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Homosexual Prosecutions

Letters to the Editor of «The Spectator», London.

I

Largely owing to your efforts and those of other liberal-minded journals, the prosecution of homosexual people is entering upon a new and milder phase. It is none the less cruel. Some two years ago I addressed you with details of a particularly bad case in rural Somerset. I am proud to remember that as a direct result of that letter, the Homosexual Law Reform Society was formed. It seems to have persuaded many authorities—why do lawyers never see the defects of their own laws?—that it is not only cruel, but ridiculous to lock up homosexuals together in close confinement. Instead, this sort of thing now happens: A friend of mine gave a lift to two men who sat in the back of his car. What took place there I do not know, but after police spies had appeared on the scene in a powerful and expensive limousine, a fine and binding-over were imposed upon them. My friend, who was never accused of taking any part in the affair, was charged with being an accessory. He pleaded not guilty. For months the usual long and costly trials followed, ending with days of argument at Quarter Sessions, and a two and a half hour retirement of the jury. During this protracted period the accused understandably rather lost his head, and tried to commit suicide. He was for some time in hospital at the public expense. He was then found guilty and fined £ 10. The cost of all this to the State must have been several thousand pounds and we have the spectacle of a large number of presumably intelligent and highly paid men occupying themselves for days considering whether or not a man permitted an offence said to take place all the time at some schools, and sometimes at all schools. What will posterity think of us?

If anybody really wants to know how childish we are, I will take him to a public convenience in Bristol where a mirror is fixed to the ceiling so that a police spy may stand outside and see what is going on within. As any passing woman or child can take the place of the police, I complained to them, but no notice was taken, and this entertainment is still available to the citizens of Bristol.

II

Mr. K. C. Rothery writes of a homosexual youth 'corrupting' a normal man and visualises the possibility of 'a chain reaction spreading the vice' throughout a prison. While it is recognised that homosexual acts do take place in exclusively male communities such as public schools, the army, ships and prisons, all research on the subject has shown that these acts are the result of circumstances and do not induce homosexuality in normal men. Mr. Rothery has only to ask himself whether he would be liable to corruption as a result of 'having a pass made at him' by a homosexual. If not, he should not so readily ascribe sexual unselectiveness to others.

On the question of homosexual law reform, it is surely obvious that homosexuals are being driven by the law to act like any other persecuted minority. It must be remembered that homosexuals are not homosexual *by choice*. If the law regarding acts between consenting adults were changed, we should soon hear no

more of the whole business than we do of, say, Lesbianism. Does Lesbianism spread and increase because there are no laws to restrain it? Certainly not. On the contrary, women so afflicted are free to consult their friends and doctors. Most homosexuals, under great strain, are good and useful members of society. Many more could be so, if given the chance. The neuroses induced by fear and ostracism lie at the root of the whole trouble. —

III

In view of the regrettable but understandable indifference of the general public, and the apathy and timidity of our legislators, it is unrealistic to hope for early action to reform the present homosexual law. No legislation, however, would be required to end the degrading employment of young policemen as decoys and *agents provocateurs* to secure convictions in this sphere.

The Home Secretary, without invoking special powers or involving Parliament, could issue orders that would put a stop to this revolting practice within twenty-four hours. If he neglects to do so, he should be asked his reasons for condoning the use of such vicious means to enforce a disputed law.

IV

The Homosexual Law Reform Society, Rooms 27/29, 32 Shaftesbury Av. W1

The disgraceful methods used by the police in certain areas stem, I believe, from the attitude that since homosexuals are automatically criminals they are 'fair game', and so it does not matter very much how they are caught. This attitude is by no means confined to policemen. It is shared by an increasing number of criminals. More often than ever we are visited by homosexuals who have been robbed, beaten up or blackmailed, or who have received threatening letters. In every case I have to advise these men not to report the crime, since in many cases it is the victim who is prosecuted while no action is taken against the real criminal.

At a public meeting earlier this month a resolution calling on the Government to implement the Wolfenden findings was carried by about a thousand votes to three. Time and again, at smaller meetings, we have met with the same reaction from men and women representing all levels of public opinion. The present law is now generally acknowledged to be flagrantly unjust in principle and bestial in its effects. Yet these effects are allowed to continue unchecked and to grow worse while the Home Secretary and other politicians try to summon up enough moral courage to take positive action.

Your readers could be of immense help if they would write to their Members of Parliament and to the Home Secretary now, urging forcibly that this reform is overdue. — Yours faithfully, *A. Hallidie Smith,* Secretary

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erbitten wir möglichst umgehend, sei es aus Zürich, aus der übrigen Schweiz oder aus dem Ausland. Die Speditionskontrolle wird durch das Ausbleiben der Beträge unnötig erschwert. Säumigen Zahlern in der Schweiz können wir das Märzheft nicht mehr zustellen; nach dem Ausland haben wir bereits das Februarheft gestoppt. Zudem ist der Zutritt in der ISOLA, Basel, ohne die neue Ausweiskarte auch nicht mehr möglich.

Avis aux abonnés ne s'étant pas encore acquittés de leur dû pour le 1er semestre 1961

Tout abonné de Zurich, de Suisse ou de l'Etranger ayant négligé jusqu'ici de payer l'abonnement pour le premier semestre 1961 est prié de le faire par retour du courrier. Le manque de ponctualité dans les versements rend inutilement difficile le contrôle des expéditions.

Nous ne pourrons plus adresser le No de mars à ceux qui n'auront pas effectué le versement attendu; aux retardataires de l'Etranger, nous avons dû, à regret, stoper l'envoi du No de février déjà.

Ajoutons que l'entrée à Isola (Bâle) n'est autorisée que sur présentation de la carte de légitimation.