrested - often through entrapment - in parks, in washrooms and in our own homes while our love for each other is branded indecent and criminal. The police fail to come to the aid of gay men and lesbians who are terrorized by queerbashers and rapists in the streets. Lesbian dances and meetings have been subjected to police harassment. Selective applications of archaic liquor laws have been used as a means of intimidating the lesbian community. Lesbians meet verbal abuse from the police on the streets.

The gay and lesbian communities are not alone in facing police harassment and violence.

The brutal murders of Albert Johnson and Buddy Evans at the hands of Metro police officers are symptomatic of widespread racism in the police force. Harassment and detention of Black people - on the pretext of hunting down 'illegal' immigrants - has led to ugly incidents such as the raids on the Gayap Rhythm Drummers, Honest Ed's and the Bloor Place Club.

Sexual violence against women - though - does not capture the attention of the police. The fact that only 2% of rape cases lead to convictions speaks volumes for the police force's attitude toward women. Perhaps, Metro's finest is too busy with the organization of their annual Miss Toronto Pageant.

It is important for us not to see police actions against our communities as being merely evidence of pervasive racist, patriarchal and heterosexist attitudes on the part of individual officers.

Police actions, especially over the last year, are part of a larger pattern which seeks to drastically shift public opinion and discussion to the right. On the pretext of enforcement of the 'bawdy house' laws in relation to the gay community and of the Immigration Act in relation to the Asian and Black communities, the police seek to criminalize large sectors of the population. The police seek to make gays and lesbians, and Blacks and Asians scapegoats for the general crisis in the economy and society which is felt by us all. We see the police playing a blatantly political and partisan role. Their actions are not restricted to random harassment of members of minority communities but to overt intimidation of the politically active parts of these communities.

Police harassment - including the laying of criminal charges - against people such as Kuldeep Singh Samra, a leader of the South Asian community, Dudley Laws, president of the Universal African Improvement Association and George Hislop and Peter Maloney could lead one to believe that the police are pursuing a systematic policy of intimidation of community spokespeople. The police raid on the Body Politic continues

to drain the paper of resources through long and costly court battles. Articles in the official police association periodical News and Views have attacked gays and lesbians, Jews, Catholics, Blacks, Asians and women. The finding of League Against Homosexuals literature in a police station shows a clear connection between the police and the ultra-right in this city. The huge police intervention in the municipal elections, combined with right-wing hate literature, helped to create an atmosphere of hatred and hysteria which led to the defeat of progressive candidates. It becomes impossible to believe there exists any commitment to a democratic process on the part of the police when we see the use of 'undercover cops' in our demonstrations and the common use of 'malicious prosecution' charges against those who stand up and complain of police misconduct. Similarly, the disconnecting of microphones at Metro Council during the budget hearings and the attempts of Police Commission Chairman Phil Givens to attacks the credibility of groups which participate in the Citizen's Independant Review of Police Actions fit clearly into a pattern where the police are playing a very political role: a role which seeks to undermine the credibility and the security of minority communities and shift the political situation to the right.

Widespread police harassment; rampant racism, sexism and heterosexism in the police force; and the use of the police as a clearly right-wing political force are the main features of the situation we face. It is in this context that GLARE situates its recommendations on what we think should be included in this investigation's findings. While there are specific and concrete measures which can be taken to deal with some problem areas in the police relationship to our communities, we also raise serious questions about the overall structure, function and nature of policing in our city and society.

The following are some of the immediate actions which must be taken as a prerequisite for improvement:

- a genuine independant inquiry into the bath raids and continuing police harassment including the use of undercover cops must be launched
- Roy McMurtry must be replaced as Attorney-General of Ontario. He and his Ministry have given the go ahead to continuing prosecution of the Body Politic, and the bath raids while their Tory Party continues to refuse to recognize lesbian and gay rights
- the 'bawdy house' laws in Canada's Criminal Code used to harass gay men and prostitutes must be repealed as should all laws against consensual sexual activity
- a more democratic structure must be developed for the Metro police commission which would include accountability to the community and a means for recall
- a genuine independant complaints board must be developed which would include representatives nominated by the gay and lesbian communities, women's groups, the Black and Asian communities and the labour movement
- the term 'sexual orientation' must be included in the Ontario Human Rights Code as a grounds for prohibited discrimination

- the police budgets for morality and intelligence should be eliminated. The funds should go instead to badly needed social services such as child care, rape crisis centres and battered women's shelters
- some of these funds could also be used for urgently needed mass education campaigns under the control of the lesbian and gay movements in the schools and the media directed against heterosexism
- Phil Givens, Paul Godfrey and the other members of the Metro Police Commission should be removed from office. They have lost all credibility in the eyes of our community.

These demands are important ones. They could help to begin to make our city a safer and more secure place for all its residents, including the lesbian and gay communities. But, along with measures like these, we need to rely on our own efforts to protect ourselves. The Gay Street Patrol, self defense classes and women's reclaim the night marches provide us with a protection far more profound than we could ever expect from the 'boys in blue'.

Clearly, the onus for improvements in relations between our communities and the police rests with Queen's Park, the Police Commission and Metro Council. Our responsibility lies in building a mass movement to get the police out of our bedrooms, out of our communities and out of our lives.

GLARE believes that there is an urgent need to look critically at the problems inherent in the structure of the police force, and the legal system. The police department is a large, armed and centralized bureaucracy insensitive to our needs and contrary to our interests. We have to ask who the police 'serve and protect' and for whom the laws they enforce were designed. The police do not serve the interests of lesbians and gays, women, minorities or working people. Who then do they serve?

We must look at the transformation of the police as part of changing society as a whole. Those police functions which are socially necessary - such as traffic control, the handling of violent incidents and the enforcement of health and safety legislation - can become more localized community-based and community controlled services.

Public confidence in the police cannot but fail to erode when we see the police protection of groups like the Ku Klux Klan or their protection of queerbashers and direct assaults on lesbian and gay protestors last June 20th. In response, we can only unite to fight back and call for an end to police violence and harassment.

***Picket Positive Parents -- Stop the Hate Campaign
Saturday, September 19; 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Yonge-Eglinton Centre