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blazing star



chicago women's liberation union

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

The Chicago Women's Liberation Union is a city-wide organization that works to end the oppression of women and of other oppressed people. The Lesbian Group is one project of CWLU; other projects work on issues of health care, sports, legal problems, child care, job discrimination, and lots more.



BLAZING STAR RETURNS



The Lesbian Group has worked on a number of projects over the years. We have offered classes and educational forums for the lesbian community; we've worked on gay rights legislation; we've talked to many kinds of groups about lesbianism through CWLU's Speakers' Bureau; and of course we've published BLAZING STAR.

We chose the name BLAZING STAR for our newsletter for several reasons. Blazing Star is the name of a lavender-colored wildflower that grows throughout the Midwestern, Southern, and Eastern United States. Because of their feathery appearance, Blazing Star has two very appropriate common names: 'Gayfeather' and 'Fairy Wand'!! We also felt that Blazing Star was a good name because the Lesbian liberation/pride movement is taking off like a 'blazing star' across the heavens!!

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During 1975, we published five issues of BLAZING STAR, approximately one issue every two months. This is our first issue for 1976, and many of our readers may have been wondering where we've been and what took us so long. We feel we owe you an explanation.

As a small work group, we are often faced with a variety of problems — situations at work or school, family problems, relationships, etc. — that sometimes affect our work on BLAZING STAR. All of these have happened to us at one time or another, and sometimes it results in getting the paper out later than we had planned.

However, in recent months we faced a much more serious problem; that is, within CWLU there were serious differences of opinion which came very close to destroying the organization. These were fundamental differences on the nature of the women's movement and the nature of CWLU as an organization; and these differences were so serious and deep-seated that CWLU literally split

over them.

The Lesbian Group was very much involved in this struggle, in large part because we realized that the opposition was implicitly anti-gay. As the struggle developed, they raised the slogan "smash feminism." This anti-feminist stance was one of the main factors in the split in which they left CWLU. After the split their homophobia became explicit. During the course of the struggle, members of the Lesbian Group found ourselves spending a great deal of time on the struggle itself and not very much time on the work we would have liked to be doing such as publishing BLAZING STAR. Now that the struggle is over, we expect to be able to get on with our work. This issue of BLAZING STAR represents one example of that.

The CWLU office, at 3411 W. Diversey, is open Monday through Saturday from 10am to 4pm. If you want to find out more about CWLU or BLAZING STAR stop by or give us a call at 772-2655.

LEGISLATION

What's Happening With Gay Rights

Ald. Clifford P. Kelley (Dem.-20th) introduced a gay rights bill to the Chicago City Council on February 4, 1976. This bill would add the words 'sexual orientation' to the sections of the Municipal Code dealing with discrimination in employment, housing, and civil rights (public accommodations).

The bill has been sent to the Committee on Police, Fire, Civil Service, Schools and Municipal Institutions which has not yet held hearings on it. The hearings might take place later this summer, in July or August. Anyone who is available to testify at these hearings should get in touch with the Gay Rights Task Force of the Alliance to End Repression, 427-4064.

Meanwhile in the Illinois State Legislature, four gay rights bills were introduced on May 6, 1976. The four bills would ban discrimination based on sexual preference in the

areas of employment, employment in state colleges and universities, public accommodations, and civil rights. The bills are sponsored by Susan Catania (Rep-22), Robert Mann (Dem-24), and Leland Rayson (Dem-9), along with 10 cosponsors. Since the current session of the legislature is intended to deal only with financial matters, the gay rights bills undoubtedly will not be acted on this session.

At the federal level, the gay rights bill sponsored by Bella Abzug (Dem-NY) has gone to committee, but no hearings have been held yet. The bill, numbered HR 5452, would amend the 1964, 1968, and 1972 Civil Rights Acts to prohibit discrimination based on

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'affectional or sexual preference' in employment, housing, public accommodations and facilities, education, and federally funded programs.

The Abzug bill has gotten some support from other Members of Congress. It has about 20 cosponsors, including the entire Black Caucus. In addition, all of the major candidates for the Democratic presidential nomination have indicated that they would sign the bill into law if it passes; this support even comes from Jimmy Carter, although he indicated that his religious beliefs led him to consider homosexuality

a sin, but he would sign the bill because he didn't believe in discriminating against anyone.

On the Republican side, Ronald Reagan's views are unknown, but President Ford would probably sign the Abzug bill into law. When Ford was questioned several months ago on his opinion of gay rights, his initial reaction was 'Civil rights for who?' But when he understood what the question was about, he said that he didn't approve of discrimination and would sign a gay rights bill.

Why We Support Gay Rights Legislation

BLAZING STAR has often published articles on the progress of gay rights legislation, and we've urged our readers to indicate their support for this legislation by signing petitions, writing letters, etc. We have urged these measures, obviously, because we believe that gay rights legislation is important; but we also think we should clarify for our readers why we consider this important, and what we consider the advantages or disadvantages of legislation to be.

First of all, we support this legislation because we want lesbians and gay men to have the guarantee of basic human rights that most other U.S. citizens have. We realize from past experience that legal guarantees alone are not enough--for example, the liberation of Afro-Americans has not yet been achieved, even after 20 or more years of civil rights legislation. However, the same experiences show us that some achievements have been made, and that it is worth it to fight for our rights.

Second, the struggle for gay liberation must begin somewhere, and this is a good beginning. If we were not subject to discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, etc., we would have more mobility to organize around other issues. Legislation is not an end in itself, but a beginning in the struggle for liberation.

We also believe that, in order to achieve our liberation, we must fight for it. As Frederick Douglass said more than a hundred years ago, "If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who



profess to freedom and yet deprecate agitation are men [and women] who want crops without plowing. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its mighty waters. This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will."

Finally, we believe in the importance of educating all people, straight and gay, about gay rights. We need the support of straight people to achieve our liberation. We can get that support--and educate people at the same time--by asking straight people to help us in our struggle for gay rights legislation, by signing petitions or writing letters.

For these reasons, we urge the readers of BLAZING STAR to take an active role in the fight for gay rights.

WORKING

Gay Rights Clause

"Neither the agency nor the union shall discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment on account of race, color, creed, national origin, sex, sexual preference or age."

The previous statement you may notice includes "sexual preference". This was something the Augustana Nursery Workers from Chicago's north side won in their first contract with Lutheran Welfare Services of Illinois, their boss. It was signed into effect last winter. The workers had a long and bitter strike to win the contract that this clause was a part of.

When the workers first raised this issue management's horrified reaction was "But we're a church". They said they thought homosexuality is a "sickness". Despite their typical grotesque prejudices, the militancy of the workers forced management to stop their attack on gay workers, at least in writing.

This is a very important gain. As gay workers we have to usually live a schizophrenic existence. At work we generally have to make believe we're straight. Otherwise we stand the chance of getting fired. This is especially true in child-care jobs and in the social service industry in general.

Just as we workers, gay and straight, have power to win economic demands through strikes and other job actions, we can also use our power as workers to win gay rights and educate our fellow workers of the need for gay liberation.

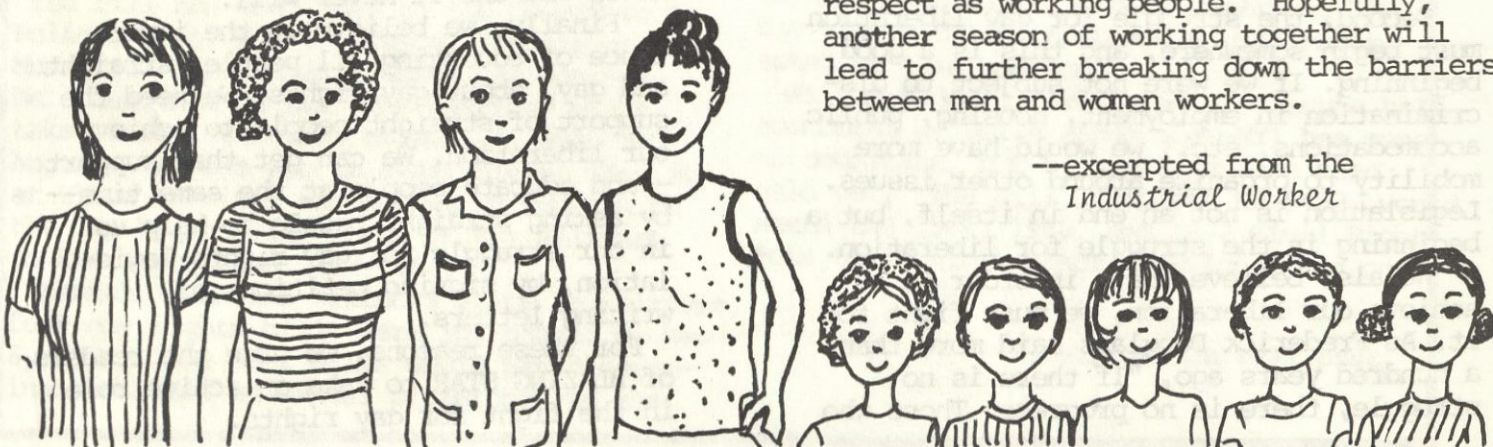
Women

on the Alaskan Pipeline

As the greatest construction job on earth, the Alaska pipeline, enters its second and final year before the oil flows, workers in Anchorage are gearing up for the months ahead, recalling last year's experiences and calling attention to likely pitfalls for the newcomers. Minority hiring and problems of women require special awareness. Women construction workers on the pipeline are helping to break down sex barriers in the construction trades, but often face harassment and intimidation from bosses, union officials, and their fellow workers.

Here are some of the problems women face. If a woman makes it out of the union hiring hall and through the orientation center, she, like her male counterpart, has qualified as a one-year Alaska resident and is a bona-fide union member with or without a special skill, like chuck tender or chainsaw operator. But when a woman arrives at the campsite, she can run into opposition from the foreman, the supervisor, or the steward, who may have their own prejudices about what is or isn't women's work. This is just one example of the kind of discrimination women face on the pipeline. All workers, especially women and minority workers are urged to report hiring infringements, harassment, and sexual assaults, and to stand together for job rights, equality, and basic self-respect as working people. Hopefully, another season of working together will lead to further breaking down the barriers between men and women workers.

--excerpted from the
Industrial Worker



Secretary or Mistress?

A recent study conducted by Women Office Workers (WOW) determined that 100 major employment agencies in New York City engage in sex and age discrimination against women.

It was found that, in addition to the 'usual; placement of women in jobs that allow for little or no advancement, older women were hard hit by agency practices likened by the report to the 'sexual politics of singles bars.'

The study consisted of two women - one 50 years old, the other younger - who sampled 10 agencies. A man working with the group also placed a discriminatory job order call with 100 agencies.

The illegal telephone order went something like this: 'I want a girl who is college-educated, has pizzazz, young, maybe 25...I need someone who looks good, a young girl, sharp dresser....' The typical response, by the V. A. Parr Agency: 'I won't send you any dogs.'

The results of the WOW experiment reflect the lack of enforcement of antidiscrimination laws. Civil rights and consumer protection offices have depended upon employment agencies self regulation through their trade association and on the investigation of complaints by job seekers.

—excerpted from
The Guardian



Sexism and Job Safety

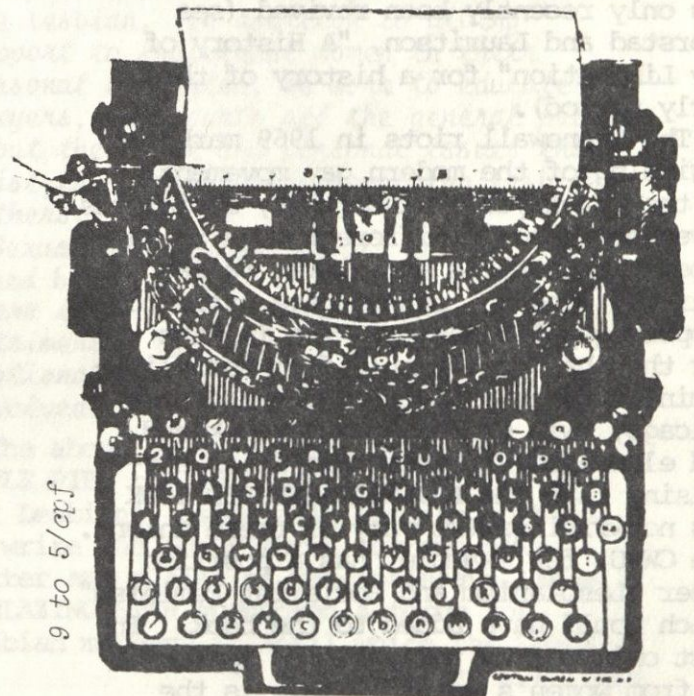
About six months ago a woman named Norma James was sterilized. It wasn't something she had planned, you understand. She wasn't eager for it, but the 34-year old mother of four was faced with the choice of keeping her job or her fertility.

The General Motors battery plant in Oshawa, Ontario, where she worked had new research that showed that lead oxide emissions could harm unborn children. The company issued an ultimatum: A woman had to prove she was unable to bear children, or face a transfer.

What happened to Mrs. James isn't a fluke. It's a warning, an early alarm for all women in industry: The growing concern over occupational health may be used to force thousands of women out of their jobs, all in the name of protection of future generations.

As one union woman said: "When industry starts talking protective about women, watch out. They're about to protect them right out of their jobs." When industry excludes fertile women, it avoids the larger issue of safety in the workplace. It's cheaper to get rid of them than to get rid of the danger. Will industry be allowed to protect women out of their jobs (or their fertility) or will it be forced to protect men and women on the job?

—excerpted from the
Chicago Sun-Times



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THE LAVENDER AND RED BOOK: A Review

THE LAVENDER AND RED BOOK, published by the Lavendar and Red Union in Los Angeles, is a gay liberation/socialist anthology, a collection of writings from around the world. Included in the book are a number of writings from the Lavendar and Red Union's paper "Come Out Fighting" as well as material from the U.S. left, English Marxists and the Australian Communist Party and others.



While socialists at the turn of the century often supported the gay movement, that support dissipated in the '30s and has only recently been revived (see Thorstad and Lauritson, "A History of Gay Liberation" for a history of this early period).

The Stonewall riots in 1969 mark the beginning of the modern gay movement. In the seven years since then, socialists have responded in different ways to gay liberation. While some have raised anti-gay slogans, others have tried to support gay liberation. The impetus for this has come mainly from socialist-feminist women's unions (like those in Chicago, Twin Cities, Berkley-Oakland and elsewhere). Given this it is surprising that the LAVENDER AND RED BOOK has no writings from any of these unions. The CWLU, for example, has a position paper "Lesbianism and Socialist Feminism" which would have added to the book. In fact only two of the articles appear to be from women's groups. This is the book's main failure.

Nonetheless, the book does collect some very good articles. One is a position paper of the Australian Communist Party - the only Communist Party in the world to support gay liberation. One of the authors of the statement was recently in Chicago and talked with members of the CWLU and the New American Movement about the work of the communist party. An example of the way in which the party has developed support for gay liberation is given by the example of a teacher at an Australian school. The school was expanding and much construction work was going on. During this time the aforementioned teacher was found to be gay and was fired. To protest the firing and to demand his reinstatement the construction workers under the leadership of the communist party walked off the job. The teacher was rehired.



In other articles, Bob McCant in Britain and the Lavendar and Red Union talk about support for gay workers. McCant proposes that gay caucuses be built in unions, he mentions that the National Union of Journalists there adopted a motion opposing discrimination on the basis of sexual preference. The Lavendar and Red Union has begun a project called In Defense of Gay Workers which they also describe in the book. They are in the process of determining gay people's concerns regarding work and then using that as a basis for this project. These articles were among the most exciting in the book and give an idea of the kinds of projects we can build in the gay community.

These books are available at the CWLU library and the Thorstad and Lauritson book is also available at Barbara's Bookstore.

LESBIAN MOTHERS

And a Lavender Rose for Mom

To be gay in our society means dealing with prejudices and hassles almost continually. Some of us may have it easier than others, but one group definitely faces the most difficult problems of all. I am referring to those lesbians who are also mothers, and in most instances, still wives. Most people think the words "lesbian" and "mother" are contradictory. Actually, there are many lesbians who are now divorced and raising their children, or who are still married but don't wish to remain so. These women are beginning to assert their right to be what they are: lesbians and mothers.

In a way, it comes as no surprise that lesbian mothers exist. Some women, especially before the advent of gay liberation, believed that if they got married they would "straighten out"; to such an extent is the pressure to be heterosexual in our society. These women now want to get divorced but are justifiably worried they may not gain custody of their children. In addition, these women fear the loss of the financial support and security for their children, if they were to divorce, as well as the effect of divorce itself on their children. As a result of these concerns, many lesbian mothers mistakenly believe they have to stay in the marriage for the children's sake. Whether or not this is true is up to the individual herself, as she alone can consider all the aspects of her situation.

For the lesbian who decides to get a divorce, the chances of her winning custody have improved in recent years if the case can be settled out of court. Court cases have been won, there have been precedents set, but it is still an uphill battle for the lesbian mother. Unfortunately, many

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Lesbian Mothers Group

The Lesbian Mothers National Defense Fund (LMNDF) is an organization dedicated to meeting the pressing needs of lesbian mothers all over the country for emotional support, quality legal representation, and financial assistance in their struggles to avoid losing custody of their children as a result of this homophobic society's prejudice against the Lesbian. In addition to giving support to individual women in their personal struggles, we work to educate lawyers, the courts and the general public about the legal and personal issues that arise in custody cases involving lesbian mothers.

Sexual orientation should not be considered by a court in a custody dispute unless there is a strong showing of a significant detrimental effect on the physical and emotional well-being of the children involved. It should not be, but it is.

The above is an excerpt from MOM'S APPLE PIE, the LMNDF newsletter. We urge all Lesbians, especially Lesbian mothers, to write the LMNDF for a current newsletter and a list of materials available.

BLAZING STAR sponsored a forum for Lesbian mothers in April which the LMNDF

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AND A LAVENDER ROSE FOR MOM
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lesbians put their trust in the courts, under the misconception that the best interests of the child will prevail. In these proceedings, the mother is usually deemed "unfit" solely on the basis of her lesbianism, not on her individual merit as a parent. The cases where the mothers were awarded custody involved her being open about her sexuality right from the beginning and fighting for her children with every means available. The women who lose are those who don't know how to fight, or even believe they have the right to fight.

Whether it be in court or out of it, there are many "reasons" cited why lesbian mothers lose custody cases. These reasons go hand in hand with the attitudes of society as well. The designation of "unfit" for the mother is a purely homophobic reaction. It is homophobic simply because heterosexuality is no guarantee of good parenthood just as homosexuality is no guar-

antee of bad parenthood. There is also the point of the child's "best interests"; it should be obvious that those interests lay with a loving parent, not a gay or straight one.

The other arguments usually presented are just as irrational. Studies have proven that there is little stigma attached to the child in terms of peer pressure who has a gay parent. And there is no foundation for the belief that gay parents will 'proselytize' or teach their children to be gay. After all, most gay people are the children of conventionally heterosexual parents.

There is assistance for lesbian mothers wishing to divorce from knowledgeable women by means of the Lesbian Mothers National Defense Fund. These women provide guidance in the legal arena, and give that moral support to the isolated mother who so desperately needs it. The phone number of the LMNDF is 206-282-5798, at 2446 Lorentz Pl. N., Seattle, Wa., 98109. To contact the lesbian mothers group in Chicago call 772-2655. And for general information is the Chicago Gay Switchboard at 929-4357.

LESBIAN MOTHERS GROUP

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provided a speaker for. Many of us who attended had little or no previous knowledge of how the justice system works - or doesn't work - and who it may work for. (Certainly not us.)

Most Lesbian women have lost custody battles because of bad lawyers. Not just because the lawyers are ignorant of how to deal with Lesbianism as an issue, but because most lawyers will sell the case down the drain deliberately. We were warned to be careful about who we trust.

Being open about Lesbianism and equally as prepared, ie. an experienced lawyer, the chances of winning are much better.

-Be aggressive, out front, clear on our position: Lesbianism has nothing to do with the fitness raising children;

-It's our equal right as women to decide to have or not have children.

It's very important to be prepared; get in touch with the LMNDF before you're involved in the case.

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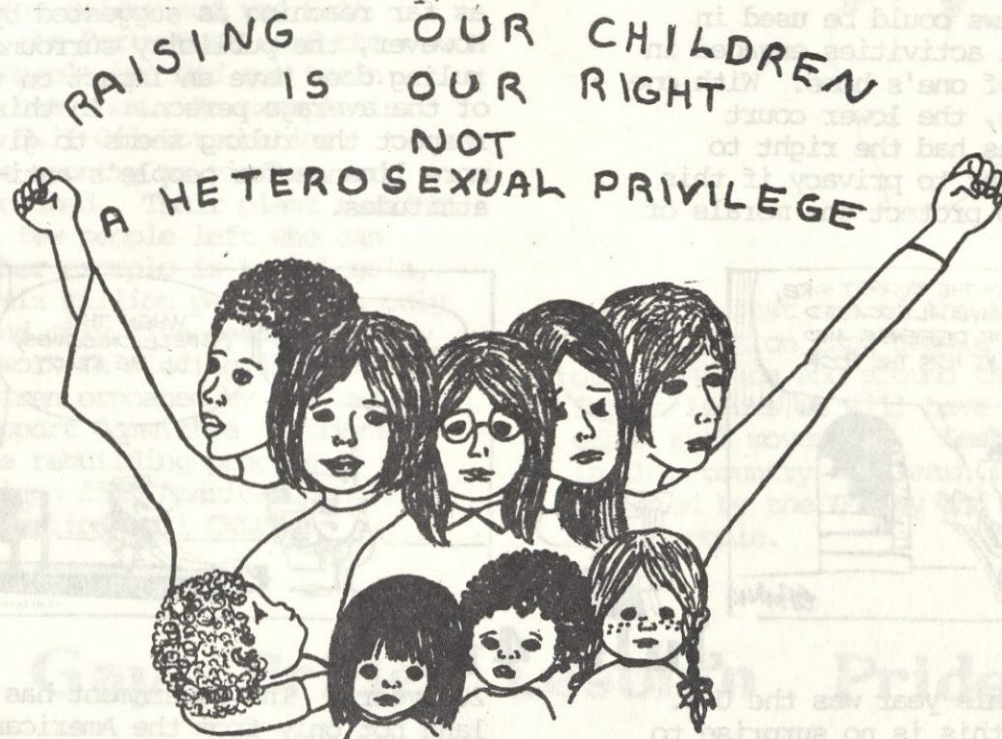
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As a result of the forum, a Lesbian mothers group has formed in Chicago. They are an independent group and urge all Lesbian mothers to get involved. Some of the ideas women see as important include:

- Investigating legal aspects in Illinois such as laws and the history of how the courts in this state interpret them;
- Supporting each other through the custody battles;
- Lesbian motherhood/childcare educationals in the Lesbian community;

- Couple relationships including children - helping our children develop within our culture;
- Rap groups - talking about the Lesbian mother experience;
- Create a space for the children in our culture to be able to relate to each other - get to know and support each other through their struggles.

For more information about the Chicago Lesbian mothers group contact Jaci at 528-3303 or Mandy at 772-2655.



LOOKING AT THE NEWS

Insurance Guidelines

The Illinois State Department of Insurance has instituted new rules to prohibit discrimination based on sex, sexual preference and marital status. These rules go into effect on July 1, and concern life and health insurance companies doing business in Illinois. The new rules mean, among other things, that health insurance coverage of maternity or abortion can no longer be restricted to

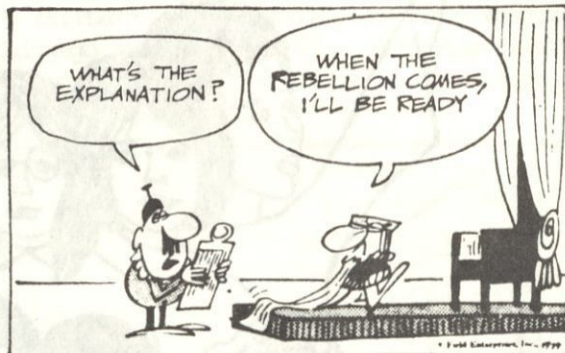
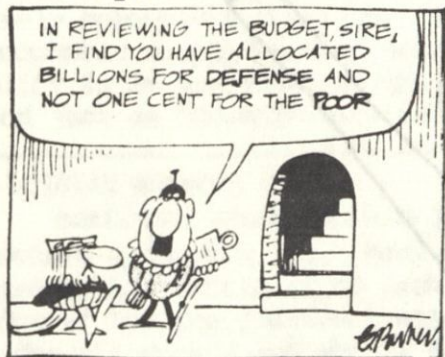
married women and that gay couples can have the same benefits as married heterosexual couples. These changes have been made after testimony by representatives of feminist, lesbian, and gay organizations urged the Insurance Department to do so.

LOOKING AT THE NEWS continues
on the next few pages

Supreme Court Ruling

In the middle of April, the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear a case challenging Virginia's sodomy laws; these laws (like others in other states) are laws that prohibit various kinds of 'abnormal' sexual activities. Most often they are used to prohibit homosexual activity, particularly among men. The Court's refusal to hear the case permitted the ruling of the lower court to stand. That ruling said that such laws were constitutional, that they could be enforced selectively against homosexuals and that such laws could be used in regard to sexual activities engaged in in the privacy of one's home. With one judge dissenting, the lower court ruled that states had the right to overrule the right to privacy if this was necessary to protect the morals of the community.

Three Justices dissented from the Court's refusal to hear the case. Legal experts and gay community leaders are divided over the implications of the ruling. It will not directly affect Illinois since sodomy laws were repealed here in 1961. Some people feel that the Court is waiting for a better case to rule on, as it has done in the abortion and civil rights issues. Others believe that the emphasis should be put on legislative work for gay rights rather than judicial work. Most agree that the ruling is not as far reaching as suggested by the media. However, the publicity surrounding the ruling does have an impact on the views of the average person. In this respect the ruling seems to give some more license for people's anti-gay attitudes.



July 4th

July fourth this year was the U.S. Bicentennial - this is no surprise to anyone. On the fourth there were big celebrations all over the country to celebrate 200 years of freedom; but there remained many unanswered questions. Who has that freedom been for? Was it for the black Americans who were slaves during and after the Revolutionary war? For the black slaves who were freed by the Civil War - freed to live as sharecroppers or in urban ghettos? Was that freedom for the women who have been the property of their fathers and husbands? Or for the American Indians whose land was stolen and who have been forced to live on reservations?

As we celebrated the bicentennial did we remember that these things - stealing land, slavery, poverty - have been a part of this country's history for the last

200 years? The government has stolen land not only from the American Indians, but from Mexico. The CIA has assassinated leaders and overthrown governments to protect U.S. business interests; the government has intervened with such great destructiveness in Vietnam.

On July 4th in Philadelphia 30,000 people gathered for a parade and rally as a part of the answer to these questions. The three slogans of the event were: For jobs and a decent standard of living, For full democracy and equality, For a bicentennial without colonies. The coalition which sponsored the event included a number of organizations from the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, and the American Indian Movement to the United Electrical Workers Union, the Third World Women's Alliance, and others. In Chicago the CWLU helped in planning and participated in the event.

LOOKING AT THE NEWS
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Angola

The Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) was victorious in its struggle to gain independence for that African country (see BLAZING STAR, Vol. 2, No. 1, for a report on the struggle.) In the last few months and weeks since the victory the MPLA, led by Aghostino Neto, has begun the process of rebuilding the country after the many years of fighting. Angola was a Portuguese colony and was left undeveloped - the Portuguese used the resources of Angola but did not train the people to use them. An example is the action of Gulf Oil Corporation, which left the country as victory for the MPLA approached. Their plant remains, but there are few people left who can run it. Another example is that Angola, a country of six million people, has only six doctors and only five people are available to work in finding homes for the many children orphaned by the war. The Angola Support Committee is trying to help in the rebuilding process through donations from American people. For more information call CWLU at 772-2655.



This is just one of the many struggles for liberation that people are carrying out in Africa and around the world. In future issues we will have reports on other such movements. Lesbians and women in this country can learn from and be inspired by the energy and strength of these people.

Gay Pride / Lesbian Pride

Gay Pride Week was held the last week of June. There were a number of events during the week, including an Open Forum sponsored by the Gay and Lesbian Coalition (see article on Coalition). The climax of the week was, as usual, a large parade down Broadway and Clark, attended by several thousand people.

Press coverage of Gay Pride Week was very poor. For the most part, the news media didn't cover it at all; when they did, it was the most sensational aspects (transvestites in Bicentennial drag) rather than the serious aspect of a struggle of an oppressed group of people for their rights.

The Gay Pride Week Planning Committee deserves a lot of praise for their hard work and dedication. However, a common criticism of Gay Pride Week, this year and in the past, has been that very few women have participated in the events. A possible solution which has been pro-

posed by a number of people is that the Planning Committee itself should be 50% women. BLAZING STAR hopes that this suggestion will be implemented in 1977.

Lesbians for Equal Rights is sponsoring Lesbian Pride Week during the first week of August. On Sunday, August 1, at 2pm, there will be a prison demonstration at the Women's House of Corrections and at 7:30 pm a workshop on the "U.S. Bicentennial: 200 Years of Lesbian Oppression." On Monday, August 2 at 8 pm at the LFC there will be several films shown: "We Are Alive," and "Amelia Earhart." Tuesday through Thursday there will be a variety of workshops at different

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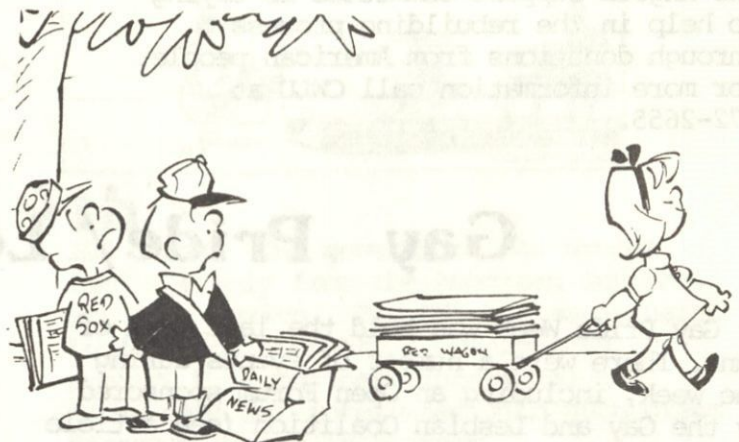
locations on such subjects as health and self-defense, Lesbian mothers; Third World Lesbians; Lesbian writers; and Lesbian musicians. On Friday at 8 pm there will be a poetry reading at the LFC (\$2.50). On Saturday, August 7 at 2 pm, there will be a march on State Street (assemble at State and Wacker) and a rally in Grant Park. That evening a concert with Linda Shear, Maxine Feldman, and other Lesbian musicians will be held (\$3.50). Lesbian Pride Week will end on Sunday August 8 with a rally with speakers from many organizations, including Jill Raymond, who was imprisoned for 14 months for refusing to talk to a Grand Jury investigation. More information on Lesbian Pride Week can be obtained from the CWLU, 772-2655, the LFC, 935-4270, or WICCA, 528-3303.



Secret Storm Forums

SECRET STORM is the CWLU sports program. It organizes softball, volleyball, and basketball teams in Chicago Park District Leagues, prints a newspaper about women's liberation called SECRET STORM, works with high school and junior college women's groups, and holds monthly forums on a variety of topics. Two of these forums are coming up. This month's forum will be held July 18 at 7:30 pm at 1901 W. Wellington; the topic is "Women's Sexuality" and it will include a panel of women speaking on lesbianism and straight sexuality followed by a discussion. The August educational will be held August 15 at 7:30 pm also at 1901 W. Wellington. A film, "Salt of the Earth," will be shown. This movie is about a strike of Mexican-American mine workers in the Southwest United States; it tells how the actions of the miners' wives helped win the strike. This is really a wonderful film about women - one which everyone should see.

CWLU is also sponsoring other events in the coming months. Every Sunday morning starting at 9 am there is open volleyball and softball for any women. We play at Palmer Square (Palmer and Albany) and have refreshments after. In May the CWLU sponsored the Chicago premiere of the film, "Union Maids." This is a movie about three Chicago



"If she's half as good at selling papers as she is at playing third base, we're sunk!"

women organizing in the labor movement of the 1930's and 1940's. It features interviews with the women, interspersed with film footage of labor struggles in Chicago. The CWLU now has its own print of the film and can schedule showings for groups. Everyone should see this excellent film. For more information about these and other events call us at 772-2655.

LOOKING AT THE NEWS
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Coalition Formed



Since last fall representatives of lesbian and gay businesses and organizations have been meeting to form a coalition that will provide a channel for communication in our community. The official name of the coalition is the "Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Metropolitan Chicago." Forty-three groups are represented in the coalition including businesses such as CHICAGO GAY LIFE, the Baton Lounge, the Up North, His and Hers and the Gold Coast, and organizations such as NOW, the Rogers Park Gay Center, MCC, Dignity, and CWLU. Officers of the coalition are Mike Jacobson of Dignity - moderator, Rick Noll of MCC/GSP - secretary, Chris Riddiough of CWLU - treasurer, and Jim Bussen of Gay Pride Week - clerk.

In an effort to promote communication in the gay and lesbian community the coalition is sponsoring semi-annual "open forums" - town hall meetings where members of the community can meet representatives of the groups, ask questions and voice their views. The first of these was held June 22 as part of Gay Pride Week. About 200 people attended and raised questions about the status of the gay rights legislation at the city and state level (see accompanying article), the ERA, and about the upcoming presidential elections and their effect on the community, among other issues.

In other actions the coalition has sent representatives to the Democratic party platform hearings and has sent a telegram to the National Gay Task Force requesting a Chicago representative on its Board of Directors. Both actions were undertaken as part of an effort to give Chicago's gay community a voice in efforts at a national level that will affect us. While the coalition doesn't speak for the whole community, it does represent the coming together of a large portion of it.

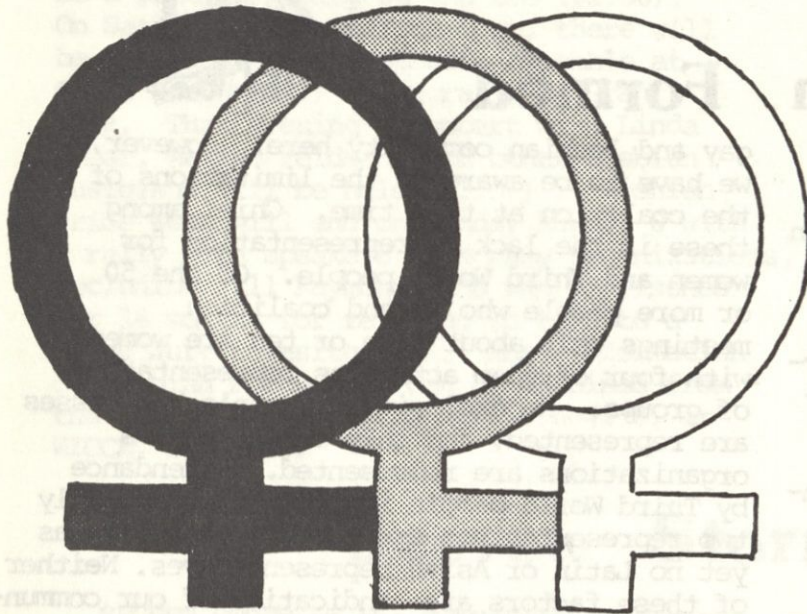
In many respects the formation of this coalition is a major step forward for the

gay and lesbian community here. However, we have to be aware of the limitations of the coalition at this time. Chief among these is the lack of representation for women and Third World people. Of the 50 or more people who attend coalition meetings only about five or ten are women, with four of them acting as representatives of groups. No exclusively women's businesses are represented, and only three women's organizations are represented. Attendance by Third World people is even lower and only two representatives are black - there are as yet no Latin or Asian representatives. Neither of these factors are indicative of our community as a whole. Clearly there are many more women's groups than are represented on the coalition - lesbians make up about 50% of the community. What can or should be done to change this? The obvious answer is for more women's and third world groups to join the coalition, but this is not enough - it does not really get at the root of the situation. Not just the coalition, but the whole community is divided by racism and sexism. These will not disappear just by our wishing it were so. We have to work to change these problems (recognizing of course that they aren't just gay problems but societal problems). The coalition can take part in this process if it chooses to. One proposal that could be a step in that direction would be setting up workshops on sexism, racism, and other problems like class, age and organizational chauvinism.

Should the coalition choose not to deal with these issues - which are clearly issues of concern to the gay and lesbian communities - it will be a real setback for our community.



Upcoming Events



Mountain Moving Coffehouse is every Saturday night at WICCA, 1139 W. Webster. July events include folk music on the 17th, square dancing on the 24th, and open night on the 31st. Also on Sunday July 25th there's a film benefit for Lesbians for Equal Rights. For August events call WICCA at 528-3303.

The Lesbian Feminist Center, 3523 N. Halsted, will be having a potluck dinner on July 18th at 7 pm, a vegetarian dinner on July 25th at 7:30 pm, and a Lesbian Crafts Fair on July 31st. The LFC is also sponsoring a film benefit for Lesbians for Equal Rights on July 23rd at 8 and 10 pm. For more information call the LFC at 935-4270.

Mattachine Midwest is sponsoring a series of conversation groups for Lesbians and gay men. For more information contact Mattachine at P.O. Box 924, Chicago 60690.

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