

Youth service scuttled

by Walter Cavaliere
Social Services Director
GATE (Gay Alliance Toward Equality)

On Monday, January 21, McMan Youth Services withdrew its support for the Gay/Lesbian Youth Group of Edmonton. The withdrawal became effective the following Saturday, leaving the group without a place to meet and without the professional support which GATE had felt essential for the group. The youth group was a joint project of GATE and McMan and had been in operation for about two years.

That McMan would pull out of this relationship was predictable. Under the imaginative leadership of its dedicated director, John Mestin, McMan was always open to serving the needs of gay youths. John was always available to GATE personnel, and McMan and GATE shared several clients. Mestin left, however, and at the open house to bid him farewell and welcome his successor, Dr. Carole Ladan, the kit which was handed out to guests did not include any reference to the Gay/Lesbian Youth Group. True, 50 copies of the kit were prepared which did include information on the group, but most of them are still in McMan's office.

McMan's association with the youth group was cancelled at a meeting of McMan's provincial board. Neither the group's leaders—Craig Ganuk or Walter Cavaliere—nor GATE was informed that the fate of the group was to be on the agenda. Nor was Bob Marvin, the McMan youth worker under whose aegis the group functioned, invited to the meeting. The board's stated reasons for withdrawing from the group were that there is no money (McMan paid only for the group's phone line); that this is a service that "shouldn't be provided" (no comment); that McMan needs the space the group uses (the group met from 7:00 to 10:00 on Saturdays, at a time no other McMan programs were functioning); and that McMan couldn't offer the group further staff time or energy. Staff working with the group never expressed objections concerning time or energy spent with the group. In fact, the group took very little staff time.

Dr. Ladan also said that the group had never had board approval. This may be true, technically, but it did have board awareness. The group was actively discussed, as GATE understood from Ladan's predecessor, at a board meeting which was attended by Dr. Neil Webber, Alberta's Minister of Social Services.

Dr. Ladan took pains to point out that she had nothing against gays, that, in fact, she had invited gays to speak to her classes on family practice. She also cautioned Ganuk and Cavaliere not to "burn bridges." None-the-less, information on McMan's actions is being sent to *Body Politic*, *Rites*, and *The Advocate*. Current youth group members are writing to McMan's Executive Director and Board Chairman, and former group members are being urged to do so too. Liaison is being sought with another youth agency, and an alternate meeting space and telephone line is being arranged.

What is especially distressing to those who have been working with the group is that McMan did not allow time for an orderly transition to be arranged or for a new meeting place to be found. Ladan seemed unmoved when it was pointed out to her that youths who have endured rejection by society and family are now faced with an additional rebuff by an agency whose stated purpose is "to help socially conflicted youths develop their potential through the promotion of a better sense of belonging and trust."

There is no code of ethics to which an agency must subscribe save whatever one it prepares to serve its own values. There is one, however, for the Canadian Association of Social Workers. Here are a few clauses from it:

1. I will regard the well-being of the persons I serve as my primary professional obligation.
- 1.2. The social worker will be able to apply the practice values of acceptance, self-determination and individuality without being discriminatory on any grounds of race, ethnicity, language, religion, marital status, gender, sexual orientation, age, abilities, socio-economic status, political affiliation or national ancestry.
- 3.6.10. [the social worker will possess the] ability to facilitate termination of services or referral to others in an orderly manner with a minimum amount of expense and other inconvenience to the client. (Note that the convenience of the client is central, not that of the agency.)

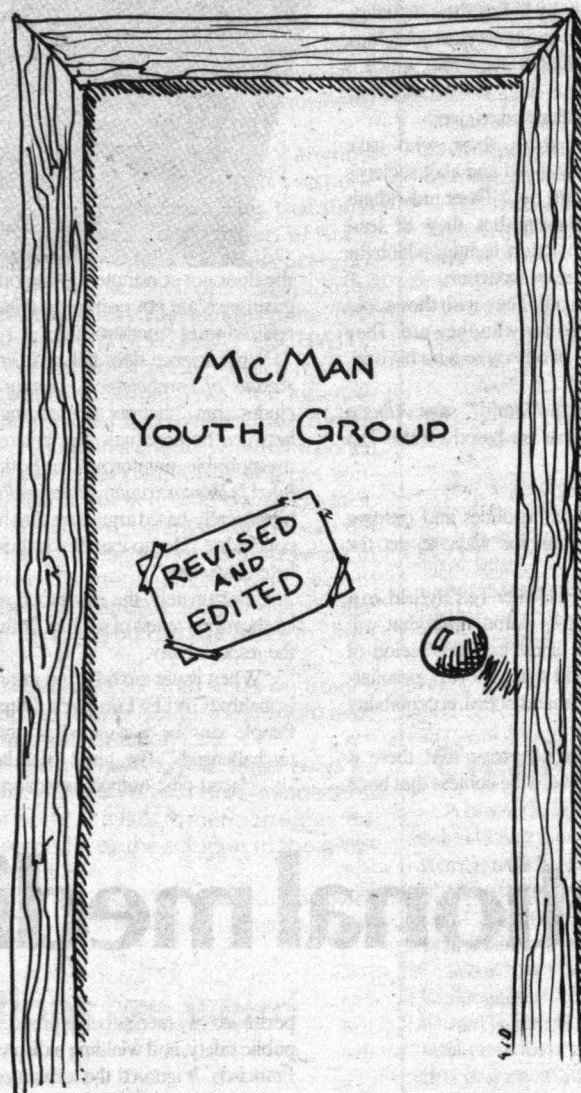
The Code also states that, in cases of conflict, the standards declared in the Code take precedence, and that "the social worker will report to the appropriate regulatory body any instance involving or appearing to involve a breach of conduct set out in this Code." It is doubtful that anyone at McMan will take any action.

To the best of its abilities, GATE will try to provide an orderly transition for the group. The Gay/Lesbian Youth Group will not die. In fact, it is currently awaiting word from Ottawa concerning an International Youth Year grant. The grant has already been approved locally.

If you wish to register your protest with McMan Youth Services concerning their treatment of the Gay/Lesbian Youth Group, you may write to:

Dr. Carole Ladan
Executive Director
McMan Youth Services Association
#1, 8207-104 Street
Edmonton, Alberta

The president of the Provincial Board of Directors is Mr. Earl Little, and of the Edmonton Board of Directors, Mr. Rick Taylor.
If you do write, please send a copy of your letter to GATE.



Some Men

Some men have the courage
To stand alone, unchained
To follow every whim of heart
Depend on every change

They value every little thing
And turn their noses up at sin
They laugh, they purr, they play around
Somehow that seems strange

Strange to me, I'm stranger now
I look around me, all I see
Has merged together into this
And all goes into one

To look at you would bring such pain
Because of all I know of me
Thoughts that dart across my mind
Are uniform, complete

Just look at me and tell me please
Exactly what is wrong with me
What you remember, what it is
That makes me feel this way

Some men, I think, are perfect
They live entranced with images
But you and I, we know, we know
That this is all just fantasy

We know, we know ourselves
In a strange and distant way
It's this that sets us both apart
From some men that we know

Some men have the courage
To stand alone, unchained
To follow every whim of heart
Fighting every change

Doug Kaiser

More national media

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Lesbians suffer a double oppression — women, let alone lesbians, have little economic and political power in relation to men, including white middle-class gay men. Women's issues in general are lower on the priority list in the commercial press. Not only is there rampant sexism in the mass media, but there is also rampant homophobia. Even the words "homosexual" and "gay" connote only gay men.

Katherine Metana, a member of the editorial collective of Montreal's *Ca S'attrape*. "According to Metana, there was never enough space for an equal number of lesbians articles and the advertising the gay men wanted to put in the magazine was degrading to women. "The men controlled the magazine," she says.

"We don't have much in common with men. We aren't touched by AIDS. We have more in common with the feminist movement, and coverage of the feminist movement is limited," she said.

News editor of *Sortie*, a gay male publication created after the break-up of *Le Berdache*, Bernard Courte agrees with Metana. "Lesbianism is ignored because we live in a patriarchal society," he said. "And women are just there to receive the cock of a man."

"Whenever I get the chance, I try and point out it *Sortie*, but unfortunately I am a man and my insight is limited." Courte also attributes the lack of lesbian coverage to a lack of lesbian visibility.

"They are absent from the alternative press because they are not there," he says. He uses the same reason for the lack of coverage of ethnic or indigenous gays. "They are invisible."

Courte has many of the same complaints with gay and lesbian coverage in the commercial media. He recalls being interviewed by Peggy Hill of the *Montreal Gazette* for an article on AIDS: "I talked with her for an hour and a half and all she remembered was that I was gay, I had a lover, and I was worried that he might have AIDS. It's not the first time I've been disappointed by the media," he says.

He also talks of a difference between the French and English press in Montreal. "AIDS was not a big thing in the French press — they played it down. But the English press was more influenced by the scare tactics of the American press."

Courte says, "The commercial media only covers us if it is sensational. If they can relate being gay to crime and disease: great. If they can relate lesbianism with being able to take care of a child properly and being gay man with being a child molester, then the profits reel in."

As Walter Davis wrote in *Pinkink*, "Objectivity is the great myth of American journalism because the point of reference defining objectivity is in the relationship to the dominant elite is white, straight male capitalist and they own the press."