

We have spent the past weeks talking to people, reading articles in magazines and newspapers, reading historical works on homosexuals and anything else that related to the topic of this workshop. There are many people writing about the activities of the right from many perspectives. The perspective that seems most important to us is our own, that of lesbians living in Canada now. I am going to talk in general about the forms the attacks of their right take. We need to know about all the forms of attack in light of our particular vulnerability as lesbians. I am also emphasizing how what we think of as the right is connected to the power structures of patriarchal capitalism. The right is not just a bunch of political loonies.

We are presenting this workshop full of information not to increase our paranoia but to make some connections between our fears and the things which are happening to reinforce and promote our fears.

As lesbians, we are particularly vulnerable to attack. Because we are women, and because we are, by our very lives, a challenge to the idea of the family, an institution of this culture which has always been used to maintain the status quo and of course, the dependency of women.

The attack from the right seems to have its focus on us in our relations to children. Our right to parent and mother, our right to teach, our right to work in childcare. The so-called 'Moderate Majority,' a national organization of the fundamentalist right, has attacked the right of lesbians to bear children using artificial insemination. I know a lesbian who was pregnant using artificial insemination who was reluctant to let anyone know about it because she feared that her child would be taken by the state because she would be seen as an unfit parent. Our right to adopt children is attacked, and of course this organization often brings up the old fable, that we recruit girls to our perverted lifestyle by teaching in schools.

The right supports cutbacks in job sectors where women are employed. Again lesbians are hit hard, we are often single women, in low income and ~~ix~~ insecure jobs, we often have children and can find no daycare. The right consistently supports the establishment of right-to-work legislation. In the United States there are large right wing ~~■~~ lobbying organizations who put this position forward all the time. It seems clear that some members of the Social Credit government of this province also support this position. This can be seen in the legislation enacted to force striking public sector workers to return to work. There is also a concerted effort to remove the right to strike from public sector collective ~~xx~~ agreements. ~~xxx~~ Employers, in both the public and the private ~~xxxxx~~ sectors, are reluctant to provide protection against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Quebec is the only province which has legislation in place which fully protects homosexuals.

Right wing propaganda is directed against autonomous women. We do not fit into the traditional role, we are not 'real' women and therefore, violent attacks on~~x~~ us can be rationalized as being responses to outrage. As Helen mentioned there has been an increase of rapes of out lesbians in Toronto in past months. In the United States, in New York and San Francisco, violent attacks on lesbian women have increased. 'Queer-bashing' is on the rise and our visibility makes us vulnerable to these attacks.

Here in Vancouver the right has attacked those ~~xx~~ who support lesbians and our right to choose our lives. The previous City Council of Vancouver denied funding to the Vancouver Status of Women. Council members made it quite clear that part of the reason was that VSW is active in supporting lesbians, and puts lesbian issues forward in its work.

Another part of the reason VSW had trouble getting funding from City Council was the attitude of some Council Members toward abortion, and their oft repeated, and unfounded, contention that VSW provided abortion counselling. The right, again because of the emphasis on the sacred institution of the family, is opposed to women having access to ~~xxxx~~ abortion, and other health services and information about our bodies. This opposition takes its form not only in the so-called Pro-Life organizations, but in lobbies of parents in school districts who oppose sex education in schools. There is little discussion of sexuality in schools, this affects lesbians, especially young women who will have a difficult time finding out about their own sexuality in any positive way. In both the United States and in Canada the anti-choice forces are quite well organized, and well funded. In the United States there is a Bill before the Congress which could result not only in abortions being illegal, but also some forms of contraception could be illegal. This has already happened in Australia. There, an IUD is a murder weapon. In the last B.C. provincial election, anti-choice people conducted intensive door to door canvasses in areas where NDP candidates had taken pro-choice positions. We saw here in Surrey, last year, a hospital board was taken over by a majority of anti-choice members, and the abortion review committee was abolished. A doctor, who is also a Surrey School Trustee, changed her position from one in support of conservative values to a more liberal one, when she realized that the same people who were protesting to the school trustees about 'values' education in the schools were those who had interfered with the delivery of health services at Surrey Memorial Hospital where she was on staff.

There is no sex education in Surrey schools, but there is

racism committee in the Surrey Teacher's Association. This committee ~~was organized~~ ^{was organized} in recent years in response to the rising incidence of racial violence in Surrey schools. Because Surrey is one of the few areas close to the city where housing is relatively affordable there has been a large population shift into the area. Many of the new residents are East Indian. There are few East Indian teachers or other workers in the schools, but those who do work in the schools are active in their community as well. One of the school principals, who is East Indian, acts as ^{an} information source for community organizations, and for other schools. One of the members of the racism committee told me that they had investigated many incidents of violent confrontations in the schools between, usually, East Indian and white boys. In each investigation, without exception, the incidents were found to have risen from some incident of harrassment by whites. Some schools are trying to educate their students about cultures other than the Western European one, by visits to religious buildings, and by attempts ~~at~~ at understanding the history of other peoples. The teachers think that this will be helpful, particularly at the elementary level. What they are trying to produce in children, then, is tolerance. The major difficulty may be that the ~~parents~~ parents of these children are not tolerant - not of differences between themselves and anyone.

We have all been conscious of the intrusion of the Ku Klux Klan into Canada in the last 12 months. The KKK embodies for me all that I most fear in a right-wing organization. Their ~~chief~~ emphasis in the United States has been on racist violence, especially against blacks in the South. Here in Canada the Klan has started to organize. In Ontario, ~~the~~ one of the focusses of Klan activity has been against homosexuals. The Toronto Metro Police are well known for their harassment of blacks so that leaves homosexuals to the Klan. In an excellent article published in the Village

Voice the Klan position on homosexuals was quoted:

While many church people are duped by their brainwashed, pink panty preachers into believing that we ~~what~~ should merely pray for the homosexual, we feel that we must endorse the law of God, which calls for the death penalty for homosexuals. It is not our intention to put this matter up to discussion, or debate the matter, or start up a dialogue with a committee of queers as to their rights of sexual freedom. The law of God states the death penalty for homosexuals, and when God's laws ~~x~~ are ~~x~~ again enforced, the death penalty is what it will be."

It is important for us to recognize how the police work in relation to the right, and its organizations. There have been a couple of examples of this recently. In Greensboro, North Carolina five members of a far left group were murdered by Klan members. These men were charged, tried and acquitted of the charges. I was visiting my mother in San Francisco recently, on the news ~~it~~ there was a report of the fears of people in San Jose about an organizing rally being held by the Ku Klux Klan....

In Ohio recently there was a demonstration organized by the Klan in support of the police, who had shot a black person for no reason. In Toronto in February there was a raid of four bathhouses frequented by gay men. Over 200 men were arrested and charged with being ~~in~~ found-in or operating a bawdy house. The Right-To-Privacy Committee of Toronto sees this action of the police as ~~being~~ being connected with the provincial elections in Ontario. The NDP and Liberal candidates had paid 'lip-service' to the need for protection of gay men and lesbians. The raid undoubtedly helped the cause of the Conservatives in that election. The Committee also points out that these raids

and others of private homes where charges have been laid under the bawdy house laws give the lie to the decriminalization of sex between lesbians and gay men in 1969.

The police in Toronto have also made frequent raids recently in places where black people meet. These raids have been rationalized under the Immigration Act. People have been held in police stations for not carrying passports. The police, all over the country, have the right to detain persons on 'reasonable grounds' that they have acted illegally under the Immigration Act, in the ~~same~~ same way they can detain persons under the Narcotics Control Act.

And speaking of the state and the police, we must not forget that the War Measures Act is still in existence. This act was last used in 1972 during the so-called October Crisis. The federal government can declare martial law and mobilize the Armed Forces without reference to either Parliament or the people.

There are many other ways in which we can see that lesbians are vulnerable to attack, and to loss of the gains we have worked for with other women. We have only to look around us, to read the newspapers and magazines to be reminded that the demands and concerns of feminists are not, even yet, taken seriously. Just recently there was the example of women protesting against a particularly anti-woman display at the downtown Eatons' store in Vancouver. The man who spoke for Eatons could not understand, he said, why ~~we~~ women would not see the humour in a display which had a woman laid out on an examining table, as if she were in a doctor's office. Her legs were apart, a mannikin dressed as a doctor stood between her ~~her~~ legs, and in his hands he had a huge electric drill pointed at the woman's belly. ~~A~~ Eaton's spokesman said, "Violent? It's funny, it's meant to be good fun, just a funny operating room... We have

strict rules about displays, nothing that resembles violence of any kind is permitted."

I want to close with a quote from Kathleen Barry, who wrote 'Female Sexual Slavery.' "In knowing, in facing directly, we can learn how to chart our course out of this oppression, by envisioning, and creating a world which will preclude /it/. In knowing the extent of our oppression ~~we~~ we will have to ~~discover~~ discover some of the ways to begin immediately breaking the deadly cycle of fear, /and/ denial-through-hiding." We can take our knowledge of the work of the right and use it ~~to build action~~, not to paralyze ourselves with fear, *but to build action*.