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A Plea for Self-Emancipation!

IV.

Thus far some ideational aspects have been dealt with. They should make it amply clear that a well-guided organization of and for homosexuals should not by any means suffer from the lack of a task.

What else could be the duty of an association of this kind? Can the experiences of other groups engaged in a similar struggle for their existence be utilized? What are the benefits of preceding traditions in other countries?

Certainly questions and answers here are interrelated in a great many instances, and furthermore some answers will depend upon the given conditions in the country where they have to be solved. The cultural and material factors will require consideration, and so will the temperament of the respective nations and their heritage. At first one must realize that there are external as well as internal needs which must be satisfied. External, in this respect, means the establishment of contact with other organizations interested in the preservation of individual freedoms, human and civic rights, free research, independence from undue interference on the part of any group or the government itself in personal pursuits, freedom from censorship, and the like. Other groups seeking redress for their ills, and also those engaged in struggles for reform and progress, might be added. There are also individuals of good will whose helpfulness might be sought. Apologetic, enlightening, or explanatory publications also belong in this category.

Paramount among the internal activities, one would think, should be an extensive program of legal advice, aid and representation. Particularly where the law-enforcement agencies, e. g., the police departments and the so-called vice-squads, are constantly trespassing their duties by provoking criminal conditions, rather than by detecting or preventing such, a well-administered law department may prove to be of major importance.

Also as an internal activity it may be advisable that a group of people who have the educational background and an interest in that field be designated to thoroughly investigate and critically review the problems of minorities, the histories of the great emancipatory epochs, and the criteria for assimilation. Involved in these studies are the definition of prejudices, their rise and abatement, and change of attitude and emphasis. The actions and counteractions, strategies, tactics, the successes and failures in that domain would surely offer a great many vantage points for our own undertaking.

A further consideration is called for with regard to education. I mean here specifically the attainment of a greater knowledge of ourselves. Here again the inference addresses itself specifically to our friends who have never shared in the experience of an organization of their own, and who have had little access to unbiased and well-substantiated information and a positive evaluation of their nature, their possibilities, etc. It will be of great help if in the end the gross misrepresentations could be made ineffective through better and more complete knowledge on the part of a larger number of our friends. It must be

added that in our day our view of life, as opposed to that of the majority, touches mankind's most vulnerable weakness. Sex today, that is to say all that relates itself to it by virtue of the interrelation of a large number of factors in human and social endeavors, is one of the most crucial issues, and one really does not know whether in the mind of the average contemporary it is first, second or third among the major matters concerning us. It follows, therefore, that while the fiercer prejudices against minority groups have had their day-at present have greatly abated, we shall have to surmount a wall of somewhat primeval nature. Also we should not underestimate what has been said about us and our place in the world in recent years. We will find, then, that there have been voices, scientific as well as humane, which made themselves heard in their demand for a change of attitude toward us. Yet we must decide whether we shall, or indeed can, stop at considering ourselves the poor victims of the malice of Nature, the deviates who «as yet (!) cannot be helped».

I must reiterate how very important it is that we set out to seek the positive in us and to distinguish clearly where the scientific research in fields concerning us departs from the proposition at which it has arrived and becomes the handmaiden of those forces in human society which will always endeavor to preserve their own equilibrium, however imaginary, by methods which absolve them from revealing their own inconsistencies.

V.

After these few reflections on the subject of an organization of and for homosexuals, some general conclusions seem obvious: For once, we perceive ourselves as a group of human beings who, for the same reason, part ways with the rest of their fellow-men in a certain respect.

Secondly, we are aware that our «different-ness» is opposed, and that the oppression resulting therefrom constitutes a threat to our existence, to the proper pursuits of our lives, to our interests and our goals, and to the wholesomeness of our personalities.

Thirdly, we recognize that our apartness has the quality of a uniting bond, inasmuch as certain factors essential to our self-respect, self-assertion and destiny, are common to all of us. Moreover, we know that our inclinations have been shared by men and women of all ages and in all societies, that they are not harmful to the happiness of other people, and that they allow of an integrated personal development in accordance with the capacities of the respective individual.

Fourthly, we believe that irrespective of the likes and notions held by the majority it is our right and our duty to present our opinions, to defend ourselves against insinuations, half-truths and untruths, even if these have not been contested or questioned previously, and to advance our status freely in legal, public and ethico-moral evaluations.

Fifthly and finally, we may feel that in order to bring about that which has been suggested in the aforementioned paragraphs, it is imperative to form a representative body to attend especially to those matters outlined in point four and, in addition, to serve the group in all such needs as may arise and which in the past may have lacked a proper approach.

H. S., New York.