

# Gays only want the rights others possess

Paul Armstrong is the Co-President of the Gay Alliance at York University.

I am a faggot. There, I've just made a political statement. I've just admitted publicly that I am a homosexual. Stange as it may seem, just that very simple declaration can make dramatic changes in one's life. I believe it's very important to do that. Gay people will never get anywhere in terms of rights and simple self-respect.

that should be either "cured", or executed. After I shut off the t.v. I pick up the newspaper and read that John Damien is still in court fighting his dismissal from the Ontario Racing Commission after seven years, that the bath house raids and subsequent prosecutions have cost the taxpayers over \$500,000, that

answer that but I can tell you that the prejudice and ignorance inherent in such questions provide the answer to them. That is, because we have to.

Try to imagine a society where public displays of affection between two people are frowned upon? Imagine a society that does not like you to walk hand-in-hand with someone you care about, does not want you to kiss or make love. Imagine a society so narrow-minded and repressive that you have to devise

police raid since the War Measures Act was invoked. We can be charged as found-ins in a common bawdyhouse (whatever that is) hauled before the courts. We can have our bars systematically charged with overcrowding while adjacent straight bars are left unobserved. We can have a gay book store charged with possession of obscene materials while numerous other stores across the city with the very same magazines on their shelves are left virtually untouched. We can have our only gay newspaper brought twice and then three times before the courts on the same charge. We can have the police break into a house and charge the owner with keeping a common bawdyhouse in his own home! These are all facts that we in the gay community have to live with. We have faced the fact that in Ontario and Toronto, in particular, there has been a systematic effort by the police to harass the gay community. Tell me, when was the last time the police broke down your door and hauled you off to jail in the middle of the night? When was the last time you were charged with keeping a common bawdyhouse in your bedroom, or in the tent in your backyard? Absurd? Read the

newspapers.

People like Mayor Art Eggleton, Police Chief Jack Ackroyd and Columnist Barbara Amiel tell us that 'special interest groups' are making waves down at city hall, that the gay community of Toronto wants 'special rights'. Well, let me tell you a couple of the 'special rights' I would like to have: The 'special right' of not being denied an apartment for being gay. The 'special right' of not being evicted because I am gay. All I ask is to be treated like everyone else in this country. Most of you (those who are straight) have all those rights protected by law. How 'special' did you have to be to win them?

As long as there is ignorance and prejudice I will have to 'flaunt' my homosexuality and stand up for what is mine by right. The Gay Alliance at York exists to provide a supportive social atmosphere for York's gay population. As Co-President of the Alliance and as an individual I feel compelled to educate people and foster an awareness of what it means to be gay and what needs to be done so that we can just get on with our lives unhindered by unfair and selective law enforcement and harassment.

**"Imagine a society that tells you, you are dirty, filthy and perverted all the years of your life."**

*Persuasio is an open forum for the exchange of opinions. The views expressed in this column are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the editors or staff of Excalibur.*

secluded and shut off from the mainstream of society deep inside

the closet. A closet is a place to hang your clothes, not your identity. Being 'political' simply means taking a stand, fighting for what is ours by right. It means coming out of the closet, being who you are without fear of reproach. At the moment the reproach is still there,

may always be in my lifetime. My hope is that somehow through concerted effort in a positive direction I can change that in some small way.

Some morning I wake up with a smile on my face and feel pretty good about the progress I've seen take place in the gay community in the past few years. Then I turn on the television and watch Jerry Falwell on the Donahue Show tell the audience that homosexuals are sick perverts

Svend Robinson has been replaced as

justice Critic for the NDP because of his support for gay rights and other unpopular causes. After I put the paper down I leave for school and I'm not smiling anymore.

There are a lot of people out there who simply cannot understand why

secret meeting places so as not to be discovered; or to have to meet in dark and dingy little bars hidden away off the street, or in alleyways or parks where men often lurk in shadows waiting to grab you and beat you. Imagine a society that tells you you are dirty, filthy and perverted all the years of your life, from childhood on; where police can raid the places you go to meet one another and even your own homes and put you on trial for doing nothing more than making love in a way that others do not approve of. If you can imagine such a society then you can gain a little insight into what it means to be gay in Canada in 1983.

Discrimination is generally condemned in this country. There are laws to protect racial minorities, religious minorities and other groups, against discrimination in the workplace and in Canadian society in general. Discrimination violates the provincial Human Rights Code as well as the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in the new Canadian

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there are gay people at all. Why there are gay bars, lesbian bars, steam baths, gay book stores, gay clubs, etc.

*"Why do 'those' people have to flaunt their homosexuality in front of us and march in the streets and wear gay pride T-shirts with pink triangles? Why don't they just stay in the closet and leave us alone?"*

How many of you reading this have asked those questions? How many are still asking those questions? Well, obviously only you can

Constitution. Yet, except for the province of Quebec, there is no such protection for homosexuals. Gay rights groups and various other civil rights organizations have been lobbying the provincial and federal governments for years to make discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation illegal. All efforts thus far have been to no avail. Through a combination of ignorance, apathy and plain old-fashioned prejudice, all attempts to abolish discrimination against homosexuals have been defeated. We can have our bath houses raided in the single largest

## Opinion . . .

### Crime rate on the rise

HARRY MARGEL

In the past, I had always felt that Torontonians were a bit paranoid, since, when compared to other city dwellers, they enjoyed an unparalleled degree of security and high quality of life. It bothered me that so many people spent their time complaining of problems that had very little substance.

Oft times I would find myself objecting to similar attitudes being displayed by the police. How could such fine officers of the law, whose job-related dangers in this city were fewer than those of construction workers, campaign openly for bullet-proof vests and open-holstered weapons? How could these people, who receive twice as much respect and twice as much pay as their American counterparts, complain of demoralization? What was it, I wondered, that was really bothering them?

As time went on, and the crime rate actually seemed to level off. I expressed concern that local papers were not putting this point across. Each day, people were greeted by yet another sensational headline, that would encourage the paranoid. At times I half jokingly suggested that creating paranoia in this manner was the most effective way to control crime, as most people would stay off the streets and away from each other. Still, there had to be something wrong with a city full of people who would run out and hold protest marches, or deplete whole inventories of security devices at the drop of a pin. Again I wondered, what was it that was really bothering them?

Torontonians had previously been known for their holier than thou schtick as they continually berated their neighbours in surrounding cities. Who hasn't heard the familiar jokes about Buffalo, the dumping on Detroit and its tragic problems? Suddenly the flood of criticism is drying up. What's happened?

Suddenly there appears some very shocking trends as can be shown in part by some staggering statistics which have recently come to my attention.

Metro Police chairman Phil Givens reports that the amount of such crimes as apartment entries, shopbreakings, and bank and trust company robberies has shot up over the past year. He calls the number of hold-ups "very disturbing". Indeed, what other way to describe a triple digit increment in a crime with such potential for violence and personal injury?

As I read the stats while researching another story, I found that 1983 is an even worse year for this crime, up 250 per cent over last year's record increase. Imagine my shock as I was informed by the FBI in Buffalo that Toronto had already had twice as many bank robberies as that city in all of 1982. That we had even outdone Detroit was more incredible.

Some local people tend to blame the recession for this problem, but what about Detroit and Buffalo, which have suffered harder times than Toronto? What about New York City, that for some reason has been able to cut the numbers of these crimes in half there?

It is not only the numbers which are cause for concern, it is the appearance of new types of crime to the city.

Murder is not new, but when it is committed in the Toronto subway system, that is. For the first time lawyers are gunned down in courtrooms here. There is suddenly a bombing of such magnitude that an entire building is blown apart. A wild shooting spree occurs in the middle of Yonge and Bloor, the city's busiest intersection. And there are other new crimes being committed more often now.

Yet another disturbing trend is the introduction of more viciousness. Perpetrators that had previously left their victims unscathed are now more inclined to use violent tactics, such as the use of physical brutality in robberies and sex attacks. Anyone who is aware of current events has knowledge of this fact.

Unless the trends and warning signs reverse themselves Toronto's image might well be lost forever to the past.

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