

Conference 2009

OUTtalk

CWU
The communications union



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OUTtalk is the newsletter of the Communication Workers Union's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Advisory Committee.

The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the union, the committee or the editorial team.

If you have any items you would like published in the newsletter, please send them to:

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ED'S TALK

Welcome back to Bournemouth and this conference edition of OUTtalk. On the back cover you'll find a map and guide of LGBT venues and services in Bournemouth. If you're a new delegate to conference and require any assistance, ask a member of your delegation to point out a member of the LGBT Advisory Committee (listed below).

John Monks has written a comprehensive report on our LGBT conference, which was held in November at the Dragon Hotel, Swansea. Two motions from that conference will be moved by the LGBTAC at this year's general conference. Maria Exall explains their importance on page 4, and the LGBT Advisory Committee asks for your support of the motions, which are 5 and 78 on the conference pad.

This year our CWU LGBT conference is planned for Saturday 21st November 2009 in Bristol, subject to confirmation.

The TUC will be holding their annual LGBT conference on the 2nd to 3rd July 2009, at Congress house, London. There is an opportunity for visitors to attend this worthwhile conference. Please contact the Equal Opportunities department for full details. Branches will be expected to pay for any release and travel costs.

As an employee of BT, I have been a keen supporter of BT Kaleidoscope (BTK) which is BT's LGBT employee Network. For a number of years I've been a regional representative for BTK and coordinated a number of social events in London, bringing together LGBT people from across the industry.

I have recently been elected to a new role in BT Kaleidoscope of "CWU Representative Co-ordination" with the aim to forge mutually beneficial relations between the CWU LGBT and



Kaleidoscope committees. The exchange of ideas can only be for the benefit of all people working in the industry, their families and their friends.

This year I've decided to reclaim London and Brighton prides for myself, having spent the last 6 years with the LGBT union banner. I'm hoping to recreate some of the esteem from my very first pride back in 2000, by watching from the crowd line.

Duncan Strivens Editor

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HELLO FROM HIM...

"Not all disco balls and Kylie..."

The National Portrait Gallery, in London, recently announced it was to hold an exhibition called "Gay Icons", which is intended to explore gay social cultural history through the unique personal insights of ten high-profile gay figures, who have selected their historical and modern icons.

Sandi Toksvig, national treasure and gay icon herself, chaired a committee which included Waheed Alli, Alan Hollinghurst, Elton John, Jackie Kay, Billie Jean King, Ian McKellen, Chris Smith, Ben Summerskill and Sarah Waters.

So what makes a gay icon? Does s/he have to be gay? Surely being gay-friendly is a must? Someone who has been an inspiration to the gay community, or played some major role in gay liberation? Google "gay icon" and among the usual suspects you also get Bugs Bunny, Abraham Lincoln, Vladimir Putin and a certain Margaret Thatcher! Surely somebody's havin' a laugh.

Although the full list has not been disclosed, and the above four are not believed to be included, there are some politicians on the list who were inspirational and iconic, such as Nelson Mandela, who had no particular gay significance, and Harvey Milk, who certainly had.

Missing from the list are what you might define as the usual suspects – the likes of Judy Garland, Joan Crawford, Mae West, Dame Shirley Bassey, Oscar Wilde, Bette Midler, Marlene Dietrich, Joan Collins, Bette Davis, and Barbra Streisand. Too old-fashioned? No Kylie Minogue, Madonna or David Beckham. Too obvious, or possibly too populist?

The selectors said that the exhibition's aim was to challenge clichéd perceptions of gay life and that the show will attempt to debunk the clichéd notion of the gay icon as a raging drag queen. And worthwhile and worthy as many of the announced icons are (Nelson Mandela, Virginia Woolf, poet Maya Angelou, Enigma mathematician Alan Turing, sculptor Rosa Bonheur, cellist Mstislav Rostropovich) it could be argued that the exclusion of the more obvious icons is in itself a form of homophobia, a denial of that part of being gay which proclaims itself in the outrageous drag queens and screamers seen to best effect in any Gay Pride march from London to Sydney.

Where, you might ask, is the fun and froth? Are they only showing the "right kind of gay", attempting to intellectualise the whole thing and exclude the noisy, wilder elements who prove embarrassing to straight society? Indeed, it's not "all disco balls and Kylie", but that's no reason to ignore this important ingredient in the mix.

However, it is worth pointing out that 20 or fewer years ago, this kind of exhibition could not have been imagined without



howls of protest. Sandi Toksvig believes there is still a need for such events. Despite civil partnerships and much wider social acceptance, she stressed that "everything in the gay garden is still not rosy", as evidenced by newspaper reports recently that one medical expert in six has tried to "cure" gayness. "I hope it will give courage to people who are still struggling with their sexuality and to see an exhibition of this kind in a prestigious place might also make other people reassess their attitudes."

Beware the barbarians at the gate...

In this time of credit crunch and economic downturn we're all being told of the need to tighten our belts. We're short of funds and savings will have to be made. Unfortunately, for some (including a few in our own union) that is the green light to cut back on what they see at best as an add-on, or at worst as unnecessary – EQUALITY.

It's a sad fact, but one which needs to be said, that there are still some dinosaurs out there who think pay and conditions are the bread and butter issues and everything else is a luxury which can be watered down or cut out when times get tough.

We as activists need to be vigilant, as already noises are being made in various places to the effect that "we can't afford to send delegates to equality events", and even that "we can't afford to have these events in the first place".

Billy Hayes, at the Equality Officers Seminar in March stressed that equality should be top of each and every agenda – without equality nothing else we do as a union makes sense. That seminar was a very successful event and I'm sure everyone who attended went away feeling it had been worthwhile and necessary. The fact that both the General Secretary and Tony Kearns, Senior Deputy General Secretary, were in attendance shows how important it was deemed.

It has been a long, hard struggle to get where we are in the CWU – a strong position with excellent work being done by the Equality Dept and the various advisory committees. Successful as that work has been, we cannot afford to rest on our laurels - the barbarians are at the gates, we must fight to prevent them destroying what we have achieved.

Dave Daniel LGBTAC Chair

MOTIONS TO CONFERENCE 2009



The issue of continuing threats to our equal access to goods and services is the theme of one of the motions (Motion 78) which has been chosen by CWU LGBT Conference to go to Annual CWU Conference 2009. It was also a major theme of the Conference "LGBTQ progressive politics: shaping the future" that took place in central London on the 4th April. The LGBTAC along with LGBT groups from other Unions supported the event. Speakers from community groups and political organisations contributed to debates on the key campaigning issues for LGBT trade unionists.

The conference discussed the Ladele case and the danger of such a case undermining our hard won legal rights. For Lillian Ladele who took legal action against her employer, Islington Council, was backed by the Christian Institute (a reactionary religious pressure group) cited her religious affiliation as a reason not to undertake part of her job delivering a service to LGBT people, namely conducting civil partnership registrations.

The case raises two important principles – Firstly our rights to the provision of goods and services on an equal basis to everyone else. Secondly the use of a faith, or belief as a reason for opting out of equal treatment to us. In the case of our rights the position is clear – because of the legal progressive changes brought in the last 12 years we have equal civil rights and we need to defend them. To try and differentiate on what can and cannot be provided to us defeats the principle of equality. That was why when the legislation on non discrimination in the provision of goods and services was brought in a couple of years ago we campaigned to ensure there were no opt outs – such as the provision of fostering and adoption services. For if there are opt outs for particular organisations, or in particular areas then that is not equality.

On the second principle we are on more complicated ground, but equality must remain the guiding point.

Where people argue that their faith or belief is a reason for them to discriminate against us they must be challenged. If we do not challenge prejudice (whether faith based or not) we allow homophobia and transphobia to take hold. And that means continuing discrimination at work and in our communities, bullying at school and by work colleagues, homophobic and transphobic violence and attacks. These are not small matters – they can literally mean life and death for LGBT people.

The argument that there is a need to "balance" the demands of faith with the demands of LGBT people is erroneous and dangerous. For if religious belief is legitimised as a reason to discriminate islands of prejudice will be allowed to continue in key areas of education, social service and health provision as well as other public services. In the end, allowing this prejudice and phobia to continue unchecked will affect society as a whole.

Those who use their religious belief to justify their prejudice as Lillian Ladele has done have some hard questions to answer. For many people of faith are not prejudiced and see that equal treatment of LGBT people as being totally in tune with their religious values of love and compassion. Perhaps the issue is not about faith at all and is actually just about prejudice.

At the Conference on the 4th April we discussed the up and coming 'Faith, Homophobia, Transphobia and Human Rights' Conference which is seeking to build positive alliances for sexual diversity and equality between faith and secular organisations. The TUC, the CWU and other Unions are supporting it. Many LGBT faith groups will be represented there along with trade union LGBT groups and community campaigning organisations. The aim of the Conference is to develop progressive politics on this important issue.

Maria Exall

**The LGBT Advisory Committee
ask you to support Motions 5
and 78 at General Conference**

LGBT RIGHTS HIGH ON MY AGENDA

Almost a year into my tenure and I hope that those around me will have seen my commitment to the cause of pushing equality at every possible juncture. One of the first things I did as the new equality officer was to ensure the transgender guidelines was approved and the LGBT rights information was redrafted and issued to the branches.

For many people in the workplaces it is still difficult for them to accept people's sexuality being different from the stereotypical 'red-blooded' male or female. I know there is no scientific study to determine just how many people are LGBT, as many people have LGBT tendencies but have not yet found the right moment to come out. It is clear however that more and more people are coming out and this is a great sign – as it shows society is becoming more and more tolerant.

Within the transgender community it is a known fact that these people face the most discrimination of all not only do trans people face intolerance from nonLGBT people, but it would not be unusual for a lesbian to be intolerant of a trans-women. There is very strong anecdotal evidence to back this up. We all need to be more tolerant and understanding.



The LGBTAC works very hard to push the LGBT agenda forward and I am very grateful for this. We need more LGBT people to come forward and be active in this union. Contact your branch secretary or a member of the LGBTAC if you are interested in becoming more active in the CWU.

Linda Roy
National Equality Officer

WORKING PARTY UPDATE: IDAHO

The Committee, with assistance from the research department and a walking tour from the Chair, carefully considered which embassies with poor records on LGBT treatment should be the target for 2009 IDAHO Day.

It was initially agreed that the Saudi Arabian Embassy would be targeted, due to ongoing and active persecution of LGBT people, although it was felt that the location was not ideal if the intention is also to raise public awareness.

After some debate it was finally agreed that the Indian Embassy in Aldwych should be the target. Not only is there a growing campaign in India for LGBT equality; there are also strong links with BT who have subsidiary companies and contractors working for them in India. In addition the location is central, with lots of tourists so good for publicising the issues. This will be taking place on Sunday 17th May.

In terms of a national monument to recognise the suffering of LGBT people in the UK, the shape was agreed as containing a pink triangle but the general design is

still being worked on. Initial liaison with the TUC and the IDAHO Day organisers on ideas and sites is due to start soon. Consideration is being given to a small-scale model of the final agreed monument to be placed in Alvenscot initially to help raise awareness of the campaign.



CWU LGBT CONFERENCE REPORT 2009



The conference was formally opened by Cllr Alan Lloyd, the Deputy Mayor of Swansea, who as a former member of POEU, NCU and CWU was proud to welcome the delegates and visitors to the first CWU LGBT conference to be held in Wales. In his speech, Cllr Lloyd stressed the importance of representation for minorities in trade unions.

Dave Daniel, the Chair of the LGBTAC opened the conference by also welcoming delegates and visitors, and as is customary, Dave asked us to stand for a minute's silence to remember all the LGBT people who have been attacked or murdered in the past due to their sexual orientation or gender. Dave highlighted the many achievements that have been made by the LGBTAC, the union is the forefront of pushing equality for LGBT people in legislation. Dave reminded conference that our hard fought rights were under attack when he referred to the case of the Islington Civil Registrar who won an Employment Tribunal because she claimed to have been discriminated against by her employer because she refused to carry out civil partnerships to LGBT couples on the grounds of her Christian beliefs. The committee has also been continuing work with producing regular editions of Out Talk, the Coming Out and LGBT Rights brochures.

Billy Hayes, the General Secretary, then addressed conference. Billy started by reminding conference of the importance of the conference and the work the LGBTAC does by pushing the agenda forward but reminded conference that although there has been achievements in law there are still problems with implementing LGBT policy. Billy also raised concern about the repression of LGBT people around the world in countries where it is illegal to be lesbian or gay or where there is little understanding of gender identity issues. Billy also stressed the importance of LGBT History Month and the importance of Trade Unionists to be directly involved with History Month.

Conference was also addressed by a speaker from Simpson Miller and by Derek Walker from the Welsh TUC, who described what the Welsh TUC were doing for LGBT people in Wales and that although there has been positive changes to LGBT legislation and public attitudes of LGBT people, there is still much more work to do as a Welsh TUC survey has shown there are still unacceptably high levels of homophobic and transphobic harassment in the workplace.

Other guest speakers included Lyndsay England from the Gay Footballers Supporters Network who raised awareness of the work the network were doing to combat homophobia on the terraces from campaigning with the Football Association to try to get clubs to adopt a club charter. It has been a difficult task as the FA regularly turns down requests for footballers to attend Gay Footballers Supporters Network events but some clubs are supportive and contact is made with clubs when incidents, such as when Sol Campbell was subject to racist and homophobic chants at a Tottenham/Portsmouth game. The final guest speaker was the Rev Martyn Reynolds, from the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement, who highlighted the work of the movement and the challenges the movement faced whilst trying to affect change within the Christian religions. Martyn described the huge power wielded by the Church of England during the Civil Partnership bill, and how its passage through the Lords was stalled. Martyn reminded conference that the second Faith, Homophobia, Transphobia and Human Rights conference would be taking place on 16th May 2009.

On to the business of the day, and in all 11 motions were heard on the day and all were carried by conference. One proposition in the name of Birmingham, Black Country and Worcester which related to facility time for equality reps was withdrawn on the day.

Proposition 1 was moved by John Irwin on behalf of the LGBT Advisory Committee. This motion supported the CWU's commitment and the action the union had taken to fight homophobia in sport and to work with organisations and groups such as 'Kick It Out', the Professional Footballers Association, and the Gay Footballers Association.

Motion 2 which was moved by Neil Bonner from Grampian and Shetland Amal raised concern about the continued blanket ban of blood donations by gay and bisexual men by the national blood transfusion services in the UK, particularly as most new cases of HIV infection occur amongst heterosexual men and women. The motion called upon the CWU to increase pressure on the appropriate agencies to end this practice.

Composite motion 3 in the name of the LGBT Advisory Committee and North West London branch raised concern with the decision made by the Employment Tribunal in July 2008 which ruled that an Islington registrar had been

discriminated against by her employer for refusing to carry out civil partnerships. Laurie Smith in moving the motion on behalf of the LGBT Advisory Committee said 'we can't have people being allowed to pick and choose who they deliver service to', and John Monk of North West London in seconding the motion claimed that the 'ruling has effectively placed the religious 'conscious' of registrars above their legal responsibilities to carry out UK legislation'. Conference agreed that whilst everyone has the right to express their feelings and religious convictions, employees also have a duty to abide by all equality legislation and not pick and choose the ones they agree with.

Mary Hanson from Central London raised the issue of the needs of older LGBT people in our communities as many older LGBT people 'grew up in an era of illegality, discrimination and prejudice' leaving them 'vulnerable to isolation, discrimination and even abuse'. Mary called upon the CWU to raise awareness within the wider labour movement of older LGBT people and the issues they face.

Gary Williams on behalf of the LGBT Advisory Committee called for the CWU to campaign against the intolerance of LGBT people in other parts of the world, particularly in Eastern Europe, due to the attacks on LGBT people who have attended Pride marches in countries such as Croatia, Latvia, Estonia, Russia, Hungary, Bosnia, Poland and Moldova. Gary told conference that more pressure needs to be applied by the trade union movement on international and that there is a requirement to meet with organisations such as the Organisation for Security & Cooperation in Europe to ensure the rights of LGBT people around the world are protected.

On a similar theme Linda Kietz from West London, in moving the motion, and Nathan Brennan, Merlin Reader and Maria Exall when speaking on the motion, raised concern about the rising tide of violence against LGBT people in Iraq. They called on the Advisory Committee to make the campaign a priority for this year within the wider labour movement.

West Yorkshire branch lamented the serious lack of refuge spaces available LGBT victims of domestic violence. The branch was concerned that refuges are not fully supportive or inclusive of LGBT domestic violence victims and that the services in place do not always have an understanding of the cultural needs of particular groups such as lesbians or trans people. Conference in supporting the proposition instructed the NEC through the work of the LGBT Advisory Committee to raise awareness of these issues, and to ensure refuges are fully aware of the needs of LGBT people.

Solent delegate Gary Williams called for National monument to LGBT 'to recognise past and present homophobia and transphobia' to be installed in the UK in order to recognise LGBT who have been murdered, assaulted or imprisoned, as already exists in countries like The Netherlands and Germany.

The first of two emergency motions was then heard. Central London delegate Laurie Smith condemned the removal of the rights of LGBT to marry in California following the passing of Proposition 8, and calling upon the CWU to send a message of support to the protest groups protesting about the change in law. Laurie requested that developments in the campaign should be publicised by the CWU.

The final proposition of the day which was moved by Colin Elcome from South East Wales Amal, with support from Maria Exall and Merlin Reader, and which called for conference to condemn the appointment of Joel Edwards as a commissioner to the Equality and Human Rights Commission due to the homophobic and transphobic comments he made about LGBT people and their rights prior to his appointment. Conference supported the call of his removal from the position and welcomed the stance already taken by the TUC over his appointment.

In all 65 delegates attended the conference and 13 visitors. Motions that were voted on to be put forward to annual conference were the motions on support LGBT victims of domestic violence receive and the Islington Employment Tribunal ruling. Conference was then closed following the summation by our Equality Officer, Linda Roy.

John Monks North West London



BACKLASH



LGBT people are not only continuing to face open and violent opposition to attempts to get any legal rights but are facing a backlash from places where it was hoped things had changed.

It's no surprise that in Russia from December 2008 religiously motivated gangs have been on the streets of Moscow, assisting police with monitoring "suspicious citizens" and other public order duties. A spokesperson for the Movement for the Rights of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transsexuals in Russia, criticised the "peace officers" initiative, saying there was no lawful basis for such teams in Russia. He added that one example when similar teams have been created and operated in a European country were called Black shirts, and were created in the mid-1930s in Germany. LGBT activists regularly face intimidation and violence from far right groups who see the LGBT community as a 'threat' to Russia's national security. It is a fear that this is what these legal gangs will do in the name of 'public order.'

In the USA, the turnout of voters in California to defeat attempts to make same sex marriage legal was massively supported by religious groups, funding adverts and campaigns.

Two-thirds of African nations maintain criminal penalties for consensual same-sex behaviour. In recent years several countries, including Nigeria, Zimbabwe and Uganda, have threatened to strengthen laws against homosexuality.

In September 2008 in Iraq a leading gay activist was assassinated. 27 year old Bashar was one of the organisers of safe houses for gay men in Baghdad and co-ordinator of Iraqi LGBT in the city. Bashar was assassinated in a barber shop by militia gunmen who sprayed his body with bullets at point blank range. A UN report in 2007 highlighted attacks on gays by militants and religious courts, supervised by clerics, where homosexuals allegedly would be 'tried,' 'sentenced' to death and then executed. Violence against gays has intensified sharply since 2005, when Iraq's leading Shiite Muslim cleric,

Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, issued a fatwa, or religious decree, which declared that gays and lesbians should be 'killed in the worst, most severe way possible.'

In December the Vatican stated its opposition to a UN declaration calling for an end to discrimination against homosexuals. The Vatican statement on discrimination against gays was criticised by France, which currently holds the Presidency of the EU Council of Ministers, as well as by Amnesty International and gay rights groups.

But this isn't just about other countries. We are seeing increasingly vocal groups desperately trying to claw back our rights, usually under the pretext of safeguarding 'their rights.'

In Northern Ireland an advert placed in a local paper by Sandown Free Presbyterian Church ahead of the 2008 Pride event in Belfast has been ruled as having breached the Advertising Standards Authority code. The 540-word ad was placed in the Belfast News Letter. It called gay people perverts and called on "religious" people to publicly oppose gay rights and Pride events.

In October 2008 Gary McFarlane claimed he has been discriminated against because he is a Christian. He works for relationships counselling organisation Relate and claims it failed to accommodate his faith or allow him to try to overcome his reservations and applied to an employment tribunal. He said that he has "overcome" his prejudices against same-sex couples since he began working as a Relate counsellor in 2003, but now feels it would be incompatible with his Christian beliefs to 'promote' homosexual sex. After complaints by staff at Relate about his views, he was suspended and later told he would face a disciplinary hearing. Eventually he was dismissed.

Mr McFarlane – who specialises in resolving legal disputes through mediation and sits on a committee which advises the Law Society – told the tribunal his strong Christian beliefs prevented him from "promoting or endorsing" same sex relationships and he assumed his supervisors would not give him any gay clients.

His tribunal follows the case of Lillian Ladele, who won her employment tribunal against Islington Council. A registrar, she had refused to carry out civil partnerships because she claimed they conflicted with her Christian views. The tribunal found she had been discriminated against because of her faith. There were concerns her victory would set a precedent that would allow people claiming strong religious convictions to opt out of the provision of services to gays, lesbians and bisexuals.

The Christian Institute, which funded the employment case, has mounted a string of unsuccessful court challenges to gay equality. Islington appealed the ruling and the employment

tribunal appeal ruled that Islington council was not guilty of religious discrimination. The council were not taking disciplinary action against Ms Ladele for holding her religious beliefs; they did so because she was refusing to carry out civil partnership ceremonies and this involved discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. This appeal ruling is a blow to fundamentalist Christians who claim they should be allowed to bring their prejudices against gay people into the workplace.

On January 9th 2009 the tribunal dismissed Gary McFarlane's claims of religious discrimination and unfair dismissal. A spokesperson for Relate said: "This important decision validates Relate's commitment to equality of access to our services. Mr McFarlane's case was backed by a group created "to stand up publicly against a tide of unChristian legal and political changes in the United Kingdom." Christian Concern for Our Nation (CCFON) claimed the law needs to be clarified and that the law preventing religious discrimination against Christians is in danger of becoming a dead letter.

Then we have the avowed enemy of all things 'Gay' Stephen Green, archbishop of hate for Christian Voice. Some months ago a proposed advert was submitted to the ASA: it insisted,

reportedly, on a qualifying adverb. And the following sentiment went up on the sides of buses: "There's probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life."

He has complained to the ASA. "I believe," Mr Green said, "The ad breaks the Advertising Code anyway, unless the advertisers hold evidence that God probably does not exist." Whilst amusing Mr Green's tactics are not a one-off. Faith, for these extremist Christians, means running to employment tribunals, broadcasting standards agencies and others. They try to stop gay poetry readings in bookshops, disrupt gay pride events and support repulsive bible-bashers who insist their rights take precedence over anyone else's.

We can expect a great deal more of this sort of thing. The law stepped over an important line when it enshrined a prohibition against incitement to religious hatred. Now people of religious beliefs think it perfectly all right to hawk their consciences round the country. Let's make merry with Mr Green and his cohorts while we can, because soon, he will be trying to stop the expressions of our justified contempt.

Gary Williams Solent

SHUNNED OR EMBRACED? THIS IS THE REALITY

The issue of faith and homophobia has always been very topical within the LGBT community. We have constantly seen LGBT rights undermined at Employment Tribunals where faith has been used as an excuse to do this.

As a semi-practicing British Muslim, I know that by and large the vast majority of moderate Muslims do not have a problem with sexuality issues per se. Those that do are completely hypocritical to say the least, as they will be likely to know members of their families who are LGBT – the question is how do they deal with this?

In my family this has been an issue which I am happy to share with OutTalk readers. This is a tale of three people (three close-family members).

The first story concerns my youngest sister. Growing up she was just like any other teenager. She had pictures of pop people plastered on her wall and she doted over Thierry Henry (she still does!). However, in her late teens she knew her sexuality was taking on a new leaf (that is the only way I can describe the situation). She approached the family and we all had a discussion on the issue – the discussion was mainly to reassure my father, who was genuinely struggling to come to terms with the news. You will understand the significance of his dilemma later on in this story.

But it was also to simply let our sister know that whatever made her happy was the important issue here. I would be lying if I said the issue did not cause ripples in our family but together we held firm. The pressure my father was

under was immense. In the second scenario an elder person in our family had already taken an all too familiar decision when faced with the same scenario. This person's answer to the problem was to abandon a daughter of 30 years of age – my dad was under some serious peer pressure to take a similar line. I guess this is not a Muslim thing – this is an LGBT thing! We see these scenarios all too often in society.

The third scenario is again the same but the outcome is different from the two already outlined. In this one – a cousin is rumoured to be gay. He has male friends stopping over at his mums and to be fair to his mum and dad they are cool with this. But there is no communication in the family. They dare not make any kind of statement on their son's sexuality. Interestingly, the son is not an outcast in the wider family. It is as if there is a "what-we-don't-officially-know-won't-hurt-us" attitude".

Families need to embrace their children on all levels. In my culture/background even now I hear mainly elders make comment on who my son should marry (automatically making a presumption about his sexuality!!). They also comment on what background the person should come from – these comments make me very angry and demonstrate to me that in many cases there is only a thin line of veneer that disguises peoples intolerance to cultural appreciation and sexual diversity.

For the record my son will be growing up hopefully with an open mind and ready to challenge intolerant statements and attitudes! **Fevzi Hussein**

HIGHS AND LOWS IN US LGBT POLITICS



One night many years ago, I was sitting at home and saw, in the Radio Times, that there was a film on late at night called, "The times of Harvey Milk". It caught my eye because it talked about the

election of the first "out" gay politician in America. The film had won best documentary in its time. So I sat up to watch that film and was taken on a roller coaster ride of emotion as first Harvey was elected, then assassinated.

Recently I saw the movie Milk which retold that story dramatically and it again took me on that ride. This time however the movie had an extra irony as it was made against the background of biggest set back in gay rights in California in recent times; while the movie portrayed a time of breakthrough in those rights.

In the movie the story is told of Harvey's battles and campaigns in local politics, in the Castro neighbourhood as well as throughout the city of San Francisco, and particularly of the battle against the Anita Bryant and John Briggs crusade attacking the rights of gay people in 1977 and 1978.

That battle was to end with the defeat of Proposition 6 which had sought to ban gays and lesbians, and anyone who supported them, from working in California's public schools. It was part of a nationwide conservative movement that had started with the successful campaign, also headed by Anita Bryant, to repeal a local gay rights ordinance in Dade County, Florida. The battle against Proposition 6 however, was won in California.

Yet while this film was being made the present day battle against Proposition 8 was being fought – that proposition did, as you know, remove the right of gay people to marry. At the start it was all looking promising, the early polls showed a good lead for the anti proposition 8 groups with, for example, 54% opposing in mid September and only 40% supporting it, according to the Public Policy Institute of California survey; but after then the polls consistently moved closer. Many famous companies and show-business names donated large sums of money and their voices to the anti-8 movement including Brad Pitt, Ellen DeGeneres and Steven Spielberg. Google and Apple both supported the opposition. However Obama, while making noises about supporting civil partnerships didn't feel able to support the opposition as he said he believed marriage to be "between a man and woman". McCain

supported civil partnerships as well, though he was clear that he supported "the efforts of the people of California to recognise marriage as a unique institution between a man and a woman".

Meanwhile there were many adverts which misled the public about what children would be taught about gay relationships and marriage in schools. Of course this is typical of the distortions, exaggerations and misinformation we have become used to in these battles, but this was also a dirty battle of elections boards outside people's properties being defaced and removed on both sides of the argument.

In the end the real fears that Obama might be assassinated, thankfully didn't come true. Sadly in the 70s however Harvey was shot dead, as was the mayor, by another city supervisor.

In the first few sentences of his victory speech Obama referred to the diversity of the peoples of the United States and specifically the gay and lesbian ones.... but the citizens of California as they voted to put this minority president into the White House took away the right to marry from those same gays and lesbians for a second time. How far the US has come – in some ways!

The story of the marriage battle goes on as I write this, however, with both with a new ballot measure, seeking to repeal California's ban on same-sex marriage, having been cleared to start collecting signatures to qualify for the 2010 ballot.

At the same time the California Supreme Court is expected to rule very soon on the legal challenge that the Proposition 8 "amendment" should have been a "revision" to the Constitution; for while the Californian Constitution can be amended by a 50% plus one majority on a ballot proposition placed there by a signature campaign only, a "revision" of the Constitution, requires a two-thirds vote of the Legislature before it can get on the ballot, and removing a fundamental right to marry from a section to the population should be a revision.

Meanwhile, in a more radical departure, two Southern California college students got permission recently to start circulating petitions for a separate initiative that would end all marriage as a state-sanctioned institution and instead make couples, gay or straight, eligible only for domestic partnerships.

Where will all this politicking end? I'll be watching with interest. Oh and go and see Milk, it's a great film.

Laurie Smith Central London

IRAQI LGBT

Whatever the morality or otherwise of the war in Iraq it has led to a flowering of LGBT people and organizations bravely coming out in the belief that the western influences will support and protect them. Recently groups of gay men have been taking greater chances, gathering together in Baghdad, Basra, Sadr, Najaf and other cities.

Sadly, like so much of what has happened in Iraq the promises and hopes have failed to materialize. It has been reported that in the past two months the bodies of as many as 25 boys and men suspected of being gay have turned up in the Shiite enclave of Sadr City alone. Most were shot; several had the word "pervert" in Arabic on notes attached to their bodies. On April 4th it was reported that two gay men were killed in Baghdad's Sadr City and police said they had found the bodies of four more after clerics urged a crackdown on a perceived spread of homosexuality.

Homosexuality is prohibited almost everywhere in the Middle East, but conditions have become especially dangerous for gays and lesbians in Iraq since the rise of religious militias after U.S.-led forces toppled Saddam Hussein six years ago.

Some LGBT people have become more visible, a growing number of women walk the streets unveiled. But that doesn't change the reality that the country remains religious, conservative and violent. According to police reports the killers of these gay men and boys are not just Shiite death squads, but also tribal and family members shamed by their gay relatives. Clerics in Sadr City have been urging followers to root out homosexuality, backed by a police campaign to "clean up the streets and get the beggars and homosexuals off them."

In 2005, the country's most influential Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, issued a religious decree that said gay men and lesbians should be "punished, in fact, killed." He added, "The people should be killed in the worst, most severe way of killing."

No arrests have been made in the killings. Whilst this is happening clerics associated with anti-US cleric Moktada al-Sadr have devoted a portion of Friday Prayer services to inveighing against homosexuality, calling for the community to be purified from such delinquent behaviour like stealing, lying and the effeminacy phenomenon among men. Clerics have told reporters that although some of the killing had been committed by members of generally it is the families that are killing their gay sons.

In March a UK-based Iraqi-LGBT group revealed that there are many prisoners in Iraq facing execution because they are gay. They have called on the UK Government and the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva to intervene "with due speed" to prevent "this tragic miscarriage of justice" from going ahead.

Iraqi-LGBT is concerned that the Iraqi authorities have not disclosed the identities of those facing imminent execution, stoking fears that many of them may have been sentenced to death after trials that failed to satisfy international standards for fair trial.

Iraqi-LGBT is asking for support and money to LGBT activists in Iraq in order to assist their efforts to help other LGBT Iraqi people facing death, persecution and systematic targeting by the Iraqi Police and Badr and Sadr Militia – and to raise awareness about the wave of homophobic murders in Iraq to the outside world.

Funds raised will also help provide LGBT's under threat of killing with refuge in the safer parts of Iraq (including safe houses, food, electricity, medical help) and assist efforts help them seek refuge in neighbouring countries.

Friends can send donations to IRAQI LGBT.

Cheques can be made payable to IRAQI LGBT.

Post to: Iraqi LGBT, 22 Notting Hill Gate, Unit 111, London, W11 3JE

Tel: 079-819 59453

email: iraqilgbt@yahoo.co.uk



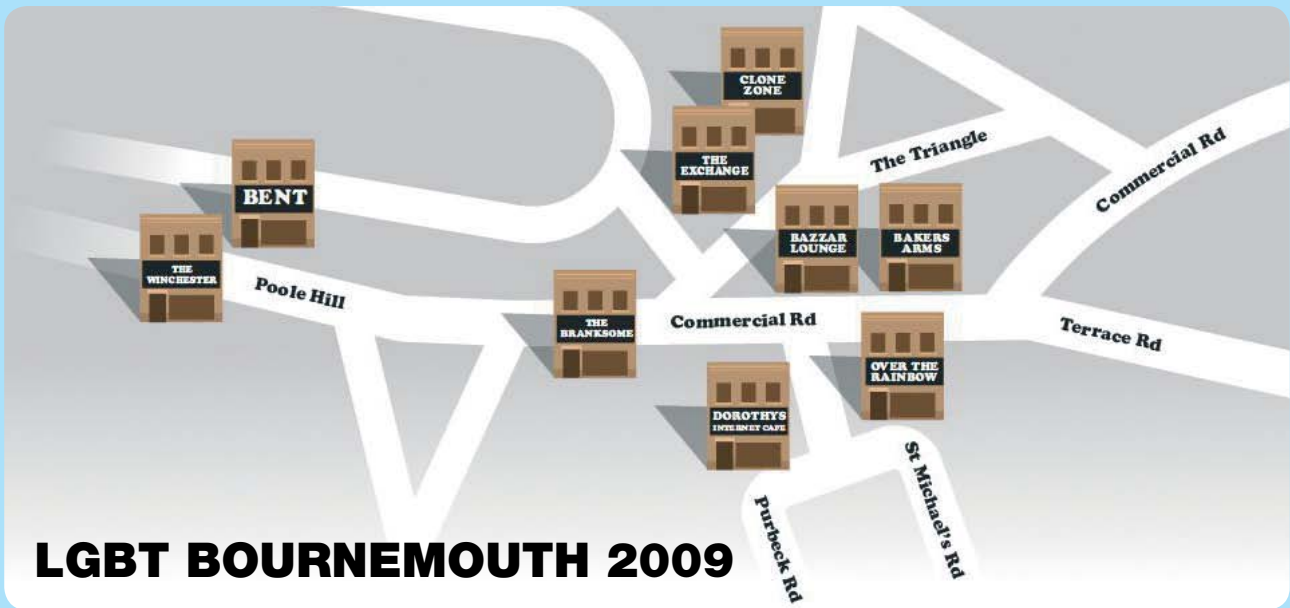
Visitors LGBT CONFERENCE

Join the CWU delegation for the annual two-day TUC LGBT conference. Held at Congress House in London.

2nd to 3rd July 2009

Contact the equal opportunities department for more details. All travel and leave expenses will have to be covered by your branch.





LGBT BOURNEMOUTH 2009

PUBS AND CLUBS

Bournemouth has a good selection of gay and gay friendly pubs and clubs. The majority are situated in the Triangle area of the town.

2930 The Triangle

2930 The Triangle launched on Boxing Day 2008. The bar is now open every day from 5pm. There is cabaret on Wednesdays and The Basement Club opens every Friday and Saturday until late.

29-30 The Triangle, Bournemouth, BH2 5SE

The Xchange

The Xchange is one of the longest running gay pubs/clubs on the South Coast. It has had a number of incarnations in it's time including 'telephone bar' and 'wine bar'. It's just had a refit, with a large bar and two dance floors. It's free to get in with a 6am license. They run many special nights, have acts and drinks promotions.

4 The Triangle, Bournemouth, BH2 5RY

The Branksome

The Branksome is Bournemouth's busiest gay venue and has something on every night of the week. Inside you'll find a main bar area with stage. Upstairs is the 2nd Level bar with more seating. There is also the terrace bar and covered seating area in the garden.

152-154 Commercial Road, Bournemouth, BH2 5LU

The Bakers Arms

The Bakers is a long established gay-friendly pub in the Triangle area. If you are walking up from the main town centre it is the first pub you will come across. The Bakers has regular Cabaret and Karaoke nights.

77-79 Commercial Road, Bournemouth, BH2 5RT

SUPPORT

Over The Rainbow!

Advice, support & information for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community **T: 01202 257478** (answer phone when closed) **M: 07801 557969 27**

St Michaels Road, Bournemouth, BH2 5DP

www.rainbowbournemouth.co.uk



OUTtalk is produced on a regular basis and mailed to all members and branches on the LGBT Advisory Committee mailing list. If you are not already on the mailing list or your details have changed, please contact the CWU Equal Opportunities department at Headquarters at:

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Tel: 020 8971 7205

e-mail: equality@cwu.org

The mailing list is completely confidential.

This **OUTtalk** and previous editions are available on-line at **www.cwu.org** follow the links from the front page to the LGBTAC