

STRIKES OVER SACKED GAY

A wave of unofficial strike action is gathering momentum through local government departments of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, over the sacking of Ian Davies, a gay employee. The council is refusing to re-instate him in spite of an Industrial Tribunal's recommendation. This has added fuel to the fire since it has shown that the Tribunals do not have the power to enforce re-instatement which people were deluded into thinking was given by the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act and Employment Protection Act.

Ian Davies, the Principal Area Officer of the Social Services Department Area One office, was sacked when he told his employers of his pleading guilty and being fined £25 on a charge of "gross indecency". He had been petting with another man in a public lavatory. It is one of countless incidents of people being arrested for such harmless actions which, if the police had not been spying on them, would have been witnessed by no-one.

As a result of the efforts of the director of social services, who saw no reason why he should not continue in his post, he was offered temporary alternative employment by the council in the research department. This was considered "safe" because there he would have absolutely no contact with the general public. The campaign to get him re-instated in his old and preferred job has so far failed. The majority on the council's committees apparently believe that homosexuals are a threat to children.

This is hypocritical in view of the fact that heterosexual men are more inclined to force people into sexual acts than gays.

Today's increased self-confidence and openness by homosexuals has meant that the efforts of gays and their supporters within the local authority, the union movement and the surrounding community are producing a major campaign to defend one of their brothers from the sort of bigotry which has bedevilled gays for centuries.

Strike action is spreading and a strike fund has been set up. His union, NALGO, is aiming for his re-instatement. A petition has been launched spontaneously by local residents. Messages of support are coming in from other branches of NALGO and other trade unions. An emergency meeting scheduled for August 18 was to consider backing the unofficial action and blacklisting the vacant post of Principal Area Officer until Ian Davies is re-instated in the light of the fact that they feel the issue has undermined their job security.

Donations to: **NALGO Branch Treasurer, c/o 196 Cable St, London E1.** Further info: **Press Officer, Tower Hamlets NALGO, 01-790 6420.**

A collective of gay workers and trade unionists were prevented by the organisers from carrying their banner on the Right to Work march from London to Brighton. The gay collective are protesting at the lack of understanding within the campaign of the situation of gays in relation to getting jobs.

Gay Centre attacked

Tony Deane reports: As with its fore-runners, the South London Gay Centre and the East London Faggots Collective, the new Gay Centre for North London at Finsbury Park is trying to endure the spate of harassment undergone when any group of gay people are prepared to be honest and open about their sexuality. Openness in this taboo area is taken as a challenge to society at large, its claustrophobic values and insidious hangups.

The Centre acts as a focal point for gay women and men, both on a social and a political level. Meetings are held regularly in a large six-roomed mid-victorian house just off Stroud Green Rd, in a tree-lined street which seems still to reflect a quiet Edwardian suburbia. Whatever the history of the area, the reality of the present presses itself upon us in no uncertain terms. The last couple of weeks has seen us spending most of our time and energy defending and barricading the house against unpredictable attack from hostile groups.

A certain amount of paranoia is of course inevitable in situations like this, but if past experience is anything to go by, for instance of petrol bombs thrown into

houses occupied by black families, we cannot afford to take any risks. Chicken wire is being placed over what remains of our front windows, and we have buckets of sand at the ready. Certain political organisations known for their hostility to black people and gays are known to be active in the area. Gay and black people have much in common in our struggle against oppression. We hope our support will be made clear at future anti-racist demonstrations.

The major attack on the Centre came on Thursday night, August 5, when a group of about 15 young people stoned the Centre on and off for over two hours, with milk bottles, unopened beer bottles and bricks. At one stage an attempt was made to batter the front door down with a scaffolding pole.

The Centre is open from 5-11pm every day, 3-11pm on Sundays, for coffee, chat, political meetings, awareness groups, etc. There will be a regular disco every Friday evening at 8pm at the Hemingford Arms, Hemingford Rd, London N1, price 30p. Jumble is also needed for a forthcoming jumble sale; we will collect any clothes or household articles you can spare.

North London Gay Centre, 17 Perth Rd, London N4.