

MINUTES of (workshop/plenary): Paedophilia (first session)

Date: 30 June 1987

Chairperson(s): Casimir Elsen (point 1) / Joanne Boucette

Minutes taken by: Casimir Elsen

NB: Please, list all RECOMMENDATIONS at the end of your minutes in a separate paragraph.

Present : 28 persons, from The Netherlands, Peru, Sweden, Scotland, France, Belgium, New Zealand, Denmark, U.S.A., Germany, Austria, Norway and Mexico.

- Agenda :
1. The CRIES affair in Belgium
 2. Ages of consent, with respect to the work of the HPP
 3. Ages of consent in general
 4. Report Study Group on Paedophilia

1. The CRIES affair in Belgium

- a. An update of the events was given (sensationalistic press reports stating that CRIES - the french-speaking paedophile group in Belgium - was nothing else than a cover up for an international network of child prostitution and child pornography, involving about 400 persons. In fact only a few people, who had met through CRIES, had organized in their private lives and without knowledge of other CRIES members illegal sexual activities involving young children.)
- b. two texts were discussed : a letter to the Belgian press, protesting against the misinformation printed in the papers, and a letter to Philippe Carper (leader of CRIES, now in jail) personally. Both letters were referred to a small committee (Miriam Saphira, Ruth Almadal, Peter Wingquist and Casimir Elsen), who will draft the letters and present them at next session of the paedophilia workshop.

2. The age of consent laws in general

It was decided to discuss the age of consent laws in general first, before dealing with the specific aspects concerning the HPP.

- a. There was first a clarification of the positions taken by the participants of the workshop on this matter. Some statements : adults should not have sex with children, but that does not mean that paedophiles need to be punished as now is done; we are only hearing from the adult side. What do the children say ?; ages of consent are set up by adults !; under the age of 12 it is absolutely NO !; the ideal situation should be that there are no ages of consent, but in reality the lowering of the age of consent must go hand in hand with changing the position of children in our society; we have to go in 3 steps, the first being an equal age of consent for both gay and straight sex, the second being a minimum age of consent on the same level in all EC countries, the third being the same in all countries; it is necessary to develop the quality of relations in general to protect persons from exploitation; in principle it should be stressed that there is a need for laws fighting exploitation.
- b. Second part of the discussion was a kind of "brainstorming" in order to put forward arguments for and against. The main arguments concerned the

Other arguments concerned the equality of relations, the possible negative effects (two arguments : a child can not foresee the long term effects - the damage is done by the negative attitude of our society to these things). Finally there were some remarks on the arbitrariness of an age of consent, that we (adults) should not decide about what children do with their sexuality, that the real problem had to do with coercion and persons with bad intentions, and the lack of sexual education from early years on. Someone expressed the fear that ILGA statements about lowering or abolishing the age of consent could be abused by right wing organisations against ILGA.

The session was adjourned then. No specific recommendations were put forward at this session.

an agreement on the topic of the age of consent. On the one side there were arguments that 12 years was the absolutely lowest age of consent that could be acceptable (psychologist's point of view), that the papers only talk about the position of the children and do not reflect the adult's point of view, that people who have suffered sexual abuse in childhood will definitely not accept a lowering of the age of consent (very emotional stand). On the other side arguments were put forward that some of the previous arguments were based on own negative experiences or professional counseling work with cases that were negative and that positive experiences so had no voice; that gay teenagers sometimes got in trouble because of the existing ages of consent; that the large number of cases of sexual abuse seem to indicate that ages of consent don't give a real protection; that also persons under the age of consent can fall in love and have sexual feelings.

In general it was agreed that there was a serious LACK OF INFORMATION on paedophilia itself and that therefore it was for some people difficult to give a balanced point of view (someone asked "how can we be opposed to something we don't know")

END OF REQUESTED DELETION

It finally was said that the issue should be broadened, that not only paedophilia itself was a matter for discussion, but that also sexual education, youth rights and related subjects had to be included in the discussion.

It was agreed that the Study Group on Paedophilia, approved at the Copenhagen conference, should continue its work (Grada announced that Bill Andriette had written that he was preparing - or at least had planned - three papers)

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That a letter be send to the Belgian press (through BELGA) asking to be more careful before accusing organisations : see letter in annexure.
2. That a copy of this letter to the press be send to Philippe Carpentier, founder of CRIES
3. That the Lesbian and Gay Prisoners Project ask for more information and proceed in this case in a similar way as they do with other cases they are dealing with.
4. That the Study Group on Paedophilia, approved at the Copenhagen Conference, continues its work.

GREDA appealed that Casimir's version be destroyed.

RECOMMENDATION NO. 4

We recommend that the second half of the minutes from the second workshop on paedophilia reads as follows:

The discussion started as the first session was continued, including now also the papers presented by Miriam Saphira and Bill Andriette. The discussion was emotional, and it was impossible to reach an agreement on the topic of the age of consent.

Participants submitted that at the moment the age of 12 is taken as the absolutely lowest age of consent by the various sciences relevant to this subject matter. At this age a person is generally regarded as capable of reaching a level of understanding that is taken to be necessary in matters related to consent to sexual activity with adults.

It was also stated that some of the papers distributed only deal with the position of children and do not reflect the points of view in terms of own desires and right to have sex with children.

Further it was put forward that victims of sexual abuse have urged not to lower the age of consent.

Next it was submitted that though the large number of cases of sexual abuse seem to indicate that an age of consent does not give a real protection, the number of cases of sexual abuse could rise in case of its abolition. Some felt that some of the previous statements were based on negative experiences and that positive experience so has no voice.

It was also stated that gay teenagers get in trouble because of the existing age of consent and that indeed the large number of cases of sexual abuse indicate that ages of consent do not give a real protection.

It was also stated that persons under the age of consent can fall in love and have sexual feelings as well.

In general it was agreed that there was a serious lack of information particularly as far as the adult's point of view is concerned. Some felt that consequently it was difficult to have a balanced point of view.

Finally some persons stated that the issue should be broadened, that not on paedophilia itself was a matter for discussion, but that also sexual education, youth rights and related subjects had to be included in the discussion.

IN SUMMARY : There was disagreement among participants as to whether a sexual relationship between an adult and a pre-adolescent child constituted abuse of power or constituted an equal relationship.

It was agreed that the Study GROUP ON Paedophilia, approved at the Copenhagen conference, should continue its work in accordance with the decision taken at the last annual conference.

To the Belgian press

BELGA Press Agency
International Press Center
Boulevard Charlemagne 1
BRUSSELS

We write to you as the 88 delegates of 46 groups from 20 nations worldwide, gathered at the 9th Annual Conference of the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA). One of the principal aims of our organisation is the support of the promulgation of anti-discrimination laws, and the guarantee and implementation of human rights for all people regardless of sexual orientation.

The International Lesbian and Gay Association has been informed of biased press reports on the so-called CRIES-affair. Without taking position on the organisation CRIES itself, we urgently ask that the Belgian press be more careful before accusing organisations of sexual minorities and their activists of criminal offenses without legal grounds for such accusations. The ILGA condemns all exploitation of popular prejudice for sensationalistic purposes.