

How You Can Help...

Gay's The Word has received a great deal of support from the lesbian and gay communities. This has been a great boost to morale and will be even more so with the threat of charges looming. Below we give a few suggestions as to how you can help maintain the momentum of the defence campaign.

- * **WRITE TO YOUR MP.** Tell her/him about Gay's The Word and the raid. Point out that not only have 22 lesbian and gay titles been 'seized' and court action threatened but that £9000 worth of stock ordered before the raid, which the shop has to pay for, is being refused Customs clearance and is being detained at the ports. Ask your MP to take it up with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the minister responsible.
- * **WRITE DIRECTLY TO CUSTOMS & EXCISE.** The address is: H.M. Customs & Excise, Kent House, Upper Ground, London SE1 9PS. Quote reference GCB3B/391/84. The officer dealing with correspondence about the raid is Mr R.J. Fowler. Tell them what you think about their actions.
- * **HELP US TO RAISE MONEY.** Now that court action is about to start we will need a constant flow of money. If you belong to a group or a club or a trade union you can help by asking them to make a donation. Maybe your pub or disco would organise a fund raising event. If you want to make a donation yourself cheques and postal orders can be made payable to 'Defend Gay's The Word' (or 'D.G.T.W.'). Perhaps you might like to make a regular donation by standing order.
- * **PUT A MOTION THROUGH YOUR LOCAL PARTY OR UNION BRANCH.** Trades Union branches have been very generous in giving financial help and political support to the defence campaign. More of both is needed. You can help by raising this with your workplace branch.

We need more people working in the defence campaign. If you would like to get more involved you can write to us at the address below. If you want copies of our information pack or details of how to take out a standing order, just let us know.

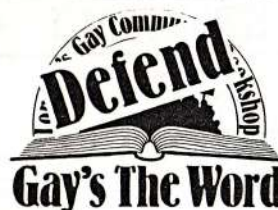
NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

(Please send SAE.) I enclose £ _____ as a donation.
Please indicate if you would like any of the following:

- ☐ information pack
- ☐ a model resolution for trade union branches
- ☐ details of how to take out a standing order

DEFEND GAY'S THE WORD CAMPAIGN
38 MOUNT PLEASANT
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UPDATE

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On April 10, Customs officials raided Gay's The Word, London's lesbian and gay community bookshop and 'detained' all of its imported stock. This raid was widely regarded as an attack on the fundamental right of lesbians and gay men to choose what they read. A Defence Campaign was set up immediately. This update is the first of a regular series of bulletins which will keep you informed of the latest developments in the Defend Gay's The Word Campaign. The first section, below, brings you up to date with legal developments. The centre pages contain detailed reports on defence campaign activities. The back page makes suggestions about how you can help defend Gay's The Word.

Since the initial raid on Gay's The Word, the main development has been the issuing, on June 6, of a formal notice of 'seizure' by Customs against 22 of the bookshop's titles. These titles cover a very wide range of lesbian and gay reading and the books (over 200 of them) will be destroyed unless the case is successfully contested in court. The full list of titles seized is given in the centre pages. Although some of the other books initially 'detained' have now been returned, Customs are still holding onto the shop's records and some personal possessions of directors - diaries, letters etc. On top of this about £9000 worth of books ordered earlier from the United States are being refused Customs clearance and detained at the ports. Despite this, Gay's The Word still has to pay for the books.

The charge against the books is that they are 'indecent'. This charge cannot be used against books published in this country - they are regulated by the much more precise terms of the Obscene Publications Act. 'Indecency' only applies to imports and more or less covers any material which the average person in the street would find disagreeable or 'in poor taste'. The implications of this are devastating - virtually every book Gay's The Word stocks could be considered 'indecent'. It means that this action effectively denies to lesbians and gay men the fundamental right to read.

Gay's The Word will contest the seizures in Court. But it faces a tough battle because it will have to prove to three lay magistrates that the books are *not* indecent *without* calling expert witnesses, looking at the books' context or significance. Only the specific words used are considered. Gay's The Word faces fines and legal costs approaching £10,000! On top of this the directors face **personal criminal charges** and costs of over double this amount. When these charges are brought, judicial wraps are put on the case - it becomes 'sub judice'. **Until then, it is vital that as much pressure as possible is generated and as much noise as can be is made.**

An information pack covering most aspects of the raid on Gay's The Word and its wider implications has been put together. The pack consists of a series of leaflets and covers: details of the raid; the history of Gay's The Word; the stocking policy of Gay's The Word; a statement of the law on indecency and the framework within which the charges are being made; how customs law threatens lesbians and gays more generally; the wider implications of the raid for the lesbian and gay communities; the lesbian response to the raid; the aims of the Defend Gay's The Word Campaign; and, finally, details of how people can help (model letters and motions etc.).

We aim to use the pack in all campaigning work, in contacts with Trade Unions, MPs, councillors, lesbian and gay groups, the media and so on. We are hoping that the pack will be used widely by supporters of the defence campaign. The leaflets in the pack will be added to and updated as developments take place. Copies of the leaflet are available from Defend Gay's The Word, 38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1.

FINANCE

We cannot thank enough the many people who have sent money from the beginning of the campaign and it cannot be stressed too much how all donations, regardless of size, are valued and appreciated. This will not be a short campaign and a good deal of money is required to combat the massive resources of Customs & Excise.

So far, almost £2,000 has been received which has helped enormously in the running of the campaign. Expenditure to date has only been on running costs; printing leaflets, posters, and the letters circulated to all MPs. With the issue of the seizure notice there will be

REPORTBACK

greater demands with, for example, legal expenses being incurred. The campaign's aim is to obtain the best legal advice it can but it does not want to use donations, some of which are from unemployed or people on a low income, to further enhance the fortunes of the legal profession. We hope to obtain the help of NCCL and it would help us if individuals were to write to the NCCL asking them to take up this case.

Money has also been raised by a benefit at the Scala Cinema, King's Cross, and a benefit is planned for early July at Bolts in North London.

A campaign needs a constant flow of money - the more so once legal action begins. If you belong to a group or club or trade union you can help by asking them to make a donation. You can help by attending any benefits. You can help by signing a standing order to make regular donations. You can help by even sending just £1 when you receive this 'update'.

DIRECT ACTION

Immediately after the first open meeting at County Hall, Westminster, a group was formed to organise and coordinate direct action and their first event was the picket of Customs & Excise in Woburn Place on April 27. They were successful in attracting an impressive number of people to join the picket, many of whom came during their lunch break.

It was decided that pressure should continue to be applied to Customs & Excise in this way and a further demonstration was arranged for June 26. Now that a formal seizure notice

has been issued there is a greater need for continuing pressure on Customs & Excise.

DETAILS OF DEFENCE CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES

The value of any demonstration is that it is a very real indication - for both sides - of the support which the campaign has. It has been encouraging to see gay men and lesbians from different sections of the communities united by anger at this attack on all our civil liberties.

BOOK TRADE

A group of gay people working in the booktrade have got together to rally support for Gay's The Word among publishers, literary agents, editors, authors and booksellers. The group has contacted 25 publishers seeking their sponsorship for the campaign and aiming to publish in the quality press a

parties and at their places of work.

Hackney Council, one of several councils who buy books for their libraries from the shop, and **Camden Council**, Gay's The Word's landlord, have both passed strong motions in full Council condemning the raid. The Civil Service Gay Group has taken the matter up with the officers who raided the shop. Significantly, the raid has been discussed at the annual conference of one of the Civil Service unions, the SCPS. The response of the Labour and Trade Union movements to the raid on Gay's The Word has been very encouraging and welcome, but more is needed. We would like to thank the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights for their help.

LOBBYING

Thanks to the assistance of Liberal MPs Michael Meadowcroft and Simon Hughes a great deal has happened on this front. Our intention was to campaign for support from MPs by writing to virtually all of them. Simon Hughes and Michael Meadowcroft arranged for questions to be put to the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the House of Commons and also drafted an Early Day Motion condemning the raid. They hoped to have it sponsored by at least six MPs drawn from all the parties. In the meantime, they have set up a meeting at the House of Commons so that we may explain more fully to MPs the raid, its implications, its effect on the gay and lesbian communities and the campaign's aims. We particularly want their support in bringing pressure on Customs & Excise to release the £9000 worth of books which were ordered and paid for well before the raid but which have yet to receive customs clearance.



joint letter from them condemning the raid. All authors whose work has been published by eight selected gay and radical publishers are being approached to declare their support and sponsorship is also being sought from a number of 'big name' authors. Booksellers are being asked to display posters and leaflets about the raid. Finally, the American publishers of the books which have been seized are being contacted to seek both support and involvement from them in defending their prime UK outlet.

LABOUR MOVEMENT

Many lesbians and gay men have been raising the subject of the raid, and its implications, within their local Labour

THE SEIZED BOOKS

The Story of Harold
Terry Andrews

Below The Belt
Phil Andros

Aphrodisiac
Christopher Street

From Violent Men
Daniel Curzon

Ed Dean is Queer
Second Crossing
Ed Diamond

True Life Adventure Stories
Judy Grahm (ed)

Studies in Sodomasochism
Levi Kamel

Streetboy Dreams
Kevin Esser

Game Texts
Erskine Lane

Forty Deuce
Tony Manotta

Cum
Flesh

Sex
Boyd McDonald (ed)

Terminal Bar
Larry Mitchell

One for the Gods
Gordon Merrick

Taking Care of Mrs Carroll
Paul Monette

The Joy of Lesbian Sex
Dr Emily Sisley & Bertha Harris

Deathtrick
Richard Steveson

Treasures on Earth
Carter Wilson

Common Lives, Lesbian Lives
Periodical