

FREE

AGAINST PATRIARCHY

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IN THIS ISSUE -
'From Politically Gay
to Publicly Bisexual
to Personally Celibate'

Perhaps having just one article in the first issue, albeit a long one, could be seen as a poor start.

We see it more as a gentle run in and a time-effective way of seeing how many people are politically interested in fighting patriarchy and more to the point, talking about the struggle through this medium. Many admit patriarchy is all pervading but there seems to be no magazine which was bringing all the strands together — linking the nuclear threat with patriarchy as well as the destruction of the eco-system, the denial of civil liberties to minority groups and wimmin, violence as a tool of patriarchy and capitalism as a system devised by patriarchy etc — and that was also available to a mixed readership. Thus a cover was added to the article and we're having a go at launching a discussion forum on what we see as the root source of the present lack of quality of life.

The article is long and in many respects isn't a single subject thesis. Rather it interweaves the personal and the political, past experience, future hopes and present contradictions.

Whatever your views on the paper and on the idea of an ongoing discussion journal, please write to us. If you have a paper you'd like printed, also get in touch. We hope you don't think it is a poor start. Let's hope it won't be a poor future either.

From Politically Gay to Publicly Bisexual to Personally Celibate



PART 1

It was in December 1982 that I finally "came out" to the world as Gay. A year later I was enjoying a relationship with a wumun. Only two months on I am celibate. No doubt various assumptions could be made from that first sentence, many of them wrong. What if anything it commits to one line is an evolution of political thought and change of positions, something I hope to bring out in the following paragraphs.

I had been aware of a homosexual side in me since about the age of 15. At that time I was infatuated with my best friend. The reverse wasn't true and when I told him what I felt, he puked up all over the dining room and a good friendship was over, the chances of my risking telling anyone else silenced for another four years. In the meantime there were two other infatuations and the end of my life at school. I had realised that I was also physically attracted to the opposite sex but rarely mentally and I had always had trouble communicating with wimmin at school. Sometimes I felt that I was attracted to men because of this communication problem.

Over a year after leaving school I came to college in Manchester. I joined the Polytechnic Gay Society and in my very first week went along to the Poly's own Gay disco, held in the Aytoun building. I also joined the Liberals (I now question what kind of commitment I had to them; a lot of the things I did were for the image of doing them) and paradoxically it was them who showed me around the Gay scene, helped me build up my self-confidence and list of Gay friends and eventually provided me with my first homosexual experience. The Polytechnic Gay Society had made little move to make me feel at home, content with mutual gratification rather than activity, and I hadn't returned after the first meeting. Also still scared of the reaction I might get from my

heterosexual friends if they found out, it was obviously more convenient to use the Liberals as a cover for my meetings with other homosexuals.

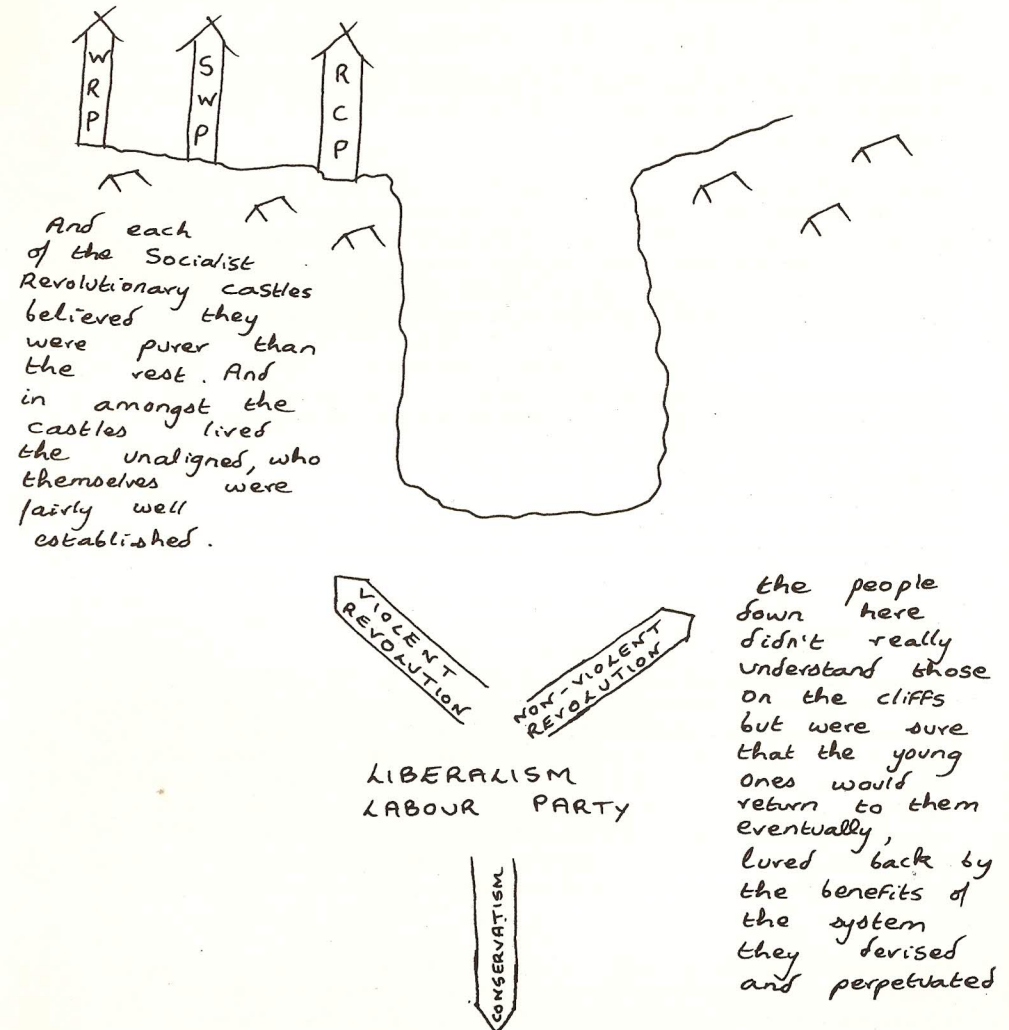
However they opposed my "coming out" and it was soon after December 1982 that I left the Liberals, thinking them too wishy-washy. I then classed myself as a radical Liberal. At that time I had already been elected to the Student Union Executive as a non-sabbatical. (I stood for this with a view to being elected a sabbatical — more power?).

"Coming Out" was only able to take place because by that stage I had managed to tell the closest of my friends anyway without any repercussions. I suppose there was a point that I reached where I could say "Well, if everyone else hates me, it still doesn't matter". Not that they did. I was in three close-knit groups; a Hall of Residence, my course and in the clique that got involved in the Union. The latter try so hard to be "right on" that, if only for the sake of their political credibility, they welcomed me with open arms. As an apolitical Gay I wasn't even a threat. The people on the course reacted well and in some respects the process was an anti-climax. There was still however a great feeling of power and excitement, of what could be defined as Gay Pride. Suddenly the nice boy that lived down the corridor was a "nice boy". I was labelled as Gay and came out as such. The fact that I considered myself bisexual was kept for close friends and the placating of a shellshocked mother. During a Student occupation I finished an autobiographical play and with publicity for that in the Student newspaper, I was well advertised as the "Gay one" by the time the sabbatical elections arrived. I was still largely apolitical as regards my sexuality. I didn't want to get involved. I was a "normal" person who happened to be Gay. I looked normal, I acted very normal, I was frightened and put off by the "effeminate" image portrayed in the press. I continued to feel that talking to people individually was the way to change attitudes. Gay Pride marches only helped the marchers.

The reaction of my Hall changed a lot of this. I stood for a sabbatical position on the Executive as an "Independent" aiming to make the Union work for Students, rather than as a debating hall for various left political factions. (Simply on the grounds of policy on homosexuality, I classed my Liberal base as more progressive than the Labour Party Socialists.) During the campaign a number of my posters were defaced with anti-Gay slogans and in my final hustings speech, I publicly declared that I would be fighting this bigotry all the way if elected and that I was proud to be Gay. The tide had turned.

The fact that I won my election meant that I was suddenly very popular amongst those I might be able to help. Trotskyist Gays got to me first. Initially I thought them too serious, picking up my sexism every time it occurred, correcting me at every mistake. Yet in the four months that they had a major political input into my life, I feel that I lost a lot of my Liberal naivety and became far more politically aware. Very soon after winning the election on an Independent ticket, I was involved in one of those Socialist political factions I had sought to replace. Trusted by very few at this "change of sides" I simply "did" to prove my beliefs. I became heavily involved in the Lesbian and Gay Liberation Campaign and began making the connections between sexual politics and capitalism, and from there capitalism and the wrongs in our

society. By June 1983 I was anti-capitalist and found myself going along with the majority of what my Trotskyist friends were saying. I had given up my course because it was preparing me for a career in management. I argued with many of my old friends over Ireland and the monarchy. I had eradicated a lot of sexist language out of my vocabulary though I still had had very little contact with wimmin. Hooked on the idea of non-monogamy I proclaimed "Sex is fun" and slept with a number of friends. Any talk of emotional involvement was countered by arguments against possession. I was tolerant towards S—M, Paedophilia, Transsexuality and Transvestism. It was important to be seen as Gay rather than Bisexual as it was a politically stronger statement. I went on a Gay Pride march in the Netherlands.



What I could not grasp was the Utopia that would follow the revolution or even how the revolution would take place. An added complication was that I was a pacifist and didn't feel that killing the capitalist bastards was really going to help anything. Internationalism, secured by violent revolutions taking place at different times, seemed a far away ideal, which to me with the violent aspect, wasn't particularly idealistic; I didn't go along with the argument that the violent revolutionaries were the true pacifists for post revolution, peace would reign. To me supporting violence in certain circumstances was supporting violence full stop. By July 1983 I told the Trots that perhaps they were sweeping me along too fast and that I would have to step back a bit. Pre-college friends reinforced this with their "personal is political" views, that any step we make is a step.

By the time I took office in August I saw myself as a Socialist and indeed looking for a party. I joined Labour believing that we must work within and change it. I was quickly disillusioned.

I was also infatuated with a Lesbian who I would pop round and see probably too often and with whom I would never discuss politics, especially as I knew she was anti-bisexual and pro-separatist. I was living under the ideal that Lesbians and Gay men should work together. I made sure that the Polytechnic Gay Society became a Lesbian and Gay Society and worked hard to help get as many people as possible to the Student Lesbian and Gay Conference in Belfast.

What my friendship with the Lesbian did reveal to me though were the big differences between the Gay men's community and that of the Lesbians. The latter seemed to be more community orientated, often with separatist elements present. I learnt of Lesbian "ghettoes" and even communities that were too close-knit for comfort. Generally though there seemed to be more caring, less casual sex. One Trot put it that "Gay men, often married, could only have casual relationships as anything deeper might blow his cover. Wimmin are in such a bad way anyway that they have little more to lose by proclaiming their Lesbianism". I didn't see it like that. To me it was the conditioning that was different. Men were proud, inhibited about their feelings, more insecure. They had casual attitudes towards other people as a defence, the casual sex was an extension of this. The end result was isolation. Nowhere was it more apparent than at Aytoun. Here men would stand around the bar, often alone, or dance alone or with a partner. There would be very little physical contact. At the same time the wimmin would be dancing in groups, hugging each other 'Hallo' or just hugging. I envied that but knew personally, that I was touch-phobic and still strung up on images, ie very male. I remained busy with the Lesbian and Gay campaign and in one person's words became "the No 1 'out' poof at the Poly". I didn't care that I was recognised as "oh you know the Gay one on the Exec" and would often camp it up a bit. In that respect at least I had become less inhibited.

Events took a dramatic turn when I then became very attracted to a bisexual Lesbian, who I shall call Robyn. She had come to see me about the Belfast Conference, and about the attitude to Bisexuality in the Lesbian and Gay Society. I replied that I didn't think it really mattered (in our Society, I knew

that hostility existed outside). An ensuing conversation lasted 3 hours; it was quite clear that we got on very well. I was excited by the first talk I had heard of non-violent revolution. It seemed to fit in so well. At school I had been the 'ecology nut', some of my work in the union had been on environmental issues. Now a whole "radical" political viewpoint became apparent to me. An Eco-Socialism or an Eco-anarchism, for I had already realised that going through parliament was not the way. A non-violent anarchistic movement seemed all encompassing — no hierarchical structure, everyone helping to change things on a personal is political basis against capitalism that oppressed the working class, wimmin, other 'subversive' groups and ecology/the environment. A revolution to bring about de-centralisation and peace would use these points in the fight.

I was very excited, I left all groups that weren't campaign groups, and started to once again believe that idealism was possible and was in fact the only solution. Anything less was a compromise that wouldn't bring lasting change.

Living ideals continued as Robyn and I became more emotionally involved and then physically. I knew there would be hassles about being bisexual. A Liberal ex-friend had once been surrounded by Lesbians in the City Centre and had been told to stay away from the bisexual wumun he was having a relationship with. I didn't feel this would happen but as Robyn was new to Manchester, I was worried that a public relationship with a man would lessen the level of acceptance into the Lesbian community. (I had heard talk from wimmin about "proper" or "real" Lesbians). Robyn felt that I had more to lose, but as an isolated Gay man there was no community to cut me out.

We decided that if we wanted to be together, then we shouldn't hide our affection for each other. We saw gender as irrelevant. As bisexual people, the sex of the other person didn't affect our feelings for the mind and character of that person. (Robyn was largely anti-man but pro-person. She questioned how "male" I was for instance). We based our relationship on being assumptionless. Beyond the basis of a hug we would build our relationship each time we met, total honesty and openness allowing us to do this. Trust was obviously imperative. We realised that other people would place assumptions and expectations on us. They wouldn't understand but we did and that was what mattered. We refuted at every opportunity that we were a "couple". At the Belfast Conference we were labelled "boyfriend and girlfriend" for holding hands and kissing. I retorted that two Lesbian wimmin doing the same at that conference wouldn't be labelled as lovers and that an assumption like that was particularly sad coming from people who fight the heterosexist assumption. I came out as a Bisexual.

This joint statement caused a variety of reactions. To the men, there seemed to be a threat. During the previous year I had quoted Mario Mieli on how everyone is really bisexual to a couple of gay men and had had very hostile receptions. Now I was told that I must be politically Gay, that I was wishy-washy, that I was being trendy, wanting the cake and eating it, to be part of the struggle but not, and that there was no such thing as bisexuality. There was little reasoning behind their rhetoric. Often it was sour grapes or shock that their assumption that I was homosexual/gay was shattered. I told them that I was Gay AND

Bisexual and that there was no contradiction in those statements. That Gay is a word to describe a lifestyle and an attitude and that I still identified with the Gay community.

For Robyn there was also some "sour grapes" — so you prefer men to wimmin etc, but the debate was largely centred on trying to define bisexuality and see whether or not it was compatible with Lesbianism. One attempt put it that "if support and main relationship comes from a gay world, then that wumun is a Lesbian, "whereas a bisexual was seen as a wumun who has relationships with other wimmin but who draws support from men. Robyn, with her strong separatist tendencies was therefore 'OK'. However myself, as an isolated gay man with no community would draw support from whichever relationship/s I was involved in at the time. We both retorted "I am me".

On the theory of bisexuality an all male workshop at the Belfast conference tried to define it. Was it by physical activity or by love/emotional attraction? The problems of labelling were very apparent but the men felt it was important to try and reach a consensus definition simply because of the attitude of the Gay community. Are you bisexual if you sleep with men and wimmin? Personally I had considered myself bisexual years before I had slept with someone. I felt sexual activity was irrelevant. I was therefore even more interested by the fact that the concept of bisexuality seemed a challenge or threat to many homosexual men. We struggled over the definitions of Gay again and how Gay often conjures up homosexual man. Perhaps, we felt, in a time of labels, we must explain our bisexuality as a personal thing. It seemed a domestic matter for the Gay world and that we must challenge these cop-out arguments that were often as elitist or as bigoted as heterosexual attitudes towards homosexuality.

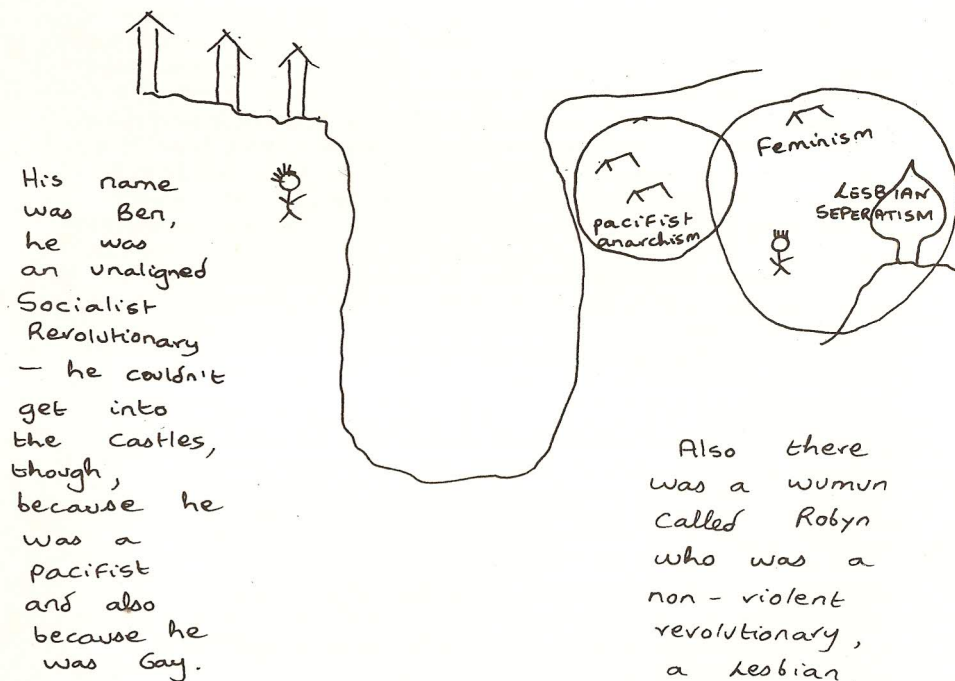
In the wimmins workshop, they attacked labelling even more:

M — I am bisexual, and I am discriminated against by gays and heterosexuals. I get really hurt when people here say I have nothing to give the campaign. I feel so lonely when no-one will accept me because I'm labelled "bi", even other gays reject me, particularly lesbians. I don't fit in anywhere.

J — Labels are too rigid. You say "I'm gay" or "I'm het" but it doesn't really explain you. Emotions and sexual feelings span a whole spectrum from hetero- to homo-sexual but we only recognise three categories. I know it sounds cumbersome but I'm a Lesbian with bisexual emotions. I fancy men, they turn me on. I love men but I never sleep with them.

S — What is sexual feeling anyway? When does affectionate contact with a man or wumun become sexual? I refuse to classify myself at all if I can, but no-one accepts that. They all want to know why. When I say "because I don't fit any of your labels" they just laugh.

And one of the settlements on the other side was radical feminism, within which there was a castle called Lesbian Separatism, which was an open castle compared with the Socialist Revolutionary ones because it was open to wimmin. As a result most men tried to stand on the building ground when the "castle" was being erected, though most lived on the other cliff anyway ... being men. But here is the story of one man ...



K — We all agree that labels are too narrow but we all still use them to make us feel secure, to give us an identity with a peer group. We can't really define something as vast as sexual emotion into limits. I think it would be more realistic to replace heterosexual and homosexual with 'only het' and 'not only het', then bisexuals could feel they belonged.

Emerging from the workshops was an interesting insight into the different approaches taken by the men and wimmin, which I shall return to, and the differences in Feminist approach. Lesbian-identified-bisexual was the label Robyn begrudgingly took on.

The relationship itself had a number of insecurities. I felt that there was a pressure from the Lesbian community on some of its members to be more separatist. I also felt that it was inevitable that Robyn would eventually stop seeing me and put all her energies into wimmin. (I wrote at the time — "I'm sitting in the lounge. Robyn is in another room talking with wimmin. I'm waiting for her to come and see me. But before she does an alarm clock goes off. Then Robyn does come in. "Oh well that's it, Ben, the borrowed time is up. Feel free to sit here if you want but now you'll be waiting for nothing". And she went to the wimmin and never came back.") The attitudes of men we met when together strengthened this belief and also made me feel very bad being a male, "indulging in heterosexuality" I was most insecure when Robyn was with other men. I could see a beauty in Lesbianism, both objectively and subjectively but nothing positive about being 'replaced' by a heterosexual man. I don't feel I was possessive, simply insecure due to the isolation. (I would also maintain that in battling against the Gay community and heterosexual expectations I stopped running my life through images.) Sometimes this nervous insecurity, especially in a group situation would show up the worst of my male traits. Our relationship was largely behind closed doors person to person, maybe it was this fact that allowed the ideals to continue as long as they did. After 2 months I began to feel a little more secure although Robyn by then had a wumun lover and unbeknown to me was having doubts about how much she was getting out of our relationship.

When it ended, I at first felt that the ideals had crumbled and lost faith in my political ideology. However once I had emerged from the subjective winge I realised that the ideals were still possible, external circumstances had meant that they wouldn't work now. Gender couldn't be ignored. Sexist men made us both angry, but it also made it harder for Robyn not to see me representative of a man.

Other separatists weren't keen to have relationships with wimmin who were having relationships with men. Robyn wanted to have relationships with them. Long term objective priorities and personal feelings encouraged Robyn to become separatist, not out of a pure hate of men, but out of a realisation that men must help themselves. The reasons for my subsequent celibacy are my personal thoughts on how I will live my politics, politics that evolved to fruition at the end of the relationship with Robyn, that evolved through talking to her and reading radical feminist literature.

PART 2

I feel that I am only just becoming aware of the real nature of wimmin oppression (and consequently mens) and that in the past, my anti-sexism has only taken me as far as my primary concern for self has let me. I still catch myself defending men for no other apparent reason but of the conditioned male bonding and masculinity within myself.

What I have begun to see and feel is the extent of the patriarchal system and the methods and reasons it uses to perpetuate itself by setting up a hierarchical system of "better-thans". Before, I had slagged off Capitalism, oppression of wimmin, oppression of Gays, of the working class, without seeing why these things were there. As a male, with my own interests at stake, I failed in the past to make the connections between those in control (men) and what they controlled (furtherance of the patriarchal system). I didn't link up the State with man, Capitalism with man, violence with man, destruction of the environment with man, structuring of society and enforcing definition (them/us, friend/enemy, wumun/man) with man. Now I do.

The more I think about my past, from my middle class upbringing to the events of the past year, the more I can see the ways in which I was conditioned (by family, school, media, by the conditioning of others that was going on around me) and the ways in which I have unfortunately responded to that conditioning. I can see instances in the past when I have replicated some of the worst of these things and in doing so furthered sexism and the domination of man over other men and wimmin. (Some things may already have been apparent in the brief history you've already read; I won't point them all out.) Being Gay has perhaps helped me become more aware of these things but I can see much wrong in the attitudes I used to hold as a so-called "right-on" Gay person, and much wrong with the attitude of the majority of Gay men, often no better or even worse than those of their heterosexual counterparts. I am not now saying that I am a pure, cleansed man — I believe there is sexism in every man — but I am simply hoping that because I feel I have been made more aware, other men may follow instead of waiting until there is no choice. I am writing this because I have found only a few men who even begin to agree with me.

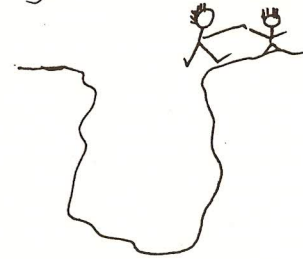
Patriarchy is the system by which MAN dominates the society in a way which oppresses wimmin and restricts men. The domination is economic and social. Men are given more power in the workplace and in the home, and in relationships. The hierarchical system which results from the desire to keep power sets up opposites and a natural tendency to define. Therefore we are not all people but men and wimmin, blacks and whites and if you're not a 'real man' you're one step down the ladder. (It was interesting that the male Bisexual workshop at Belfast clung to the idea of defining whilst the wimmin chucked it out. I now see the whole question of labelling — bisexuality or whatever — as a male tool to divide and dominate.) Wimmin are at the bottom of the ladder, wimmin who don't conform to the norms a step below that (eg Lesbians, Black wimmin, — separatist Lesbians are slagged off even more for their stand against the system), forced to take the brunt of the inadequacies of the male-devised system.

They are economically worse off, often forced into economic dependance on a man in exchange for which our system says man can beat wimmin, own wimmin, rape wimmin, objectify and degrade wimmin and be dependant on wimmin for emotional security. The system is dependant on wimmin economically (unpaid labour force in the home, low paid labour force in the workplace) socially (childbearing and rearing) and emotionally. In this structuring that men have imposed upon Society, in their desire to hold power, to be in charge, they have left themselves out. The them/us has become a you/me. Men are not encouraged to show their feelings. As kids we are told not to cry and not to kiss Dad. We are taught to be real men, to fight for what we want, not to give in. Often men can only show their feelings in the privacy of a bedroom (in an exchange ritual for sex?) and anyone who shows feelings more openly is a cissy, those who show feelings for other men degraded and laughed at as a poof. Men therefore turn to wimmin, who conversly are socialised into being listeners, carers, comforters, peace-keepers, who are taught to be subservient, at the beck and call of the male partner (that they must have a meal ready on time, look after the kids, "pretty themselves up" for the menfolk to ogle at). Wimmin are brought up to put themselves down. Men are brought up to put their inadequacies and shortcomings at wimmins feet, be it their mothers or partners. Gay men fight some of this socialisation, perhaps veer away from the norms of masculinity, perhaps not, and show feelings to other men, but will often treat wimmin no better. Also they may well transfer the sexism of heterosexual relationships into their homosexual ones. Gay clubs are as predatory as heterosexual ones, male conditioning transferred into a gay environment brings about the high level of promiscuity, often uncaring. The gay scene can be a cattle market, a sex network where men objectify men and continue, by reinforcement, the traits of the patriarchal system.

I have already explained how I used to proclaim "sex is fun". This was my confusion brought about by being politically anti-monogamy and being socialised by the Gay scene into believing "Casual Sex - one-night stands - is what gay men do. Therefore I must . . . "Until I met Robyn, all my relationships were at least initially based on de-humanising objectification of the partner's body or by male greed for sexual release. Thinking back, I can see how I have been exploited by gay men when new on the scene or slightly drunk or emotionally vulnerable. I now feel that I have been 'raped' twice due to pressure put on me by older Gay men. (Perhaps people are thinking that I'm saying only wimmin can provide caring relationships - I'm not. As I said earlier, the sex of Robyn was irrelevant.) I now see sexual activity as a natural extension of emotional involvement. Even "soft spots" that I have had for people in the past have not always been filled with enough consideration or care.

the two came to be good friends and eventually lovers, although Robyn was spending more and more time in the Separatist Castle. No men went near the separatist castle but for a few . . . separation would mean the end of their privilege, because it was their oppression of wimmin which gave them this privilege. Inside the castle the men couldn't use the wimmin.

Ben's politics changed as he saw the difference between the two cliffs and also as he became more aware of how badly men treated wimmin. Helped by Robyn he changed cliffs.



Ben's ideas became more feminist and he moved towards supporting those in the Separatist Castle, which was set on a rock of its own, for many feminists did not support it and sometimes attacked it along with the Socialist Revolutionary men. These attacks were often more damaging, but many feminists still liked men. Indeed some feminists lived on the other cliff although they weren't treated so well there. It was said that only in the lesbian Separatist Castle were wimmin really treated well and only there could they really lead their lives to the full, despite the attacks from the rest of the world.

With Robyn, I was for the first time able to show my feelings more, hardly surprising perhaps when, as a man, I have been conditioned into opening myself up to the opposite sex. I was able to be more physical with other people during the time of the relationship, again perhaps because, despite our lack of assumptions, I felt I had a security. In that sense there was a reliance on Robyn there. Perhaps this was heightened by the fact that Robyn was the only person I was revealing my emotions to. This in itself caused an imbalance in our relationship as Robyn was also putting energy into friendships with her Lesbian friends.

In a heterosexual relationship it is likely that the wumun will be more emotionally self-sufficient. At the bottom of the ladder she only has herself to depend on. One of the reasons separatist wimmin shy away from relationships with wimmin involved with men is that the energy they put into the relationship with the wimmin is likely to be drained away by men. Considering the isolated nature of man, this is not surprising.

There were times in the relationship with Robyn that I was sexist (not just in language but in attitude, behaviour and lack of understanding), on one occasion I was impatient whilst making love. I now see this, shamefully, as attempted rape. Reading Feminist literature has made me cry, despair and feel horror at what I symbolise. I am Ben but I am a man. I read some of it before the relationship had finished. I reformed. I made the decision that I didn't want to practice penetration any more. I made the decision that "when the relationship was over" I would be wary of becoming emotionally involved with any more wimmin and would channel my energies into men. Yet I wasn't strong enough to say "Now." I learnt an enormous amount about wimmin from Robyn, she helped me increase my awareness but for all the energy she put into the relationship, what did she gain? The small satisfaction of knowing that a man might be less sexist in the future? Both these factors indicate to me that it IS time for men to say NOW. Reform isn't enough. We must go beyond the protection of our interests. (I didn't argue with my first Lesbian friend because I wanted to maintain the friendship.) Men who are more aware have usually been led to that state by wimmin. Are men to be dependant on wimmin to show them how they are dependant on wimmin?

We often hear a sort of hippie comment on getting "to love ourselves more" and have perhaps discounted it in the past. However I feel that once aware, we can change ourselves dramatically and quickly. Once aware of the exploitation of animals (and with the belief that we should treat all human and non-human animals with equal consideration) it was easy to become a vegan. Sexism is more subjective than eating habits but change is possible. We can, as men, rid ourselves of the dependance factor. If we see how and when we are dependant we can be on the lookout and be more aware when those situations arise. When a relationship with someone ends, it is all too easy to transfer the need for emotional security onto someone else. When Robyn told me she didn't want to see me anymore, I could easily have gone looking for what I had with her with a man. Dependance on men is no better than dependance on wimmin. At the same time we must be aware of building a brick wall around our feelings, of closing ourselves up, of running away from emotional need and from showing our feelings. In this way we would restrict ourselves. A first step then can be to learn to love ourselves more and open ourselves up to ourselves.

I see wimmin and mens separatism as the only way forward. Only when wimmin leave men will men fully realise how they have been treating wimmin and what wimmin have been providing. Hopefully men will learn to be emotionally self-sufficient, non-sexist, to open themselves up more, to rid themselves of competitive masculinity. Then perhaps wimmin will feel able to start sharing with men. In this respect NO heterosexual relationship in the present circumstances, however 'right-on' can be OK, simply for the reason that it will reinforce every heterosexual relationship, the majority of which are disgusting symbols of the patriarchal system. (Also it may be that only once outside the relationship can the wumun see her oppression.)

It is obviously not easy. Even for those who objectively agree with this subjective feelings may override. (With Robyn and myself, there were two false starts at not 'seeing' each other.) For me, a view into the Lesbian community is a spur to try and achieve the same with men. Although I like more wimmin than men now, I can see how easy it is to become dependent on them. I will continue to talk to wimmin whilst they are prepared to talk to me but energy and feelings will be directed towards men. In my attempts to become emotionally self-sufficient, I am learning to masturbate without objectification, to love myself more; paradoxically when I feel totally happy in my own company, then will be the time that I can start thinking about relationships again. I am wary of my ability not to transfer dependance and therefore see celibacy as a positive help. Celibacy is an easy move for me. I don't crave sex (there is no such thing as a male sex DRIVE), after all there is no-one that I am emotionally involved with. For me it is a personal path to aid my attempt to love myself more and help myself understand how other people are feeling and why they are feeling what they do.

Complete separatism will not come quickly or easily; if it happened tomorrow I would be worried by what men would do to each other — pounce on those that showed any sign of emotion?, try to become dependant on them?, and there will not be many men who will be prepared to sacrifice their short term material interests for their long term good. Which man, in a relationship he is dependent on and enjoying, is going to turn to his partner and tell her (him) that because he's too dependent, he's going to be masochistic and leave the relationship AND not put the emotional security on anyone else?

It is not easy even if that does happen. The short term outlook can be pretty bleak. In addition to the isolation of being male, there is the additional isolation of holding "strange" political beliefs that are 'self-restricting', even if in the long term they are liberating. But is it really a high price to pay? That person is still a man. Isolated, yes, but with the enormous privilege of being male in a system created and run by men for men. I hate that privilege. I hate the feeling of isolation. I dislike a lot of the men I hope to make more aware. I envy the friendship network of the Lesbian and Feminist communities and wimmin's ability to show their feelings. I don't live though with the fear of walking out at night, with the degrading attitude of other men, or with the scorn for having short hair and wearing trousers, or the lecherous comments, or the knowledge of the discrimination I will face at work or in the company of men at a meeting or in a social gathering, at the Doctor's, at the hands of the law, of the state. I'm in a majority as a man, a minority as one opposed to Sexism. I feel I must use

this awful privilege to end itself. I have freedom of movement, more freedom of speech, I must use it. (This doesn't mean compromise. I will not hide my gayness to get a job, although it is valid, as one wumum said to me "you don't even have to tell people you're gay, we can't get away from being wimmin.") As the privilege lessens, the minority will increase, the isolation decrease. As a man there is no way I can complain or ask for sympathy when I look at the position and plight of wimmin and the fight that the strong, courageous, feminist minority are having to stage to get minimum consideration in this patriarchal society.

Many Gay men will be horrified and angry at what I have written. Many heterosexual wimmin will find it an affront to their lifestyle and happiness. Many Socialists will call me bourgeois and say men and wimmin must fight together against the class system. What they fail to see is that they are perpetuating one class system within their own ranks. No political party in this country shows any real consideration for wimmin. Many wimmin would say that they use the class argument to avoid thinking about their dependence on wimmin. Are male socialists going to allow wimmin to become separatist any more than male conservatives?

Many Feminists will disagree with me/the wimmin I have been listening to, others will not trust my words because I am a man. I am not trying to preach, I have not reached a point where I know what I believe is THE answer. I am just putting my thoughts across in an attempt to find others of like mind.

To fight sexism is to fight the basis of patriarchy and in short to fight all forms of oppression and male dominance. People must make the connections if the movement towards a non-violent revolution, ie a lasting change, can grow. (Liberal tolerance is often as damaging as Conservatism. Excusing ills on any basis is ridiculous when those ills are in our own hands. People don't have to be sexist, or eat meat or practise S—M . . .) Peace, to me, isn't just getting rid of the missiles. It is a society where we can all live together in an equal, sharing, non-exploitative way. Men as well as wimmin must start to move towards it.



CURRENT THINKING

What I'm writing now comes two weeks after what you have just read. In that time I've begun to consider my subjective feelings, my self a lot more and begun to see some of the personal subjective/objective contradictions, both of the present and of my recent actions.

Three weeks ago I was very depressed. There were a number of contributing factors. I believed Robyn never wanted to see me again, I was looking for somewhere to live and having no success due to my state of employment (ie, un-, I had resigned the sabbatical on political grounds in December 1983), I was ill (at one time confined to bed) and I felt very very isolated. Most of my friends, to whom I had explained my anti-patriarchy beliefs, thought I was nuts. Even Socialist Feminists gave me the same response, although they may have heard the same from radical feminist sisters. Coming from a man, it was "nuts". In fact Robyn was the only person I knew who was supportive to my ideas — after all, they had come partly from her and had been cemented in talking to her. I was still on the outside of the Peace movement that I wanted to get into. I saw little hope of change in man that would be necessary to fulfill the political strategy. I felt that losing all hope in men would mean losing all hope in myself. I saw myself as a useless, lonely oppressor. However more aware I might/might not be, I was still a man. I began to attribute every hiccup in the relationship with Robyn to myself. I even considered suicide but rejected it on the grounds that it was merely attention seeking, and it would be a little late to get a lot of attention when I was dead. I was harshly following my new set of objective strategies. I HAD to become emotionally self dependent. When I most needed a hug or reassurance, therefore, I would avoid those things on the grounds that it wouldn't be helping myself. Instead I would masochistically go home (by this stage I was living on my own) and lose myself in books, that trotted out the theories I believed in, or food which I couldn't really afford. I questioned the validity of this approach to loving myself more and was only too aware that it might lead to the bottling up of my feelings, a retrograde step following three months of being able to open myself up to others a lot more. However the times I needed a hug were always after "horrible" (unsatisfactory) meetings with Robyn where perhaps there was no communication or a very emotionless "Hallo". The fact that my need for an emotional crutch was involved with the end of the relationship with Robyn reinforced my belief that I had been dependent on her, etc. Also I could see a paradox emerging. The more time Robyn spent with wimmin, the less time she would have for me and the more her feelings would lessen and change from 'love' to tolerance to Continuing my life with more of a feminist consciousness, directing my political activity to the fighting of sexism, my love for Robyn would not diminish. There was/is a growing imbalance in that respect. We met, intentionally, a couple of times in the first month of "separation"; by the end of the second time, I couldn't even touch Robyn (maybe I was correctly interpreting her wishes) and I had no idea of how she felt or how she viewed our continued 'friendship'. I began to feel very insecure in her company. (I also noticed her misunderstanding my actions for the first time.)

In an effort not to bottle up my feelings, fears and hopes, I became quite garrulous with anyone who was prepared to listen. Most, as I have already said,

took my hardened views to be temporary insanity. On the grapevine I heard that I was intolerant and inflexible (one of the dangers of living alone? I moved into a maisonette with two people I'd never met before, excited by the challenge of "getting on") and putting peoples backs up. It was seen that, on meeting people, I would trot out my views and opinions (in the strong way that accompanies new-found fervour) and say "This is me. Like it or lump it". There was certainly no need to adopt this approach. I could explain my position more passively and over a longer period of time, allowing more sharing of the common ground before we reached the areas where we might inevitably disagree. I see this front as a defence to opening up and also part of the self-degradation process, inherent in many gay people and men becoming aware of their privilege and unfair position as men. In a way it was forcing other people to categorise me - I was presenting myself as a category. (The fact that I learnt about these facts on the Grapevine told my depressed self that no-one cared enough to tell me outright . . .)

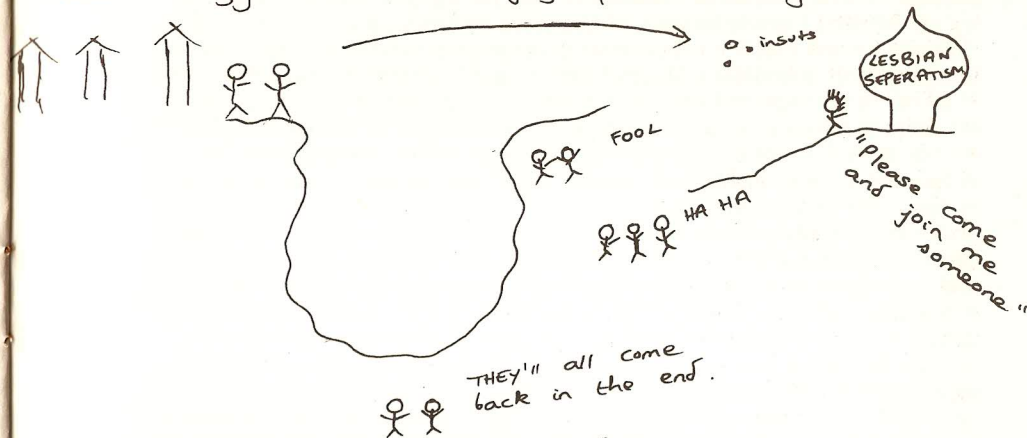
Things became slightly better when I met two men that were in rough agreement with me, although they lived in London, when I started to dig for the remains of an Anti-Sexist Mens Movement and discovered a course on "Thinking about Men" was about to start, and when I was told that the pills I had been taking to (psychologically) end my illness were depressants. I felt very happy that I knew why I was depressed. Also I became busier again, in the Student Lesbian and Gay Campaign. Although no longer a student, it was a known and safe environment and one with plenty to do. One as well that was to clearly reveal another layer of sexism within me.

Firstly there was a ghastly meeting where Robyn and I, both tired, were about the only two present. I tried to divide the work, taking on assumptions from Robyn's previous commitment and arrogance because she didn't want to listen.

I feel I was very sexist in the way I pressurised her. At a later meeting I argued that if Lesbians didn't want a Lesbian and Gay Liberation Week, which was what was being planned (I was annoyed because they didn't want to take a full part in it; they felt it would be seen as a male dominated event anyway - I wasn't non-sexist enough to understand the reasons why . . .) they could have passed a motion at a General Meeting asking for a separate week. I knew the political climate was OK but my sexism was overtly apparent in the way I had completely failed to begin to understand what it might be like for wimmin to get up at a male-dominated General Meeting and pass a motion on Lesbianism. I now feel that it has been the Trot/Socialist input into my political beliefs that has misled me into believing the ideals of Lesbian and Gay Liberation together. It is good for Gay men to have Lesbians/wimmin around (Gay men are men) and avoid the issues of separatism. I now see the Gay Men's Liberation as an attempt by Gay men to raise themselves into the status and privilege position of Heterosexual men, ie to free themselves but to ignore the position of wimmin, a tier below. (Perhaps this is why Bisexuality is more of a threat to Gay men) Lesbians that don't want to help Gay men are slagged off as man-haters and yet Gay men have consistently refused to help Lesbians and other wimmin, if it hurts themselves, if only by allowing them space, often on the excuse "they hate us, why should we help them".

One day Robyn told Ben that she was going to live in the Lesbian Separatist Castle (which wouldn't be a castle if there were no attacks) and she went.

Ben supported separatism, although he was sad that Robyn had gone, and went to live outside the Castle so that if the wimmin wanted anything from him, they could tell him. However this wasn't an easy situation. There was virtually no-one to keep him company and there was no ready-made settlement. Ben started to build one, but the Socialist Revolutionaries from the other cliff threw stones and insults at his efforts, some pacifist anarchists berated him, as did some feminists who thought he was crazy and his gay friends laughed at him.



THE Lesbian Separatists didn't totally trust Ben, he was after all a man, but wavered at him occasionally to keep his morale up . . . a few were interested to see how long he would stay there and for how long he would fight his privilege, but then so were the Socialist Revolutionaries and the establishment parties. . . . and come to that, even Ben himself.

the end. (1)

Separatists have a stereotype image of being middle-class man-haters living in ghettos. As with all stereotypes, this is a load of rubbish. However one of the problems in discussing Separatism or Feminism is that there are different types of Separatist and different types of Feminist. When, as men we talk about what wimmin feel about certain things, it is the views of the wimmin we know or whose books we have read. If I talk about humanitarian Separatism, someone else can say that the separatism he knows is man-hating separatism (a Gay male friend, after a hard effort to keep the Lesbian & Gay Soc' Lesbian orientated was told by a man-hater that Lesbians weren't coming to the meetings anymore and that they didn't want his help in any way — that is the separatism he knows), another friend of a feminist might say "separatism is all wrong . . . according to HIS feminist friends". (In an Anti-Sexist Men's Group, which group of wimmin are we to be accountable to? The answer could be "as many as possible" as we are fighting sexism, not living a political strategy. However, for example, there are differences over whether or not it is worth fighting cinema pornography and in the methods to be used to fight sexism.) It is obvious that men must work out their own personal political strategies based on a feminist consciousness but also awareness of themselves. Another of the "masochistic contradictions" (someone else's quote on my life) that appeared to me was that due to the fact that I felt I would be more easily dependent on a wumun and because I am not not-sexist I would not treat her equally (although I would try my hardest) I would be wary of becoming emotionally close to wimmin. However I know that it is often easier to communicate with wimmin than men (a change from schooldays. Maybe I didn't want to communicate with wimmin at school in the expected way, ie in order to 'go out' with them.) and I am attracted to feminist wimmin as well as Gay men. Many of the feminist wimmin are not separatist, some believe in reform of man within a relationship. Yet, in expressing the thoughts that I would be bad for a wumun, I was being sexist in that I was telling a wumun how she feels and what is good for her. It is important that I really consider my feelings. My anti-sexism and my wariness of dependence on wumun need not be seen as totally altruistic. I have been told that I am denying my sexuality by not putting my struggle as a gay man first. (I was also told that I was denying my sexuality in that I was denying the Gay culture by abstaining from the scene . . . on the grounds that the clubs were sexist. I will go back to the clubs though and contribute my thoughts to the culture and hopefully make more anti-sexist friends) but it is not a question of latching on to a feminist viewpoint and saying "I'm with the humanist separatist party", it is a question of realising how the viewpoint can help yourself and prioritising what you see as the primary struggle. Instead of neglecting Gay Liberation, I shall try and bring my understanding of feminism into it, ie, trying to get Gay men to fight the sexism that oppresses wimmin — as well as themselves.

It has also become clear that it is possibly impossible to totally live the political strategy all the time without regard to mental health. If I had committed suicide when a few hugs, however un-right-on, might have solved the problem, it might have been a waste. What I have done in the past is stamped on the feelings I have had that are not "in line". For example, seeing Robyn at Aytoun could be a fairly tortuous experience, especially if there was no communication. I feel hurt and sad (as I might do if any close friend suddenly stopped communicating when we met and I could see the dismantling of a friendship and a

love going on one-sidedly) but in the past have said "I know I feel hurt and sad but it is only self-pity, and therefore these feelings are bad". Perhaps this is weakening, it is certainly not contributing to my self growth to deny a part of me (I don't hide my happy thoughts of incredulity at what has happened in the past so I shouldn't push out the less happy aspects).

In many respects I must listen to my feelings and see what parts of the objective political strategy are subjectively OK as well, in the present personal environment. I must consider myself and continue to come out ("Coming Out" is a continual process. The other week I broke down more barriers within me by walking through Manchester dressed in Pink and yellow 'camp' gear — a year after being frightened by 'effeminacy' — I apologise for the use of this bad word) as a person, as a gay man, as an Anti-sexist man. I still love Robyn and I don't feel that had I still been in that relationship I would be strong enough or willing enough to stop it in such a sudden manner (me clinging on . . .). I don't know how I will react in the future if a wumun and myself become particularly close. However my energies in personal relationships are directed towards men, my political energies towards men, and the fighting of sexism. I feel fairly strong. I feel I have managed to change on my own with the help of the information links (literature etc) with wimmin that I feel must never be lost. (Separatism must be understood. This is my interpretation of it. It is a question of wimmin refusing to help men in the traditional ways, be tied to them financially or legally, be depended upon economically, socially and emotionally and of them moving into their own space where they can help each other grow and learn and challenge the inequalities of patriarchy and the expectations and assumptions that go with the system, ie wimmin being actively separate. It is the role of men to be passively separate, to be aware of why wimmin want the space, of supporting that demand, of supporting the struggles of wimmin, of fighting sexism and with wimmin, creating a positive anti-sexist culture. Men must also change, fight their own sexism, learn to grow as people, learn to love each other more and learn to give equal consideration to everyone, something competitive masculinity disallows. Communication links should remain. Men cannot know what it is like to be a wumun and must continue to listen in order to support wimmin, and in fighting sexism in order to be accountable to wimmin. Men cannot always know what is sexist or the best way to fight it. If a wumun finds even an innocent remark sexist, then it must be seen as such. This separatism will hopefully be transitory, men changing enough and dismantling the system to such an extent that wimmin feel able to and want to start sharing with men in a peaceful society.) I feel more secure about relationships, and feel I am learning all the time about myself, my inhibitions, my sexism and my friends.

I am helping set up a Men against Sexism group, I am doing a course "Thinking about Men", I am looking forward to friendship networks of caring and sharing similar to those my Lesbian friends are in, but I feel it is vital that I remain an Anti-sexist man, not become a Men's Liberationist. I must give wimmin space but not stop listening to them. I feel it is very important for me to remain allied to the struggle of my feminist friends.

NOTES & REFERENCES

When I first decided to write a 'paper', it was to be on Bisexuality theory. Events overtook this and it was obvious to me that I wanted to communicate my thoughts on Patriarchy and Separatism. At one stage I was going to include large chunks of various books and tons of cross references.

However when I started writing I didn't stop until I had finished. What is written is a straight blow out from my mind, apart from a short definition of patriarchy from "Piecing it together; Feminism and Non-violence" and the quotes from the Belfast Bisexuality Workshop transcribed from Sheffield University Gaysoc Newsletter. I don't know whether I should have included those, whether I have tried to get too much in and perhaps left things out. I am open to criticism, literary and political.

I often tell my friends that "I was reading the right books at the right time". As Robyn came to her final decision to be separatist, I was objectively understanding this in the context of the Radical Feminist Literature I was reading at the time. Even the order I read the books in seemed to be right. These texts, which I feel have made me far more aware are listed below in that order:

"Off our Backs . . . and on our own two feet", New Society Publishers 1983.
(Men on sexism, anti-patriarchy.)

"Reclaim the Earth", Women's Press 1983.
(Excellent, includes particularly useful "Feminism and Ecology" by Stephanie Leland.)

"On the Problems of Men", Women's Press 1983.
(Excellent, good sections on rape, gay men, men's movements.)

"Love your Enemy", Onlywomen Press 1981.
(Arguments for and against political Lesbianism, only brief mention however on humanitarian separatism.)

"Piecing it Together; Feminism and Non-Violence", Feminism & Non-Violence Study Group 1983.
(Useful aid to helping men see violence in a new light.)

"No Turning Back; Lesbian and Gay Liberation in the Eighties", New Society Publishers 1983.
(Includes a useful analysis of patriarchy, competitive masculinity etc.)

"Readings for Men against Sexism", Times Change Press 1977.
(Some useful sections.)

I feel now is the time to re-read the first four as well as continue my reading of Feminist and Anti-Patriarchal thought.

The book by Mario Mieli, referred to in the text, is "Homosexuality and Liberation" Gay Men's Press.

The piece was written on 24/1/83, with "Current Thinking" added on 7/2/83.

Ben Stout.

The continuance of this magazine is dependent on two things:

- i) it being bought,
- ii) contributions from you.

This first issue was distributed by ourselves but, with a bit of luck, reached most radical bookshops around the country. The magazine is also available by post.

"Against Patriarchy" is non-profit making. It is produced by an open mixed collective — at the moment only 3 people — who do so on a voluntary basis. 500 No 1's were run off, we need to sell 350 for there to be a No 2. (There's still a little left in the kitty.) But we also need material.

It is hoped that "From Politically Gay to Publicly Bisexual to Personally Celibate" will produce quite a response as it is seen as fairly contentious, that as many men as wimmin read the article, that as many wimmin as men write in with their views. Stuff has to be with us by July 1st if possible, and can be about any aspect of patriarchy. We don't see geographical distance as necessarily being a problem in joining the collective — offers of help from anywhere would be much appreciated.

Because of the variable of magazine size, the price may also fluctuate but we will keep it as low as possible. A subscription, (of course!), would be the best way to avoid this problem. 6 issues, posted to you from the presses costs £4.

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