

blazing star

chicago women's liberation union



LESBIAN MOTHERS



All lesbians face discrimination and oppression; each of us has experienced this. There are some of us, however, who face even more difficult situations, where the oppression is even more acute. One group like that is lesbian mothers. Like all lesbians, lesbian mothers must deal with the possible loss of jobs, family, and friends if they are found out to be gay. Like most women, lesbian mothers are likely to get low paying jobs if they can get any jobs at all. Like all mothers, lesbian mothers find it difficult to get adequate inexpensive child care.

Just trying to deal with these problems would be difficult enough, but lesbian mothers must deal with even more. Lesbians are generally seen as unfit mothers by straight society and because of that face the possible loss of their children through the courts. In such child custody cases the legal and financial burden is often great.

In order to be able to face these situations, lesbian mothers, even more than other lesbians, must have the support of the lesbian community. This support can take many forms - financial contribution, legal aid, emotional support, provision of childcare at community events, and so on. Sometimes such support is not forthcoming. The lack of support can be unconscious, as when we forget from time to time that there are mothers in our community. This is bad, but it is worse when the non-support is conscious, when women can not bring their children to places or events because the children are male, when different standards of childcare are provided for boys and girls, or when mothers are left out of activities.

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BLAZING STAR urges everyone in the lesbian community to support lesbian mothers and in particular the lesbian mothers group (see our last issue, Vol. 2, No. 2). Only if we are united can we win lesbian liberation and the liberation of all people. If we do not support lesbian mothers, if we divided our community, we are doing the work of the powers that be.

Recently there has been a policy enacted by the Lesbian Feminist Center (LFC) that shows lack of support and understanding for the situation of lesbian mothers. That policy states that no male children of any age will be allowed in the center. **BLAZING STAR** strongly disagrees with this policy and has urged the

LFC to reconsider. Until a change is made we do not feel that we can in any way encourage women to go to LFC activities. Because of that the CWLU, with the endorsement of **BLAZING STAR**, has decided not to post notices or publicize activities of the LFC. This means that we will not be publishing in **BLAZING STAR** information on the LFC. The CWLU office will continue to refer women to the LFC, but only with an indication of our opposition to their policy. We will continue to carry information on groups, such as the Black Lesbians and the Lesbian Ex-Mental Prisoners, who use LFC facilities, but who are not a part of the LFC decision-making collective. If anyone has questions about our policy, please call or write us at the CWLU, 3411 W. Diversey, 772-2655.

WORKING

PSSU Fights Anti-Gay Discrimination

The Pennsylvania Social Services Union (PSSU) last year won a contract which includes a clause that prohibits discrimination against its members on the basis of sexual or affectional preference. The PSSU included case-workers in mental hospitals and in welfare offices. After the contract was won, a bill was introduced into the Penn. State Senate which would prohibit the hiring of homosexuals and others as state police, workers at mental health institutions, and other state employment. If passed, the law would threaten the contract of the PSSU. The union has joined with the Pittsburgh Gay Political Caucus, NOW, and NAM to fight this bill. This represents one of the first times (to our knowledge) where a union has not only included a contract clause prohibiting discrimination against gays, but has also actively fought against anti-gay legislation.

One of the main forces, both in the initial effort to include gay rights in the union contract and later in the legislative fight was NAM, the New American Movement. NAM is a national organization that was founded in 1972 and has supported gay liberation since its founding. Its national office is in Chicago, at 1643 N. Milwaukee. For more information call them at 252-7151.

WRITE IN

In this and the last issue **Blazing Star** has printed three stories concerning trade union support of gay workers rights. Do you know of any other cases? What is your union's position? Write and tell us about this information or questions you have about unions: **BLAZING STAR** %CWLU 3411 W Diversey, Chicago IL 60647.

UFT Supports Gay Rights

New York (NGTF)--The following resolution was passed by the Executive Board of the United Federation of Teachers at its June 14th meeting in New York City:

"Whereas, the United Federation of Teachers has traditionally supported the civil and human rights of its members, and

"Whereas, the United Federation of Teachers recognizes the oppression of homosexuals in general, and homosexual teachers in particular, and

"Whereas, it is the responsibility of trade unions to provide their members with protections from all forms of

discrimination of the job,

"Therefore Be It Resolved that the United Federation Of Teachers continue to support the civil rights of all members including homosexuals, and will continue to represent equally all of its members in all UFT activities, associations, and organizations, without regard to sexual orientation."

This resolution by the UFT follows similar resolutions passed by the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, the California Federation of Teachers, and the District of Columbia Board of Education.



**Boycott
J.P. Stevens**

Much of the textile industry (located often in the South because of the cheaper labor there) is non-unionized. J. P. Stevens pays its employees 31% the National average wage for factory workers; they ignore minimum safety standards. They have turned whites and blacks against each other to prevent them from organizing.

In 1974 workers at a J. P. Stevens mill in Roanoke Rapids, NC, voted to be represented by the Textile Workers Union of America (TWUA). But two years later there is still no union contract. The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) has found J. P.

Stevens in violation of labor law 15 times and declared the TWUA victorious in a Georgia election. Workers are threatened and harrassed for supporting the union. To fight this the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU--formed by a merger of the TWUA and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union) has called for a boycott of J. P. Stevens products. This boycott has the support of the AFL-CIO. Dollars and Sense magazine (Sept. '76 issue) has more information on this. Support the boycott of J. P. Stevens products!

Worker Denied Safety Equipment

(LNS) A Seattle woman faces severe spinal problems and the partial loss of her sight, apparently because she was denied the use of safety equipment on her job as a construction worker.

Letha Neal, a black woman hired by Potelco, Inc. in Seattle, was the only woman worker on the construction site. She was hired on May 3, apparently because of pressure from the City Office of Women's Rights.

As soon as she was hired, she was put to work on the jackhammer, even tho it is unusual for an inexperienced worker to be given that job, according to a spokesperson for the Construction Workers Union.

Although Neal asked for a shorter drill bit to adjust the hammer to her height, she was turned down. Nor was she allowed to use a lighter-weight hammer,

even tho it was laying idle. She was never given any instructions on how to use the jackhammer, nor any safety instructions. Moreover, in apparent violation of state law, the company not only did not issue her safety goggles, but even refused her request for them.

After working five days on the jackhammer, Neal was admitted to a hospital with a build-up of spinal fluid and a substantial loss of vision in one eye. The vision loss may have been caused by concrete shavings lodging in her unprotected eyes. Her doctor is unsure whether or not and to what degree her disabilities will be permanent.

The City's Office on Women's Rights is investigation the case.

excerpted from NEW WOMAN'S TIMES

Rip-off At Jim's

Finding a job these days is hard. If you're a woman, it's especially hard. This makes women workers prey for all sorts of things: lower-paid jobs, the most tedious work, submissiveness, and sometimes even prostitution.

The day beofre Thanksgiving, I got a phone call from a restaurant I had applied at earlier, Jim's Restaurant on Southport in Chicago. "Come to work to night and try out. The other waitress isn't working out," the owner said.

I ironed my uniform, in order to look my waitressing best, and then went to work. I was greeted with a very friendly "hello" by the boss, Paul. I watched how he served the customers and took their money. Alertly I helped him with everything I was supposed to. Soon after, he started offering me wine. At first it seemed like a treat, but as the wine kept on coming and the boss's sweetness turned into a come-on, I knew something was wrong.

The come-on started subtle, so I tried to ignore it. The pay was \$2.25/hour, plus tips under the table. I The come-on increased. If I wanted this job I would have to sleep with

this goon. He thought I was drunk enough to fall for this, but I demanded my wages, cursed him out, and left.

Suggestions to exchange sex for work are more common than many men would think. As the depression gets worse more women will be faced with this sort of situation. Women have got to unite along class and sex lines in order to survive. Dignity, bread, AND roses.

Reprinted from the Industrial Worker



Editorial Note:

The preceding article on sexual harassment is the beginning of a series we want to run on the subject. We need your help--please let us know if you've ever been sexually harrassed on the job. Also tell us the name of the company, if possible, for use in a boycott list in the future. Write to: BLAZING STAR, c/o CWLU, 3411 W. Diversey, Chicago 60647.

LEGISLATION

GAY RIGHTS IN THE STATE

A major drive for gay rights legislation at the state level will be launched this winter. Four bills on the subject were introduced in the Illinois House of Representatives on May 6, 1976, but they could not be acted on at that time because that session of the legislature is devoted primarily to finances.

The bills will be re-introduced in the legislative session that begins in January 1977. The four bills would prohibit discrimination based on 'sexual orientation' in the areas of employment, employment in the state university and community college system, housing, and public accommodations.

The bills are sponsored by Leland Rayson (Democrat--9th District--Tinley Park), Susan Catania (Republican--22nd District--Chicago), and Robert Mann (Democrat--24th District--Chicago), along with ten co-sponsors.

The bills were researched by the Legislative Bureau, a state agency, at the request of Susan Catania. The research showed that there were over 80 places in the existing laws where discrimination based on race, sex, etc., is prohibited. Catania then took several of the most important areas (e.g., employment) and wrote bills that would amend the existing laws to add the phrase 'sexual orientation' to the list of types of discrimination.

After the bills have been introduced, they are expected to be sent to the Human Resources Committee for hearings. Anyone who has experienced discrimination because of their sexual orientation is welcome to present testimony, either oral or written, at the hearings. If you can give testimony, or want to help out in any way, call the Gay Rights Task Force of the Alliance to End Repression at 427-4064.

Blazing Star, in conjunction with women from the Gay Rights Task Force, will be sponsoring an educational forum on gay rights legislation in late October. For more information, see the article on page 7



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The gay rights bill at the federal level, sponsored by New York Congresswoman Bella Abzug, has a new number. It is no longer HR 5452; it is now HR 13928.

HEALTH

Save Cook County

Cook County Hospital is one of only three public hospitals in the county. (The other two are Cermak at Cook County jail, and Oak Forest, a chronic disease hospital.) It's open to all people in Cook County; it doesn't discriminate against minority people. Private hospitals are often closing their doors to Medicaid patients and the costs at such hospitals are soaring out of reach for both poor and middle income people. Cook County Hospital is the only hospital accessible to many people.

There are many weaknesses in the health care, but County does have excellent programs which other hospitals don't have. Its Trauma and Burn Units handle many cases not treatable elsewhere. For women particularly County provides good, inexpensive care--second trimester abortions are available there as is mammography.

In spite of this County may be closed down. Leaders from Chicago Medical Schools have questioned County's right to exist as a teaching and service institution. Spokespeople for private hospitals have suggested County be closed. If this happens there will be no public health facility for the people of Chicago.

The Committee to Save Cook County Hospital has called for people to speak out against this. For more information get in touch with the Committee at 9 S. Kedzie 60612, ph # 826-2244, 826-4949.



Health Fraud

SAN FRANCISCO--The Haight-Ashbury Women's Clinic began to suspect that the laboratory which processed their Pap smears, Ocean View Medical Laboratories, Inc., reported scarcely any abnormalities. After the clinic sent some test slides to them which they knew were cancerous, and Ocean View reported them as normal, the Women's Clinic recalled their past 17 months of slides--384 of them. 295 were returned and were retested. As a result of the retests it was determined that 15 women had not been informed of their health problems. Several of these women have been traced.

Unfortunately the Public Health Clinics of San Francisco also used Ocean View, and there are currently no funds to rescreen the 9000 slides they have sent to them. Legal action against the laboratory is pending.

Reprinted from NEW WOMAN'S TIMES



Howard Brown Memorial Clinic

Howard Brown Memorial Clinic (HBMC) is a VD clinic for the gay community. It tests and treats people; its clients are mostly gay men who frequently receive inadequate treatment at other clinics. HBMC faces a cut-off of its insurance and possible closing of the clinic unless they raise money to cover the greatly increased insurance rates. If anyone wishes to support the clinic, they should contact *BLAZING STAR*, % CWLU, 3411 W. Diversey, 60647.

LOOKING AT THE NEWS

Lesbian Activists March Downtown

"Women loving women is a right, not a crime!" was one of the rallying cries intoned by an estimated 75 lesbians marching through Chicago's Loop on Saturday, August 7. Parading behind a banner that proclaimed "Lesbians Unite, Break Tradition's Chains", we celebrated Lesbian Pride Week by publically protesting against our oppression.

Following a sidewalk route, we set off from State & Wacker at approximately 2:30 pm. We continued on State St., then walked over to the Civic Center Plaza, past the Federal Building, and proceeded along Jackson St. to Grant Park. Along the way we wore lavender armbands, carried protest signs, and often raised both our voices and our clenched fists. Shoppers crowding the sidewalks moved out of the way as we proceeded forward, and showed little reaction besides blank or disapproving stares.

A few onlookers did voice their sentiments regarding lesbianism, however. While crossing the Civic Center Plaza,

we came upon a long-haired bearded man who shouted "You people are sick!" Our instantaneous cheering and cries of "Dyke Power" silenced the man. Elsewhere positive reactions were expressed by a handful of men who shouted "right on!" at us.

After the march, a rally was held in Grant Park, in the circular plaza around the statue of Abraham Lincoln. Several speakers praised the spirited march, and called for continued action against society's abuse of lesbians.

Among the speakers was a representative from Lesbians for Equal Rights, the organization responsible for coordinating Lesbian Pride Week. She urged that all those wanting to participate in future events as lesbian activists join LER, which meets regularly on Saturdays at 4 pm, 842 W Newport, 3rd floor.

As the rally ended, a kissing exchange took place. It was an appropriate closing for an event clearly demonstrating our lesbian solidarity.



Members of *BLAZING STAR* participate in the Lesbian Pride demonstration in the Loop on August 7.

Gay Rights Educational

BLAZING STAR, the Lesbian Group of the Chicago Women's Liberation Union, is beginning a series of educational forums on topics of interest to the lesbian community.

The first such forum will be on the subject of Gay Rights Legislation. It will be held on Sunday, October 31, at 3 PM, at Kartemquin Film Studios, 1901 W. Wellington (near Damen, between Diversey and Belmont).

There will be speakers from the Chicago Women's Liberation Union and the Gay Rights Task Force, and discussion afterwards. Childcare will be provided. For more information, call *BLAZING STAR* at 772-2655.

LOOKING AT THE NEWS,

continued on next page

Women's Music Festival

On the week-end of August 20 thru 22 2,000 women from all over the United States, Canada, Italy, and the world over met in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan for a very enjoyable, very sharing cultural event. There was folk, blues, and rock music, all the best in women's music. Topically the music was just as varied. There were songs about lesbians, third-world women, mothers, women in prisons, and working class women. Saturday night there was a dance with a San Francisco women's rock band, BeBe K'Roche. We learned such newly written dances as "Coming Out", probably the only square dance about lesbians. There was also a play by and about lesbians. One of the high-points for me which really expressed the mood of the event was when Holly Near sang "Nicolia", a song about a woman factory workers who learned to organize. During the harmony part, the women in the audience joined Holly Near by spontaneously standing and linking arms and singing the refrain, "harbour me", over and over. It felt very good to be part of two thousand beautiful women embraced in harmony, singing words of such collective significance.

Some of the other performers were CT & April, Maxine Feldman, Willie Tyson, Ginni Clemmens, New Harmony Sisterhood, Andrea Weltman, Margie Adam, Woody Simmons, the Be Be K'Roche Rock Band, Teresa Trull, Meg Christian, Holly Near, Gwen Avery, and Sally Piano. A Boston Women's Film Collective was filming the festival. The footage will be used for

two TV programs--one about the women's festival and the other about lesbians.

I want you to understand, though, that this was not just a spectator sport. Women didn't just come, listen to music, and go home. Instead, everybody took care of everybody else. We each signed up for a workgroup when we registered; either child-care, food preparation, first aid, security, or registration desk.

There was a big tent with toys and loving women where mothers could leave their young ones. There were two meals each day. There was a well-equipped first aid tent, staffed by people who knew health care. The registration desk was open throughout, so that people could register, sign up for work, or get information.

Security was probably the hardest job. This meant keeping men out and keeping women calm about men who would come by to be voyeurs and try to get in. Non-violence was the philosophy employed. When the male troublemakers appeared, those on security gave the signal and everybody womaned the gates arms linked. Due to this well-organized procedure things were kept under control. As one woman on security put it, "These men aren't really dangerous; they're just coming to look. They can't understand why women would want to spend a weekend without any men around."

It was really comfortable to be a lesbian in this environment, with all the lesbian couples out in full lavender.



Translator Needed

If anyone can translate Scandinavian languages, especially Swedish, please contact the CWLU at 772-2655, ask for Chris. I am working on translating some papers from the Homosexual Socialist Group in Sweden and work like someone to check my translations.

Lesbians Are "Mighty Fine"

Along with the rest of the paraders, I shouted out "Three-Five-Seven-Nine, Lesbians are mighty fine!" as we trooped downtown on August 7 in the Lesbian Pride March. This particular one of our protest cries impresses me because of its positive note. Much too often we're viewed in a negative light by others, and it is a sorry fact that we also hurt ourselves too often with defeatist notions regarding our sexuality. Self-confidence and self-assertion are not easily had, we all know, when others deride, punish, or deny the very existence of something as intrinsic to being as one's sexual instinct.

There is a need for us to tell ourselves that we are "mighty fine". I personally am a great believer in the power of positive thinking, and I am not ashamed to say that I tell myself such things all of the time. If each one of us would get up every morning and say to herself "I am, I am beautiful," we might muster enough good feeling to counter the belittling remarks usually uttered with reference to homosexuality.

Perhaps such a suggestion seems overly simplistic. How much good, you might justifiably ask, will self-promoting statements do when a co-worker cracks a queer joke, or when a supposedly straight woman teases you with advances, or when a parent strongly disapproves of your same-sex preference? Not much good at all. What you tell yourself has to be consistent with what you tell others. We must not hide or apologise for the fact of our love. We must not silently accept abuse. By speaking out courageously, self-respect is won, and with it can come the respect of others.

At one time or another, each of us has experienced the dreaded fear of losing a job, or the approval of parent, friend, or acquaintance, simply because of our sexual preference. We're all very aware of what the closet is. However we do not all know that sometimes such fear is unfounded, and that most of the time it would be better to be without a so-called friend or parent or employer who will not accept you for what you are. Why should we be afraid

of losing people who disdain us. Living in fear is not living at all. Hiding one's loving self is the epitome of self-denial.

Speaking from the standpoint of my own personal experience, I can say that acting with confidence and candor regarding my lesbianism has been rewarding. Having explained to my mother that I am a lesbian, I was met with her loving acceptance as well as her encouragement. When my male employer asked me out on a date, and I responded by telling him that I date only women, I not only kept my job, but was treated with the same respect and friendliness that I had received before. When my upstairs neighbor, a straight woman, heard me trying to persuade another neighbor that my lesbianism is a perfectly natural thing, she joined in the argument-- on my side.

These are only a few of a number of such occurrences; I think many of you have known similar experiences, too. Hopefully, we will keep working toward self and social acceptance, we will keep believing what we know to be true, that we are "mighty fine".



Who We Are

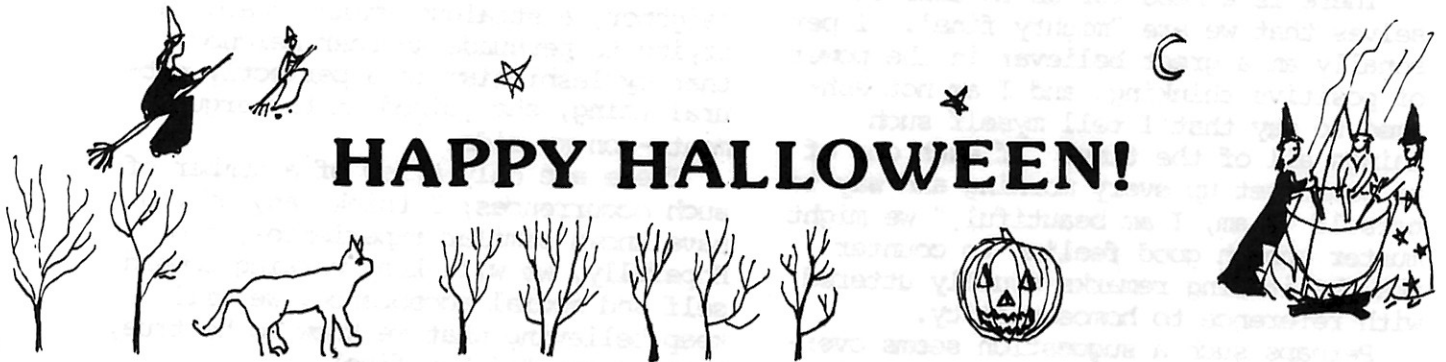
BLAZING STAR is a newsletter for the lesbian community, published by the Lesbian Group of the Chicago Women's Liberation Union. As lesbians who are active in the women's liberation movement, we want to educate all women, heterosexual and lesbian alike, about the oppression of lesbians, as well as keep our lesbian sisters informed of what is happening in our own community.

The Chicago Women's Liberation Union is a city-wide organization that works to end the oppression of women and of other oppressed people. The CWLU office is at 3411 W. Diversey. If you want to find out more about CWLU or **BLAZING STAR** stop by or give us a call at 772-2655.

Correction

The last issue of *Blazing Star*, dated July 1976, was listed as Volume 2, No. 1. This is incorrect—it is really Volume 2, No. 2. The real Volume 2, No. 1 was the issue dated January 1976. Therefore, this issue, dated October 1976, is Volume 2, No. 3.

We are sorry about this error and any confusion it may have caused. We made this mistake because of the long delay between issues, and because we did not have the previous issue on hand when we were doing the July issue.



HAPPY HALLOWEEN!

- I would like more information about CWLU.
 - I would like to subscribe to **BLAZING STAR**.
- Enclosed is \$3 for 10 issues.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Send to: CWLU, 3411 W. Diversey, Chicago 60647



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