FACING POINTS

ASLEF LGBT Representative Committee Newsletter

Summer 2011

WE MARCHED FOR THE ALTERNATIVE

ON the 26th March ASLEF members joined half a million others and marched through the streets of London for the alternative.

For an alternative to the government spending cuts that will damage public services and put more than a million people out of work. That will hit the vulnerable, damage communities and undermine that which holds our society together.

The ASLEF LGBT banner was proudly there and our LGBT members should know that their communities will also be hit by these savage government cuts:

- With a 20% reduction in police funding over the next 5 years it's likely that the recording and investigation of homophobic and transphobic hate crimes will be affected.
- A reduction in local government funding will have a serious impact on LGBT support services provided by voluntary sector groups in local communities.
- There are fears that a reduced NHS budget will affect trans healthcare and in particular may bring about the denial of gender reassignment treatment. There are already reports of PCT's delaying referrals for patients.

There are also grave concerns about the funding of HIV prevention programmes.

But there is an alternative to these deep public spending cuts, rich individuals and big companies should be forced to pay all of their taxes, banks should pay a Robin Hood tax on all their transactions and jobs should be created to boost economic growth. This is the long term way to close the deficit and reduce the nation's debt.

Photos: Shaun Seymour

What happens next?

The march was only the first step in the campaign which will continue in the coming months. Many local initiatives are beginning to spring up bringing some people out protesting for the first time, prepared to fight the cuts threatening their communities.

To find out about anti-cuts groups and action taking place in your area visit www.falseeconomy.org.uk or contact your local trades council.

Government drive to tackle homophobia in sport

STOP someone in the street and ask them to name an LGB or T professional UK sports person and few will be able to do so. The reason why? They are like hen's teeth!

Some of a certain age may remember the turbulent life and career of Justin Fashnu who until this year was the only professional football player in the world to have come out. He suffered homophobic abuse from club managers, fellow players and fans even before he had confirmed his sexuality. He did eventually come out to a backlash which included his brother publically disowning him; sadly these pressures and criticisms caused him to take his own life.

So that was 20 years ago, what about now, 2011? In the years that have lapsed we have seen the introduction of civil partnerships, adoption for same sex couples and a reduced age of consent however this progress seems to have passed the sporting world by.

In 2009 Welsh Rugby International Gareth Thomas came out. In an interview with the BBC he said that what he chose to do behind closed doors had nothing to do with what he achieved in rugby. Three months later during a match with Castleford the crowd subjected Thomas to homophobic abuse. The offending fans were banned from the ground and the club was fined £40,000, a warning shot to other clubs but the fact remains it still happened.

More recently England cricketer Steven Davies came out to a flurry of media attention but it is yet to be seen what the Barmy Army's reaction will be.

In 2010 The Football Association made a half hearted attempt and produced a video two years in the making aimed at confronting homophobia. On the eve of the launch event the FA did a swift U turn and cancelled it saying they needed more time to work on the project. Those who had been involved described the film as an 'expletive-laden rant'. A year on and the FA must still be working on strengthening their strategy as nothing has been released.

In an attempt to try to tackle this the Government have now involved themselves and launched a 'Charter for Action' and have already attracted big name supporters such as The FA, The Lawn Tennis Association, The England and Wales Cricket Board, The Rugby Football League and Union along with the Olympic Organising Committee. The charter contains four principles and aims to make sport a welcoming environment for LGB&T people.

It's sceptical how much difference this charter will actually make in a dressing room or on the terraces but there should be hope. After all campaigns such as Show Racism the Red Card have made huge strides in reducing racism in football, why can't homophobia and transphobia also be kicked out??

The England wicketkeeper Steven Davies has announced he is gay

Only In America ...

Recently in America, hundreds of thousands of birds dropped out of the sky, dead. According to antigay activist Cindy Jacobs of Generals International, a spiritual warfare group, this is retribution for the law in the US barring gays and lesbians from serving openly in the military being repealed.

She publically stated that when a nation makes a change against God's principles 'nature itself will begin to talk to us'.

Yet another reason why we still need LGBT rights activists.

Government consultation on civil partnerships

Section 202 of the Equality Act 2010 removes the legal prohibition on civil partnerships being registered on religious premises. This will mean that premises approved by the local authority will be able to hold ceremonies although there is no obligation for faith groups to introduce this and it will be on an opted in basis. Some groups such as the Quakers and the Liberal Jewish Community have welcomed the move.

The registration of the civil partnership will remain secular despite the venue but it will mean that a religious service could be held to mark the registration.

To allow all interested parties to comment on the implementation of this section the Government Equalities Office have begun a consultation. This is primarily aimed at faith groups, LGB organisations, LGB individuals and local authorities.

If you wish to submit a response you should visit www.equalities.gov.uk by 23 June 2011.

Introducing ...

MY name is Craig Cameron and I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce myself having taken on the role of LGBT rep for District 2.

I am a driver for Scotrail based in Yoker, a role I've held for the last 4 years. Prior to this I started as a station grade at Stafford before being promoted to Train Manager for Virgin cross country based out of Manchester.

By taking up this post, getting more active at branch level and in liaising with other organisations like the STUC I hope to provide an effective voice for all our members and to represent ASLEF in a proactive manner. Ideally, over the next 12 months I'd like to support the branches in Scotland by providing further information with regards to the work we do and the role we play and how this benefits all our members.

When away from work I can quite often be found in the great outdoors, kayaking, several thousand feet up climbing and walking or in the winter months hurtling down hill rather precariously on a pair of skis!

MY name is Richard Brauen and I am proud to be the elected LGBT representative for District 5. I am 46 and work for C2C as a Depot Driver based at their East Ham Depot close to Barking. I have worked for the railway for only 3 years and have really enjoyed being part of a dedicated and committed team of drivers and depot drivers at C2C.

When I joined up, I was still quite nervous about being 'out' at work and initially kept a low profile. I had no idea what attitudes would be like on the railway and so discretion took the better part of valour. However my friends, work colleagues and managers where all very accepting and supportive and it was very easy to be myself at work - out and proud. I am very grateful to everyone at East Ham for being so open minded and kind.

I grew up in an age when it was very difficult to be 'out' and lads at school whose sexuality was dubious were often beaten up. Quentin Crisp might well have been cocking his hat 'pinktastic' in Soho in the late 70's but my secondary school in the West Country was far from forgiving, and bullying was a terrifying way of life. Keeping below the radar and out of sight and mind of others is a daily struggle. Living with fear and the loneliness was crushing.

Coming out does not always mean you will always find acceptance from others, but you can find support and help from organisations like ASLEF LGBT... you no longer need to be on your own, and you need never feel threatened or intimidated at work. I am honoured and proud to be the District 5 representative and do my bit to help and support anyone who needs it.

Pride in our Union - Power to face the fear.

Donation not discrimination

The government is expected to lift the ban on gay men giving blood, the ban which has been in place since the mid 80's is considered discriminatory under the new Equality Act.

However there is not a complete lift, only gay men who have not had sex for 10 years will be eligible to donate. So is this simply a side step to stop discrimination litigation?

Gay men are considered a high risk group for HIV as they currently make up 42% of infections in the UK. All donated blood is screened for HIV and other diseases but a small number of infected donations are missed due to the time between infection and detection. The Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs have told ministers that introducing a 10 year ban would reduce the risks of this happening.

A straight man who has paid for sex is able to donate a year later so why a 10 year rule for gay men? Even gay men who practice safe sex or who are in monogamous relationships are excluded from donation. Does this new ruling indicate that the government believe that gay men can not be trusted over their sexual history?

Giving blood should be a universal right

In an age when blood donations regularly run at very low levels, should the government be saying donation and not discrimination?

Get Involved

We would like to contact as many lesbian, gay and transgender ASLEF members as we can. To do so we have a confidential database of LGBT members at Head Office so that we can get information to you directly.

Should any member require a personal copy of this newsletter and future newsletters, confidential arrangements can be made for a copy to be mailed direct to your home address. Just contact the LGBT committee representative for your district or Lee James at ASLEF Head Office on 020 7317 8600 or Ljames@aslef.org.uk and we will add your name to our mailing list. This mailing list will be treated in the strictest confidence and no information held will be divulged to branches or other members.

Useful addresses

Broken Rainbow
Support for LGBT people experiencing domestic violence
Helpline: 08452 604460
www.broken-rainbow.org.uk

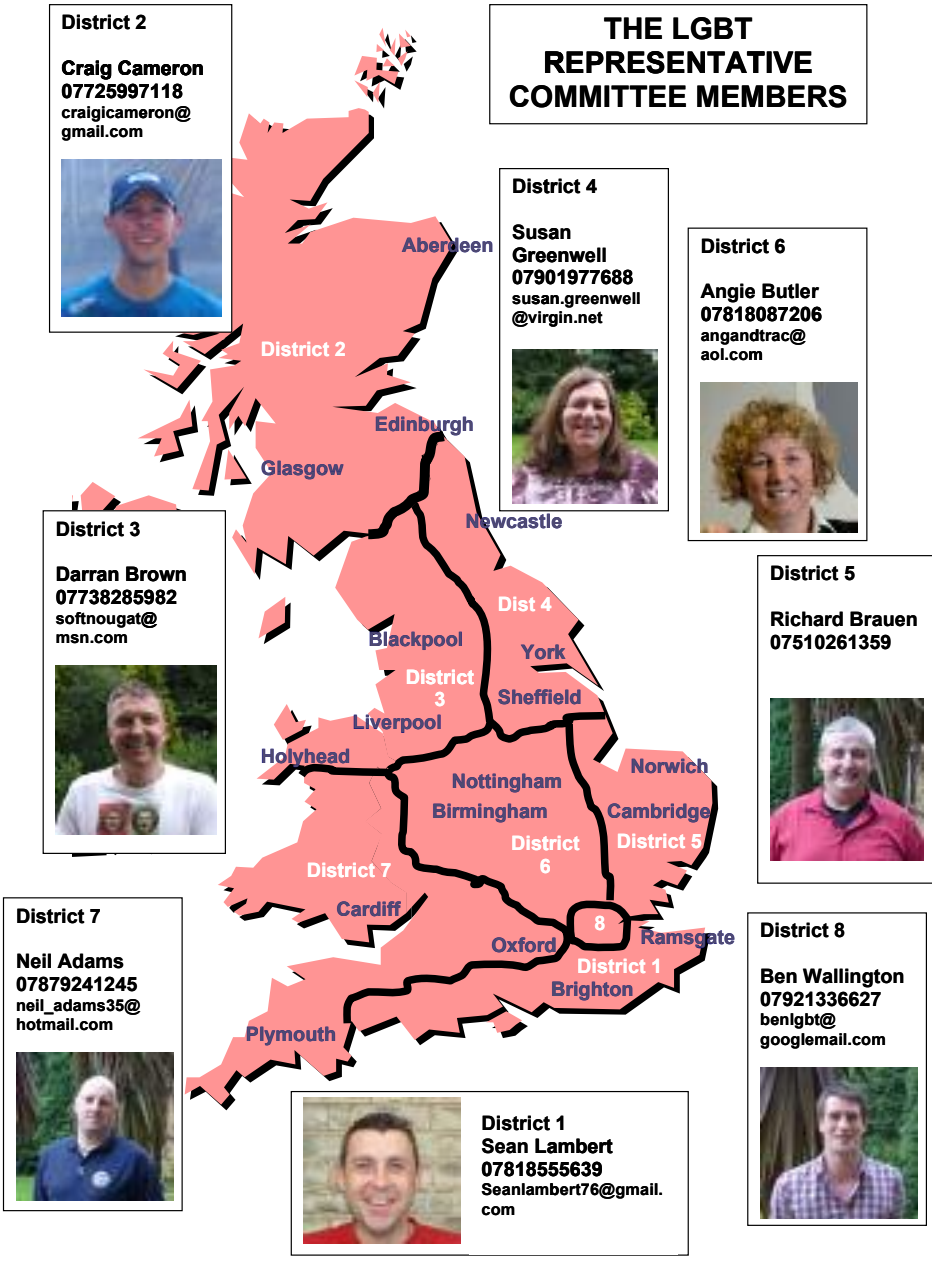
Stonewall
National campaigning organisation for LGBT people
Tel: 0207 7881 9440
Email: info@stonewall.org.uk

Press for Change
Organisation campaigning for equal rights for transgender people
BM Network, London WC1N 3XX
Email: letters@pfc.org.uk

The Gender Trust
UK Charity Helping adults who are
transsexuals
Tel: 01273 234024
Email: info@gendertrust.org.uk

Terrence Higgins Trust
Charity offering information and support on HIV and AIDS
Tel: 0845 1221200
Email: info@tht.org.uk

THE LGBT REPRESENTATIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS



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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY2011

2nd July **London Pride**
9th July **Bournemouth Pride**
13th August **Brighton Pride**
29th August **Manchester Pride**

ASLEF LGBT T-Shirts

ON SALE NOW!

Navy blue polo shirts with the embroided ASLEF/LGBT logo on the front and 'Pride in our union ASLEF LGBT' printed on the back.

T-shirts cost £9.50 which includes postage & packing. Cheques should be made payable to 'ASLEF' and sent to 9 Arkwright Road, Hampstead, London, NW3 6AB.

For more information speak to your LGBT District Rep or contact Head Office on 020 7317 8600

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