

Mollie Leach's article, Eastbourne Herald, March 1978

Mollie Leach with the Saturday story

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'We are not truly free, Give us justice,' say Gays

THIS IS A FEATURE about homosexual people. About what they are and what they are not.

They ARE often desperately lonely people who find it difficult to make close friendships.

They are NOT effeminate men who want to dress like women. The transvestites who do this are mainly married men.

They are NOT corrupters of children. As a journalist I have sat in courts of justice in this country and the Channel Islands for 25 years and in every case of molestation of young children the criminals have been heterosexual men — in nine cases out of 10 married and with children of their own.

National criminal statistics bear out my own experience.

One in 20 of the population is homosexual — and this is true in all walks of life — it could be your baby son or grandson.

'Gay' is an acceptable term, so I'll use it. Gay people do not ask to be born so, any more than do heterosexuals.

Many fear they would lose their jobs if it were known that they were not heterosexual. Many dare not let their own families know they are gay.

Some have lived lonely, isolated lives — without a friend or confidant — feeling that they are the only such person in the world. Deep loneliness is a constant state for the homosexual.

How does a boy know he is homosexual? Well he doesn't throughout his schooldays when he plays rugby, fights in the playground, camps with the Scouts and does or doesn't do his homework on time.

But when he is older and his contemporaries are talking about girls and falling in love with this or that good looking chick — he begins to realise that while he too can admire a pretty girl, he is not deeply emotionally moved by girls.

Rejection

He then finds that he can be deeply emotionally orientated to another youth or man.

In ancient Greece the purest form of love was that of a brave and honourable man for another. When one was mortally injured in battle the friend would fight over his body until he too was killed.

But when a modern

youngster begins to realise that he may be homosexual, he is afraid and rather desperate. What does it mean? To whom can he turn? Most boys are afraid to tell their parents and totally unable to tell their friends. Some tell their doctors — and often meet with repulsion and rejection. 'There is something wrong with you, is often the response. 'Go and see a psychiatrist.'

Trade unions ban job discrimination against gays

It is at this stage that many young boys, in deep despair commit suicide.

They feel they are quite alone — and the only person in the world with this heavy, frightening burden. One of the Eastbourne Samaritan counsellors told me that a big proportion of potential suicides are young homosexuals.

The Eastbourne branch of the Campaign for Homosexual Equality was formed about two years ago. It supports the national CHE in its fight for full equality in law for the homosexual; for the removal of fear, discrimination and ridicule and to have



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them accepted as people with the rest of the people.

The Eastbourne CHE group has been approached by doctors from Hellingly Hospital for help in the cases of both in-patients and out patients.

'Some people who come to us for treatment,' said Dr Ronald Maggs, a senior consultant at Hellingly, 'are suffering appalling distress from the lack of knowledge of their sexual identity or the rigid refusal to accept it.'

Caring

'In such cases we are glad to turn to a group such as Eastbourne CHE which show a warm and caring attitude for these desperately unhappy people. I am all for caring, self help of this kind.'

The group has also been invited to lecture to the Eastbourne 18 Plus group and other local bodies. At these events the avalanches of questions which follow the talks provide a valuable educational forum.

Friendly

A number of trade unions have ruled that there must be no discrimination against sexual orientation — among them the National Union of Teachers, the National Association of Local Government Officers and the National Union of Public Employees.

The Eastbourne group exists also, to say to the person who believes he is homosexual — 'Don't feel isolated, desperate or despairing. You are not alone. Ring the Eastbourne CHE number — 28071 and talk to John.'

I met a number of group members. They were friendly and courteous; they were dressed just like my son or husband and they talked freely.

One said, 'I have to live my life in separate boxes as it were. If my employers or colleagues knew I were gay I would lose my job, my security and the nice home I have created. I can only relax and talk freely among my friends in CHE.' Most of the others were in the same position.

Incidentally all these people disliked and disapproved of the poem, published in Gay News, which was the subject of the blasphemy trial.

They pointed out that it was written, in fact, not by a homosexual but by a literary figure who is heterosexual.

Most gays are disgusted with the stage 'take-offs' of the Larry Grayson — John Inman type.

If a gay does any criminal act, 'Let him be brought to justice,' they say — 'as a Jew, a Roman Catholic, a black criminal or a white heterosexual one should be.'