

SPARROW

*Gay Christians of
Atlantic Canada*

Volume 1 Number 3

FAREWELL JIM DONOVAN

You will be missed

"WHEN GOD MADE MAN---SHE WAS ONLY JOKING"

AN EDITORIAL

by Brian

I wish to address this editorial to the Lesbians of our community. I cannot believe that we do not have Christian Lesbians. I do feel that they are threatened by the men, as evidenced by the last of Lesbians in our group. I wish to seek knowledge as to why Lesbians are apprehensive to show that they are proud of being a Lesbian as well as being Christian. If you are serving your various denominations according to the straight world, and are finding fulfillment in doing so, I am very pleased and wish you peace and contentment. However, if you are only giving lip service to your religion, and are unhappy doing so, why not form your own women's caucus, and worship with members of your own persuasion. Or, are you apprehensive about doing this too. Do you think your peers will make fun of you because you do attend an ecumenical group for prayer and mutual sharing of problems and joys.

My title comes from a button given to our only consistent woman member of Sparrow, who is straight, by one of our Gay members. She was most pleased that someone had put a female entity into God. Are we not all created by God? Does God not love each and every one of us--and not play favorites?

I would like to hear from the Lesbian community any comments that would enlighten me on the matter of Lesbian Christians. I can only go by what I see, which in most cases is a false image as we tend to put on a mask to different people we become involved with or meet.

I would like to take off your masks and level with yourselves.

Any comments may be sent in anonymously, but I would ask that you take the matter seriously.

I invite any views on the subject matter in any of my editorials, mailed to: Sparrow; P.O. Box 3611, South; Halifax, N.S.

A Very Special Kind of Gift

I have been given a gift, a gift of which I am becoming increasingly aware of, in fact, uncomfortable aware of you might say. I didn't choose this gift for myself, had I my druthers, I'm sure I would have opted for something a little more attractive, easy, less painful, than this gift I have now. I find that as I grow, (heaven forbid) older, I can appreciate this very special kind of gift in a better light, it doesn't seem so much like the trial I thought it was in my teens and early twenties.

We have all, each and everyone of us, been given this gift, how we use it depends upon how, to a great extent we will be a ease and in love with our very unique self.

The gift is the gift of aloness, our isolation. Aloness can hurt and we can try to relieve the pain by alcohol, drugging our mind into Nirvana, promiscuity, or becoming embittered and withdrawn. I have experienced a smacking of these things in my own life, and while I cannot spare you the pain of these ways, I can try and save you the expense of the trip. I found that aloness, appreciated for what it really is, and what it can do for me, is an occasion for growth, awareness and peace with myself.

Cont on Page 2

JEFF

Only moments ago
 now lost
 in your room
 small and simple
 I sat on your mattress
 watching your fingers
 tingle magic sounds
 clear, quiet, and haunting
 (as I see you, intent,
 sitting on your stool)
 Classical guitar.

Sunday afternoons are
 foundations of memories
 (to make me, years from now
 smile with wet eyes)
 and poems borne
 of simple loves.

Anthony Wallace

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The comments expressed
 in this newsletter are
 not necessarily those
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Cont from page 1

It is good to be alone, for at what other time can you relax and quiet your mind to reflect and get to know yourself? During an average week of work, social engagements, entertainment, etc, just how often do we get a chance to sit down by ourselves, to find out who we are (how many people define themselves by their work roles, ie, I am a lawyer, writer, plumber). The question--WHO AM I?--covers much more territory than mere work. It covers personal desires (if you won the Loto, what would be 7 things you'd do?), it covers spiritual beliefs, fears, anger, hurts, joys in life, in short, what makes you the unique person you are.

During times of stress and uncertainty in my life, I find a walk along a deserted beach, or along an old logging road in the forest, refreshing, renewing. Knotty problems I have been wrestling with throughout the work week seem to fall into perspective. The answers, sometimes tough to take, gradually become clearer both to my understanding and my doing of them.

Aloness is a time of getting to know yourself as you truly are, knowing what lies in your heart. Aloness is a time of drawing close to God and opening yourself up to that greatest love of all.

Aloness is not a trial to be endured, but a very special kind of gift to be used wisely and well.

By Jim Donovan

THE GUNS OF AUGUST: TASK FORCE REPORT CHALLENGES CHURCH

by (Rev.) Bruce Wallace

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A startling front page headline appeared in the Toronto Globe & Mail for Tuesday, March 18: "Sex before marriage not church business, author of study says."

The study refers to a task force report on human sexuality set up by the United Church of Canada following its General Council of August, 1977. What is even more startling is that the task force report approves the ordination of homosexuals on an equal basis with heterosexuals, even when they are actually living with a person of the same sex.

The story comes in reaction to an apparent news leak to the press, which the chairman of the task force, Rev. Robin Smith, 55, then felt compelled to address. The details of the report are being withheld until the end of May, pending their presentation to the approximately 500 delegates who will be attending the triennial council, next held in Halifax this summer.

In outline form, the main lines of argumentation now seem established. The church no longer condemns the structuring and nurture of sexual relationships prior to marriage, and that homosexuals are homosexuals by nature and are not therefore to be condemned for homosexual behaviour. Rev. Smith drew the lines in unambiguous terms: he called the distinction between homosexual orientation and homosexual behaviour false and 'phony'. "There is no reason, in principle," he said, "why mature, self-accepting homosexuals, any more than mature, self-accepting heterosexuals, should not be ordained."

The change in the church's positions in the various areas of sexual behaviour and ethics has come about through the massive amount of modern sexual research which has appeared since the middle to late 1960s, together with sharper insights from modern biological and social sciences.

Well, presenting a task force report is one thing; PASSING it is quite another. And, in point of fact, the report has about as much chance on the council floor as the proverbial snowball in hell.

In a previous article for this newsletter, this present writer tried to suggest some of the articulate theological resources presently available and developed in conjunction with the emerging mountain of sexual research. However, the theology of the United Church is developed out of dialogue among clergy and laity at various levels of the church courts; modern understandings set against the Biblical standard and the response to it through modern literary and historical research. And while that's the way it works in theory, the practical reality on the council floor is rather different.

Too often the laity are willing to dismiss outright the findings of modern literary and historical criticism of the Bible, which must go hand in hand with any acceptance of the changing perspectives on sexual behaviour brought about by disciplined research. While laity are a clear majority, they tend to defer to the authority of the clergy "who have studied these matters, etc." and who act as spiritual leaders.

In practice, what this means is that any conservatively minded clergyman, fearful of the 20th century, is very apt to give the typical over-awed and cowering council delegate quite a snow job—unless said delegate is himself a well-prepared spokesperson.

The argument from tradition is a well-worn one. What neither council delegates, nor, in some cases, clergy seem to realize is that snow jobs result from the manipulation of the inherent design of the worship enterprise, which forms the backdrop for council sessions.

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Get enough delegates--particularly those who have an inflated idea of their ecclesiastical contributions and importance as developed through interaction in the lower courts--brainwashed into believing that the worship of God pre-supposes the same kind of Old Testament God which is venerated by Sister Anita or the friendly people on the PTL Club, the wrathful God of volitional action who violates natural laws at pure whim-- and you've got the antecedents to vote back any progressive piece of research presented on the conference/council floor.

The game, in short, is playing against a stacked deck. Or very nearly so. The only way to beat the argument from inherent design is through a campaign of massive media exposure.

Maybe you feel, as I do, that task force reports are sometimes a little beside the point. After all, the 1972 General Council approved in principle the right of les Quebeçois to determine their own future--and some of these same people are now hustling that pro-federalist 'people to people' petition.

As one of the 'street clergy', I can only advise gays to accept the depth and dimension of your/their sexuality and construct the most loving and sensitive relationships of which you/they are capable; but at the same time, General Council of the United Church, meeting at Dalhousie University the third week of this coming August, represents a major opportunity to form a united front in the struggle for justice.

The Task Force Report on Human Sexuality has--almost unbelievably--acknowledged the co-equal status of homosexuals and heterosexuals and the inherent worth of the capacity to love which is generated from each. It is now up to the homosexual community to make a major effort to influence the straights and engage in open dialogue.

The acceptance of the Task Force report at the Halifax General Council will not have any direct bearing on the inclusion of sexual orientation in the now-formulating federal human rights code expected in either 1981 or '82, but EVERY STEP COUNTS.

Remember John Damien.

(Reprinted from New York Times, Sunday Edition, March 23, 1980)

RIGHTS OF HOMOSEXUAL DENOUNCED BY PREACHERS

Washington, March 22nd. (UPI)-- A group of fundamentalists preachers say they have collected forty seven thousand one hundred signatures on petitions to President Carter opposing any presidential action guaranteeing homosexual rights.

In a news conference, yesterday before presenting, the petitions to Robert Maddox, White House aide, who is Mr. Carter's liason with the religious community, five ministers charged the President with (a soft attitude) on homosexuality. "

"So--called, "Born Again", Christian President is not acting very born again", said Bob Jones III, President of Bob Jones University.

The ministers said "God's judgement is going to fall on America as on other societies that allows homosexuality to become a protected way of life.", Mr. Jones added.

The ministers also said they opposed legislation in Congress that would extend the protection of Civil Rights laws to homosexuals. Mr. Jones compared homosexuals to murders but said it would be impossible for homosexuals to be a Christian, although a murderer could be a Christian because after confessing Jesus as Lord "He doesn't murder anymore".

Bob Billings, executive director of Moral Majority, said the petition drive was in response to a similar drive by the National Gay Task Force asking Mr. Carter to issue an Executive Order forbidding employment discrimination in the Federal government against homosexuals.

Handwritten text at the top of the page, possibly a title or date, including the number '5'.



The Dangers of Seeking Counsel

by Paul Woodman

Homosexuals, like the rest of society, often turn to psychiatrists and the clergy for professional counselling. But in doing so, they are often turning to people who have oppressed them.

The pastoral counsellor works within a framework of religious hostility with Biblical roots that extend far back into the Old Testament, with the result that anti-gay sentiment is still high within the institutional church.

Secular counsellors often formulate their attitudes towards gays based on limited exposure only to those having problems coping with being gay in a straight society. Many of the studies done on gays which take a negative attitude toward them suffer from the weakness of limited exposure. Although the American Psychiatric Association no longer regards homosexuality as a form of mental illness (December, 1973) old attitudes die hard.

Much is said about myths concerning homosexuals, but there is one concerning counsellors which must be laid to rest as well. All the training in the world does not free a counsellor from the effects of social forces which affect all of us. A counsellor has also grown up in a world of 'fags' 'queers' 'pansies' 'macho men' and the admonitions of Romans I: 26-27.

A counsellor is trained to deal with both specific and general situations. The direction in which the counsellor may go can often be influenced by "non-professional" influences. A classic example is the desire of some counsellors to convert gays to the 'straight' and narrow. This is not the result of professional expertise, but of social conditioning which regards homosexuality as harmful to the individual.

In the past few years, there has been much discussion on the ability of psychiatrists and psychologists to change gays to straights. Such a debate is often a red herring because it fails to grapple with the rightness of changing the sexual orientation of gays.

The discussion has recently been rekindled by the release of the current Masters and Johnson study of homosexual relationships. They reported that they were able to help some gays to become heterosexuals; but these were gays who desperately wanted to change, and who were not clear in their sexual orientation. However, Masters and Johnson take a very positive attitude toward gay relationships and in no way suggest that a conversion process is the desired norm for counsellors in consultation with gays. In fact, it says something about attitudes towards gays that many people zeroed in on an obscure part of the study, dealing with conversion, as opposed to the more important parts of the study.

Education is a key word here. Clerical and secular counsellors both must be educated as to the flaws in the negative attitudes towards gays. As an example, the clergy must realize that the Biblical and traditional injunctions against homosexuality are rooted in the cultural prejudices of certain historical periods. The blind acceptance of the Bible as a guide for social attitudes is unfortunately perpetuated by Christian radicals who want to persuade conservative Christians that radical social justice has Christian roots.

Secular counsellors must be more critical of social norms, and stop seeing them as automatic guideposts to dealing with anyone who deviates from these social norms. Counsellors should not be uncritical protectors of social norms, but guardians of the total human dignity of the people who turn to the counsellor for help.

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A Credo

For my relationships with others



YOU and I are in a relationship which I value and want to keep. Yet each of us is a separate person with his own unique needs and the right to meet those needs.

When you are having problems meeting your needs I will try to listen with genuine acceptance in order to facilitate your finding your own solutions instead of depending on mine. I also will try to respect your right to choose your own beliefs and develop your own values, different though they may be from mine.

However, when your behavior interferes with what I must do to get my own needs met, I will openly and honestly tell you how your behavior affects me, trusting that you respect my needs and feelings enough to try to change the behavior that is unacceptable to me. Also, whenever some behavior of mine is unacceptable to you, I hope you will openly and honestly tell me your feelings. I will then listen and try to change my behavior.

At those times when we find that either of us cannot change his behavior to meet the other's needs, let us acknowledge that we have a conflict-of-needs that requires resolving. Let us then commit ourselves to resolve each such conflict without either of us resorting to the use of power or authority to try to win at the expense of the other's losing. I respect your needs, ^{and} I also must respect my own. So let us always strive to search for a solution that will be acceptable to both of us. Your needs will be met, ^{and} so will mine — neither will lose, both will win.

In this way, you can continue to develop as a person through satisfying your needs, ^{and} so can I. Thus, ours can be a healthy relationship in which each of us can strive to become what he is capable of being. And we can continue to relate to each other with mutual respect, love, and peace.

Pasadena, California
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THOMAS GORDON, Ph.D.,
Founder, Effectiveness Training, Inc.

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THIS IS MY LIFE

SUNDAY 13 APRIL 6:30 P.M.-MIDNIGHT

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Just recently, I've come to terms with myself over my gay sexuality and it's been a long struggle within trying to decide whether or not to come out.

I know a move had to be made soon. If I soon didn't accept myself, I'm sure the accusations that would start as a result of not conforming to the heterosexual norm would only make things go from bad to bleak. After all, I've never shown any serious interest in women, and I'm not asexual. Being gay and uncertain how to handle it creates a lot of inner tension, and who needs that!! Trying to get through day to day existence, and get a career charted out, creates enough pressures.

I decided (a New Year's resolution!) that 1980 was the year to come out. As things turned out, it was the last week of 1979!

Because of certain happenings, the questions finally did start and they came from my parents, and I finally forced myself to turn my inward feelings outward and level with them. I could have fed them a story and they probably would have believed it, as they trust me implicitly. I leveled because I care for my parents and over the years, we've earned each others mutual love and respect. Coming out to them created a very tense, emotional time. I feel they accept me as before (I've not changed), but cannot understand why I want a gay relationship.

I've known about the Turret for several years but because I'm somewhat reserved in nature, I couldn't get up enough nerve to go in and meet other gay people, until later.

One of my initial contacts with the gay community was through Sparrow. I chose them because, as a group of Christians, they would probably be understanding, and interested in hearing my viewpoints. I've made good friends and if I've got a problem I can air it in an atmosphere that is understanding of gay living and its hassles.

Mention religion to most and you've turned them off! I find that in today's society, people are really hung up on religion. As a religious person (I'm Christian) I think myself no better than anyone else who doesn't hold any religious convictions. To be religious is my choice, just as being gay is.

To be gay and Christian is for many inconprehensible. The greatest thing one can experience in this life is love and while being gay does appear to conflict with the literal interpretation of most Bibles, gay love is a valid alternative for me.

It's of the utmost importance to live as an individual in a society that fights individuality when it deviates from hard set norms.

I've given it many years of thought and have an outward identity that reflects me as I am on the inside and, finally, I'm proud of it!

Sparrow is now holding a weekly disco coffee house at the Turret Gay Community Centre; 1588 Barrington St., 9-12 p.m. The reasons, as stated in Volume 1, Number 2 of our newsletter is working out. We are raising money for our trip to Toronto, but also there has been an increase in the under age members of the gay community attending. Plans are now finalized for the cabaret (see pictures on Page 5 of last cabaret), to be held on April 13 at the Turret. 75% of the proceeds will be going to The Body Politic "Free the Press Fund".

Plans are now in the works for a cabaret sponsored by GLAD (Gays and Lesbians at Dal) in the near future.

The next dates for the coffee house are: March 30--9-12 p.m.
April 6--9-12 p.m.
April 13--6:30-12 p.m.

The April 13th coffee house, as mentioned before is the Cabaret. We will have soup and sandwiches. Admission will be \$2.50, this includes a ticket on our special door prize which will be a great benefit to any person who goes to the Turret.

The coffee house shall continue after the Cabaret on the following dates: April 20--9-12
April 27--9-12
May 4 --9-12
May 11 --9-12

On the weekend of May 17th, if sufficient funds have been raised, the Sparrow delegation will be in Toronto. We are making arrangements so that the coffee house shall continue on that date.

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"READINGS FOR THE WEEK"

From the "Living Bible" readings for the next six weeks.

- First week: Saint John, Chapter 19: 23--30
"When Jesus had tasted it, he said, "It is finished", and
and bowed his head and dismissed his spirit."
- Second week: Saint John, Chapter 19: 31--37
"One of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear,
and blood and water flowed out. I saw all this and
have given an accurate report so that you also can
believe."
- Third week: Saint John, Chapter 19: 38--42
"And so, because of the need for haste before the
Sabbath, and because the tomb was close at hand,
they laid him there."
- Fourth week: Saint John, Chapter 20: 1--13
"Then I went in to, and saw, and believed (that he had
risen.)"
- Fifth week: Saint John, Chapter 20: 14--18
"Mary Magdaline found the disciples and told them.
"I have seen the Lord!""
- Sixth week: Saint John, Chapter 20:
"Then he breathed on them and told them "Receive the
Holy Spirit".

The following should be read each week in conjunction with the above weekly readings.

Saint John, Chapter 20: 26--29
"Eight days later, the disciples were together again, and
this time, Thomas was with them. The doors were locked,
but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them
greeting them. Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger
into my hands. Put your hand in my side. Don't be
faithless any longer. Believe" "My Lord and my God!"
Thomas said. Then Jesus told him, "You believe because
you have seen me. But blessed are those who haven't
seen me and believe anyway".

On March 30, 1980, an election of officers will take place. Sparrow is preparing its books and records for an application to Revenue Canada, under the Income Tax Act for status as a charity. By this we mean, should any donations to Sparrow be made, they can be deducted from your incometax.

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donation of _____ for a total of _____.

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"Cruising--What a piece of Garbage"

by Emerald Gibson

Cruising, what a piece of garbage. The movie was filled with the most disgusting scenes I have ever seen, and when I saw the movie I question the intention of it, and also the ramifications it could have on the public, straight, closeted, persons.

I firmly believe now that the movie Cruising is going to take its toll, unless we do something about it. But what can we do?, when we cannot rely on the authorities for the proper protection.

Please, I ask you, not to let the movie bother you, but I ask you to (if you have attended the movie) to let your comments be known, by sending them along to us at P.O. Box 3611, South; Halifax, N.S.

If you are beaten up, or if you run into any kind of harassment by the authorities, please report it to one of the following numbers:

423-6814--The Turret

429-4294--The G.A.E. office

429-6969--Thursday to Saturday, 7-10 p.m.--Gay Line

M E E T I N G S

GAE GENERAL MEETING, HALIFAX

Wednesday, April 2 7:30

Wednesday, April 16 7:30

ALTERNATE BOOK STORE

IF YOU WANT ANY OF THE LATESE GAY MAGAZINES OR BOOKS, PLEASE WRITE TO THE ALTERNATE BOOK STORE FOR AN UPDATED LIST (Please enclose 50¢ to cover mailing charge). YOU CAN ALSO GET SUCH THINGS AS LOCKER ROOM AND RUSH, AT \$6.00 EACH, OR THE LATEST BODY POLITIC.

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H O U R S-- Tuesday-Thursday
4:00 to 6:00 p.m.
8:30-11.00 p.m.

Friday
4:30-6:00 p.m.
8:30-2:00 a.m.

Saturday
10:30-2:00 a.m.

Sunday-Monday

CLOSED

Avon is always a nice gift to give and to receive, with its varied selection of fine quality products. Avon can please the most discriminating taste. Sample one or two of the Avon lines, and I'm sure you will agree with me, high quality does not have to cost a lot.

If you wish to buy any of the Avon products, please call Joyce Northrup at 442-7544.

To try to economize on expenses, Sparrow will, in future, only publish a three page (back and front) newsletter, until such time as subscriptions have increased.