

There is today one overriding test by which the effectiveness and viability of any homophile organization can be judged, and that is its ability to relate to the revolution which has occurred amongst gay people in our society. That revolution assumed its most visible form in the Christopher Street demonstrations of 1969, with the result that June, 1969 has now the same meaning for gay liberation as July 1789 once had for bourgeois liberation. After destroying the "Stonewall" of the homosexual ghetto, this revolution revealed the existence of a homosexual "third estate", strong and fearless, no longer willing to cringe before the establishment, and proudly determined to demand its rights as free men within a professedly free society. In the short span of three years, this revolution has done more to destroy the seven age-old myths about gay people than all the pontifications of former generations combined. (These myths: (1) that homosexuals are effeminate, (2) that they proselytize for "recruits", (3) that they molest children, (4) that they are sick, (5) that homosexuality is "unnatural", (6) that it is the cause of the decay of civilizations, and (7) that the world would be depopulated if homosexuality were legalized.) This is not the place to discuss the reasons for this exhilarating change except to note that it constitutes part of the much broader pattern of sexual liberation generally, which -- particularly amongst those under thirty -- now seriously challenges the entire traditional Judeo-Christian sexual ethic in all its aspects, both heterosexual and homosexual. Many sociological trends have converged to bring about this change. Suffice it to note that the impact of drug usage in sapping socially-inspired sexual inhibitions, the changing roles of the sexes, increased leisure concomitant with the waning of the Puritan ethic, the increased economic independence of young people, the break-down of the traditional family structure, and, finally, the increasing rejection -- both by the churches and by other agencies of social control -- of the postulate that the central purpose of sex is procreation -- all these are important factors which have contributed to this sexual revolution.

The import of these revolutionary changes must be understood by any homophile organization if it is to remain viable in today's world. For organizations such as Mattachine, which is one of the very few present-day gay organizations with a genuine pre-revolutionary history, this is doubly important, lest they fall into the error of continuing to do business in the traditional way ^{and} finding themselves castaways on today's beaches. Clearly many of the old axioms must be discarded. Such relics from the past as age limitations on membership in gay groups, emphasis on "coat-and-ties" to create a "respectable" image, deferential

attitudes toward the powers that be, blind-spots toward minorities within the homophile community -- whether they be black, Puerto-Rican, transvestites, or sado-masochists -- all these are products of an age ^{which} has disappeared. Fortunately Mattachine has begun to recognize the need for change and ^{has} taken some affirmative steps to meet today's challenges. It has probably changed more than any of the other old-line homophile organizations. But this is not saying very much, and it still has far to go if it is to employ its concededly strong resources in ways which will be effective in the contemporary scene.

Too many Mattachine members are still obsessed with an organizational chauvinism that ill comports with the needs of the times. Too few Mattachine members appreciate that organizations are nothing more than instruments for the attainment of certain human goals, and that they are not ends in themselves. The days when Mattachine could claim, with evident satisfaction, that it was the only homophile organization in New York are gone forever, fortunately never to return. Gone too are the petty autocrats who presided over most of the pre-revolutionary gay organizations, jealously guarding their satraps against all interlopers. The overwhelming majority of homophile organizations today are real, genuine groups, whose membership rolls are steadily increasing. The sham paper organizations of the past, created by inventive prima donnas on self-serving ego trips are today as rare a political phenomenon as is Mayor Daley's Chicago. As one of the few genuine old-line homophile groups, Mattachine has a contribution to make, but it can do so only if it rejects any notion of "going it alone". No homophile group can be relevant today unless it maintains the closest contact and cooperation with all other gay groups in its community. Unless gay people hang together they will continue to be hanged separately. Concretely this means that the test of effectiveness of any Mattachine officer or Board member can no longer be judged merely by his attendance record at exclusively Mattachine functions. Officers and Board members must be judged on their contributions to the gay community; they must be judged not merely on what they are doing for Mattachine, but what they are doing to further the goals of gay liberation as a whole.

If, then, we recognize that gay liberation rather than enhancement of Mattachine as an organizational entity, is our true goal, it is clear that all of us -- members, Board members, and officers alike -- must work within the context of that goal. Membership on the Mattachine Board of Directors should entail some contribution to gay liberation. It is high time to discard the illusion that Board members have acquitted themselves of their responsi-

lities simply by amassing perfect attendance records at Board meetings. It is high time to recognize that Board members whose activities range over the entire contemporary gay scene and whose work for gay liberation is performed wherever there is a need for their services -- regardless of the organizational banner under which that work may fall -- that such persons are assets to the Mattachine Society, that they bring to it a breadth of vision and a knowledge of day-to-day developments in the now-rapidly-moving homophile community which are quintessential if Mattachine is to remain at all relevant in today's world. Mattachine would long ago have fallen prey to the internal forces of parochialism had it not been for these outside gay activities of a few of her members.

It is within this context that I seek reflection to the Mattachine Board of Directors. Nine months ago, I would not have sought reflection. Then I was asked by Bob Milne, our dedicated president, to head the Mattachine programme of weekly visitation to gay prisoners on Riker's Island. I reorganized the programme, and opened it up to participation by members of other New York area homophile groups. As a result, some of the most effective and dedicated members of the Mattachine prison-visiting committee -- in fact, an actual majority of its members -- are themselves not Mattachine members, but belong to other gay groups in New York. It is no exaggeration to say that, without this infusion of vibrant new talent from fraternal organizations, the programme itself might have foundered. Mattachine has similarly benefitted over the years from my co-chairmanship of the National Committee for Sexual Civil Liberties, a national organization, composed mainly of lawyers throughout the country working for the repeal of the sodomy laws and of other criminal sanctions directed against homosexuals. With Walter E. Barnett, sometime professor at the University of New Mexico School of Law, and now on the faculty of Hastings Law School in San Francisco, as its other co-chairman, this committee was two years ago responsible for the removal of a most noxious solicitation provision from the proposed new Federal Criminal Code which, in January, 1971, was submitted to the Congress by the National Commission on Reform of Federal Criminal Laws. (I wrote the brief for this purpose.) The same committee last year distributed to every member of the New York State legislature the two official memoranda from the entire homophile movement arguing for repeal of the New York sodomy and homosexual solicitation laws. (Again, I wrote the two memoranda.) These have subsequently been distributed in numerous other states where penal law reform is under active consideration. As a consequence of our committee's representations in New Jersey, the New Jersey Criminal Law Revi-

sion Commission is presently considering our recommendation that the New Jersey solicitation statute be repealed. (Sodomy repeal has already been recommended for the state by the Commission.) As a result I am presently heavily engaged in writing the New Jersey brief for this purpose. I might add that the Nebraska Penal Law Revision Commission, after having initially decided upon a solicitation statute for that state, recently agreed not to recommend any criminal sanctions in this area after our two New York briefs were distributed to them.

As a sequel to the Riker's Island visitations, I am now in the process of organizing a similar programme for New Jersey. I have already twice visited gay prisoners in the New Jersey State prison at Rahway as the sole gay representative in a group sponsored by the Fortune Society of Essex County. The Riker's Island programme itself is now open for purposes of instruction to any other gay organization in the New York area which wishes to establish a similar committee to visit other New York prisons. Some members of the G.A.B. of Brooklyn are already participating in the Riker's Island programme with a view to setting up a similar visitation committee of their own for the Brooklyn House of Detention.

I have been an active member of the Mattachine speakers' bureau for several years, but the effectiveness of this group has been immeasurably enhanced this past year under Bob Milne's presidency. I am also on the speakers' panels of the G. A. A. of New York and of the G. A. A. of New Jersey, activities which have greatly increased my own effectiveness for Mattachine. Many of Mattachine's New Jersey speaking engagements are turned over to me, and, in those cases, I generally invite someone from the G.A.A. of New Jersey to share the platform with me. This has proved singularly effective on a number of occasions, since two speakers have far more than twice the impact of one. The G.A.A. of New Jersey is today one of the largest and most viable homophile groups in the country. At its most recent meeting it had as joint guest speakers Merle Miller and Dr. George Weinberg, who spoke to an overflow crowd of more than 200 people. At its own expense, G.A.A. of N. J. sent three representatives to the national gay conference in Chicago in February, at which political plans were concerted for gay representation at both of the forthcoming national conventions of the two major political parties. By contrast, I should point out that, but for my having personally impressed upon the Mattachine Board the necessity for Mattachine to be represented at that same Chicago conference, there would have been no one from Mattachine there. Even as it was, Mattachine had no funds to pay our lone Chicago delegate's travel expenses; he was able to attend only because of the outstanding generosity of

Don Goodwin, who personally donated the necessary funds. (This was not the first time that Don has been the Society's Good Samaritan.) I was similarly responsible for the Board's decision to have Mattachine actively participate in the work of the New York committee which is presently arranging for the forthcoming march on the New York legislature in Albany later in April. Mattachine, to its shame, was the ONLY New York state gay organization which had no official representative to speak from the state capitol steps during last-year's Albany rally. Fortunately, under our present president, Bob Milne, such organizational chauvinism has ended, and the Mattachine Society of New York has begun to play its rightful role within the homophile movement in solid coöperation with other fraternal and sororal gay organizations. I stand four-square behind this policy, and wish to further it in every respect. I hold my work with other gay groups to be a valuable contribution to Mattachine. The important contacts, the cross-fertilization of ideas, as well as the strength which comes from numbers, are too numerous to detail. As a result there have been occasions when other gay commitments have prevented me from attending Mattachine Board meetings. I can, however, assert unhesitatingly that every such absence has been necessitated only by the need to attend another gay movement function and that I have ^{only} once absented myself from a Board meeting for reasons of personal convenience.

Because I am not engaged in outside employment, I am able to devote 100% of my time to the gay movement. This, too, I consider an asset for Mattachine, since it permits me to work for gay liberation full time. I solicit your support in reelecting me to the Mattachine Board of Directors where I should like to continue working for both Mattachine and for the movement as a whole.

Respectfully submitted,

Arthur C. Warner

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