

Why is homosexuality still something to hide?

Michael Schofield points out that, despite legal change and Gay Lib, full public acceptance is a long way off.

Whatever else the Minehead committal proceedings in the Jeremy Thorpe case did or did not prove, they certainly indicate that people in public life are still fearful of allegations about homosexuality, even though it is now almost twelve years since homosexual acts between consenting adults in private became legal in England. (In Scotland and Northern Ireland, indeed, it remains a crime punishable by jail.)

Before 1967, homosexual offenders were treated with considerable severity by the courts. Extended use was made of police *agents-provocateurs* in plain clothes to entice homosexuals. When a homosexual was caught, every effort was made to persuade him to turn Queen's evidence and implicate his former partners. Sometimes men were sent to prison for acts in private six or seven years earlier.

In one case in Reading, 14 men pleaded guilty to offences with another adult known as Ginger Tom. When the judge asked which of the defendants was Ginger Tom, he was told that Ginger was not in court because he had bought immunity by listing all his 34 partners over the last four years; three committed suicide, five left town and the evidence was not strong enough to charge the other twelve.

In 1954, there was a famous trial in which several well-known people—notably, Lord Montagu of Beaulieu and Peter Wildblood (who subsequently wrote a book, *Against the Law*, about his experiences)—were accused of homosexual offences. The Wolfenden committee was appointed later in that year. After three more years and 62 meetings, it produced 13 proposals for reforming the law on homosexuality. The Wolfenden committee also reported on prostitution and the government soon brought in a bill to turn *these* proposals (to "clear the girls off the streets") into law. But it took another ten years and the goodwill of the then Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins, before members of parliament felt able to vote in favour of a flaccid version of the recommendations on homosexuality.

Twelve years of legalisation do not seem to have had much effect on public pronouncements about homosexuality. The amenities committee of the Tunbridge Wells district council refused to hire out the town's Assembly Hall for the internationally-known pianist, Peter Katin, to give a recital because the proceeds were to be donated to the Campaign for Homosexual Equality. Scarborough's local authority made CHE welcome at first, when it wanted to hold its annual conference in the town; but then, when the councillors discovered what the initials stood for, they cancelled.

A London teacher was told that he was

barred from ILEA schools, not because he was homosexual, but because he insisted on saying so. A social worker was dismissed because she appeared on a television programme about lesbians.

Homosexual acts between women have never been illegal, but the social hostility can be quite strong. Lesbian women in a divorce case are nearly always refused custody of their children. Adoption societies are wary of allowing two women to bring up a child, and a lesbian who arranged to have artificial insemination in order to have a child of her own was pilloried by the popular newspapers, led by the *London Evening News*, who were exonerated by the Press Council when the mother complained.

Yet all the evidence from polls and surveys shows that ordinary men and women have become much more tolerant about homosexuality over the last few years. The change in the law seems to have brought about a welcome reduction in prejudice. The subject is now discussed openly; some would say endlessly. There are more jokes, but less hostility. One star of the major television series, *Are You Being Served?*, plays a blatantly homosexual salesman. John Curry, in ice skating, was able to add a gay note to sport. Even the moral authorities now seem to accept that homosexuality is more of a sin than a crime. Mrs Whitehouse loves homosexuals, but not homosexual acts.

This difference between public attitudes and private opinions is quite striking. People in authority tell us how we ought to behave. Yet the biographies of famous men frequently show that politicians do not always practise what they preach. Last year Tom Driberg's posthumous autobiography revealed that his ruling passion was homosexual promiscuity, and yet he was not noticeably forward in promoting the reform of the laws on homosexuality. Of course Driberg's behaviour was extreme by most people's standards (having sex with waiters in the House of Commons lavatories, for example): enough, it was said, to give buggery a bad name.

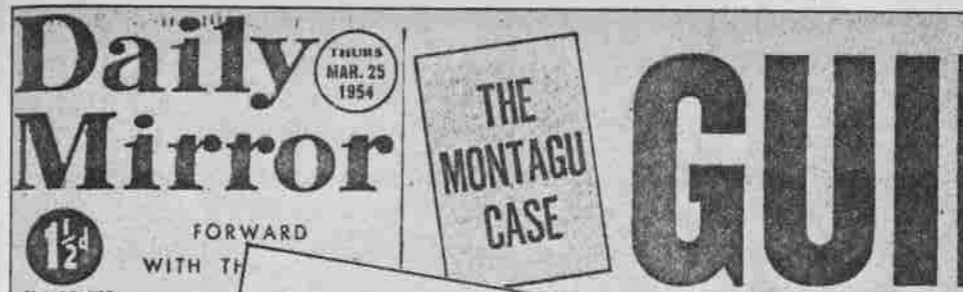
The age of consent for heterosexuals is 16, but for homosexuals it is 21. Last year Lord Arran, who sponsored the 1967 act, introduced a bill designed to lower to 18 the age at which men may consent to homosexual acts. The idea was fiercely attacked and rejected in the Lords by 146 votes to 25. The Countess of Loudoun said the bill "extended the tentacles of evil." Lord Halsbury called it "a sick bill," promoting "the debasement of morals." Lord Longford talked about the corruption of youth.

Adolescent sexuality is always the most sensitive area. Sex is one of those facets of

life where adults disapprove of youthful behaviour and seek to control it. It has always been an agreeable task to tell young people how they ought to behave, and adults usually expect adolescents to be bound by stricter standards than they adhere to themselves. Teenage girls, who have committed no crimes, are still taken into custodial care because they are alleged to be in "moral danger"—which normally means they enjoy going to bed with men. Teenage boys can still be jailed for two years for a consenting homosexual act committed in private.

At boarding schools, a boy who develops a sexual interest in another boy is usually told it is just a passing phase. It only becomes a cause for concern if it seems likely that the boy will grow up homosexual. This makes it difficult to explain to young people why adult homosexuality is legal, and adolescent homosexuality not.

The authorities fear that youthful homosexual behaviour will inhibit the development of the individual. *Not so long ago, courts and public opinion treated homosexuals severely. The Mirror's 1963 treatment of the Vassall case (right) would be unimaginable today. Gay News (below) shows there is now wider tolerance*



HOW TO SPOT A POSSIBLE HOMO

YOU can and London's Bon Ginza, Rome's Via Sauchiehall-street Mandalay, and the you live...

Vassall, the spy, was like one, he acted like yet here, in the formal of the Tribunal's report, Radcliffe and his two associates...

So far as we can see any clue to the fact that active police detective work homosexual.

Later on they say: "The British brought him through his hood but the volume of evidence convinced us that at that time in Vassall's conduct or conveyed even to a sharp observer to homosexual practices."

Almost unbelievably it seems one or two people Vassall worked he was a bit intimate. Some of him "Vera". But neither for the officials' pickers ever appeared to mark a homo, and a dangerous it is really true that of frankness grown men, men of the world, a home when they see it is high time we had a on how to pick a pervert

Badly, homo fall into -The obvious, and the conce OBVIOUS: Those who hair, touch up their lips, spotted by a gay little wiggle day in Blackwall Tunnel. CONCEALED: They wear all and sit up at chi-chi bars w Or they wear hairy sports and give their wives a black eye club. THEY: wealth, play golf, ski work up great knots of mu lifting weights. They are man have children. THEY are everywhere, and they be anybody. How then are we going to pick them out? I have been discussing them with a psychiatrist and others who have made a keen study of the problem. Quite clearly EVERY man of the type listed here is NOT a homo, but you will certainly find that the queers fall into these categories: tell them my secrets.

1-THE MIDDLE-AGED MAN, unmarried, who has an unnaturally strong affection for his mother.

2-The man who has a consuming interest in working and talking with boys or youths

3-THE CRAWLER. The 'umbria man, the man who is always saying he's nothing and everybody else is marvelous, the man with the fixed and meaningless smile on his face. A primo suspect.

4-THE FURRY DRESSER. When out, two or three button jackets are in his wardrobe. He has the...

The Admiralty, the Foreign Office, and M.I.5 don't seem to know... so the Sunday Mirror offers them some useful advice

Vassall, a spy and homo—a gilt-edged specimen of his type.

ment of heterosexuality. This seems to assume that people will not have sexual intercourse with the opposite sex because homosexual activities are so much more exciting—an assumption that most people would want to refute.

A few gay groups have had the nerve to suggest that the sex education given in schools should include a discussion on homosexuality, if only because many teenagers are confused about their own homoerotic feelings. Most head teachers have rejected this suggestion with indignation.

Under our system of education it is the individual head of each school who decides how much sex education there should be, and what subjects should be taught. Many head teachers are less than enthusiastic about this responsibility. They fear that it may jeopardise their careers by causing trouble with parents, staff and the local education authority. Readers of the local paper would soon get to know about anything unusual going on in the school. This would encourage critical statements from councillors and other dignitaries.

With so many people to please, and so many hazards to avoid, sex education gets less and less explicit. By the time all those in authority are satisfied that the course is inoffensive, the pupils are likely to experience some difficulty in understanding the simple facts of heterosexuality, never mind any of the variations.

The 1967 act did not rate more than two cheers in the homosexual community. The law still differentiates between heterosexuals and homosexuals in many ways. For example: the penalty for indecent assault on a male is a maximum of ten years, but on a female, it is two years. The definition of "in private" is more restrictive for homosexual acts. It is an offence for a man to solicit another man for an immoral purpose, but no man has ever been prosecuted for soliciting a woman. It is illegal for a man aged over 21 to have sexual relations with a man under 21, even in the reasonable belief that the younger man was over 21 and when the two men are almost the same age. Local by-laws are still used against homosexuals in a way they are never used against heterosexuals.

It remains an offence for a third party to procure a homosexual act, even though such an act is now quite legal. When this strange anomaly was tested in the courts in 1972, the Law Lords decided that the Sexual Offences Act, 1967, had made homosexual conduct "merely exempted from criminal penalties" but did not make it "lawful in the full sense."

Leo Abse gained a reputation as a liberal reformer after he had piloted Arran's bill through the Commons; but he resents the idea that further changes in the law are necessary. Other MPs privately support some of the aims of the homosexual lobby, but very few are prepared to speak out.

About seven years ago, several self-help gay groups started to form, following an American model. Homosexuals felt that it was time to abandon gentle persuasion and polite lobbying, as so little progress had

been made since the passing of the act. The time had come, they believed, for acknowledged homosexuals to stand up and fight.

Gay rights organisations have developed useful self-help activities, such as magazines, switchboards, directories and travel agents. The worried can be helped, and like-minded men or women can meet. This is tolerated as long as it does not become the subject of public controversy.

Every large town now has its gay bars, clubs and discos. The police usually leave them alone unless prominent people in the area complain. After a raid, the clubs are more likely to be charged for infringements, of licensing laws or fire regulations than for a breach of the peace (the police's blanket charge for immoral happenings). Nervous landlords occasionally decide to ban the so-called "obvious queers" if the pub's reputation is becoming too blatant.

The homosexual stereotype—which for so long has been the comic's easy laugh—was never more than a tiny segment in a large minority group. Even the appearance of the recognisable gay man is changing. Fewer effeminate mins or overdressed fastidious queans; more butch men with short hair in leather and jeans—the *macho* image.

The quality of life available to gay men and women has improved in the last few years. But this is not enough for many radical homosexuals who insist that the only way to get social acceptance is to come out and say they are gay. The pages of *Gay News* have featured many stories from readers who have found that parents, friends and work mates have accepted their sexual orientation after they openly declared it. But the same newspaper also contains many examples of intolerance, harassments and dismissals from public bodies.

It is not too difficult in 1979 for a gay man or woman to find someone to go to bed with, providing they keep quiet about it. It is rather more difficult for two gays to claim that they have the same right as everyone else to express their love for each other. It is next to impossible for a politician to admit to homosexual preferences. Only one MP—Maureen Colquhoun—has declared her interests and she is in trouble with her Northampton constituency party, which has been trying to ditch her as Labour member.

If the House of Commons is at all representative of the people in this country, there must be some other homosexuals among the 635 members of parliament. I suppose I could be summoned to appear before the Speaker for even suggesting that any MP has anything to come out about, but there is no evidence to show that a homosexual politician is likely to be less trustworthy.

Ten years ago, identified homosexuals were liable to suffer social ostracism and physical violence. Today they are not far from getting some sort of social acceptance on a private level—between friends. But if they aspire to have some influence on the political decisions that affect their lives or if they want to make a positive contribution to the community, then they are still at a considerable disadvantage.

The crammer boom

Diana Geddes

Not what Miss Brodie, in her prime, would have called 'creme de la creme': just the social 'creme,' perhaps?

What do the Duke of Edinburgh's niece, a Sultan's daughter, Roy Jenkins's son and Rupert Murdoch's daughter have in common? They have all been to a "crammer," as private coaching establishments of widely varying types and sizes are popularly called. Crammers are booming. A host of new establishments have sprung up over the past decade; some excellent, others of such dubious quality that they border on the fraudulent; some in grand Georgian mansions, others in potting sheds in the back garden. But all are eager to jump on what can be a very profitable band-wagon.

Tuition fees start at around £2 an hour but may go up to £10, while fees for a year's A level course range from about £750 to £2,000 and more. That compares with average non-boarding fees at Britain's top public schools or about £1,200 a year.

There has been an enormous increase in demand for intensive post-16 plus tuition in GCE O and A levels and also for Oxbridge entrance coaching. John Murrell, senior governing manager of Gabbitts-Thring, the leading consultants on independent schooling, says that in the last five years alone, requests for advice on private tutors have doubled. They are now receiving about 6,000 such inquiries a year, an average of 25 a day. The growth in demand from overseas students hoping to get the necessary qualifications to get into a British university has been particularly spectacular, says Murrell. But the biggest source of demand is still from British pupils at independent schools, and it is growing yearly.

Why are the independent schools, with their reputation for high academic standards and examination success, apparently driving their pupils into even more expensive institutions devoted to passing examinations? One might have expected to find the crammers stuffed with pupils from state schools which, we are constantly being told, are failing their bright pupils academically. But these form only a tiny minority of the students in private tutorial colleges—though they constitute 95 per cent of the school population. The cost of private tuition is, of course, prohibitive for many state school parents, but that is not the whole explanation. The answer is in the nature of the independent school itself.

Independent schools, particularly boarding schools, tend to be more disciplinarian and demand more conformity from their pupils than state schools. Crammers have always acted as a refuge for the misfits and rebels of the public school system—the bullied and the unhappy, the spoilt brats and the incorrigibly lazy, those who failed their exams and those who were expelled. But they now seem to be attracting a different sort of clientele—pupils who

choose to leave school immediately after O level because they can no longer stand the domineering, sometimes downright rude attitude of their schoolmasters and mistresses, the ugliness of school uniforms, the needling irritation of the more pointless school rules, the lack of freedom to live their lives in their own way.

"There has been a tremendous change in the type of pupils coming for advice," John Murrell says. "Even up to five years ago it was considered that there must be something odd or even kinky about a bright child leaving an orthodox public school at the age of 16. But it is now a fairly regular, and accepted, practice. The girls, in particular, don't like the cloistered atmosphere of their boarding schools and want to throw off their corsets, as it were. Both boys and girls simply want to be treated more as adults. That's probably one of the main reasons for the great expansion of the coaching establishments."

Another important reason for the growth of the crammers is what Murrell calls the academic rat race: "An awful lot of children don't want to do drama, play in the hockey team, or to be a prefect. They

want to concentrate on their academic studies so as to get good grades so as to get into the university of their choice. I personally think it's a tragedy, because it's in the sixth form that a good public school can contribute most to a child's real education and that is much more than the exclusive pursuit of academic excellence."

While the "best" public schools like Rugby, Winchester, St Paul's (girls and boys), Eton, Westminster and so on, feature prominently on the rolls of the crammers, most students at private tutorial colleges come from smaller, less well-known, independent schools. Many of these have tiny sixth forms, with a very limited choice of A level subjects. Their inadequately qualified staff may find it difficult to get their pupils up to A level standard, let alone up to the standard required for Oxbridge.

Sallie-Faye Fullton, now a student at Beechlawn Tutorial College in Oxford, was last year at a girls' boarding school on the Isle of Wight. She was one of only eleven pupils in the lower sixth. She complained that the teaching was poor and that staff so inadequate that she and the other senior girls had to help supervise meals, lessons, bed-times and so on. "I seemed to spend all my time looking after the juniors," she says. "I was bored, discontented, and very worried about my A levels."

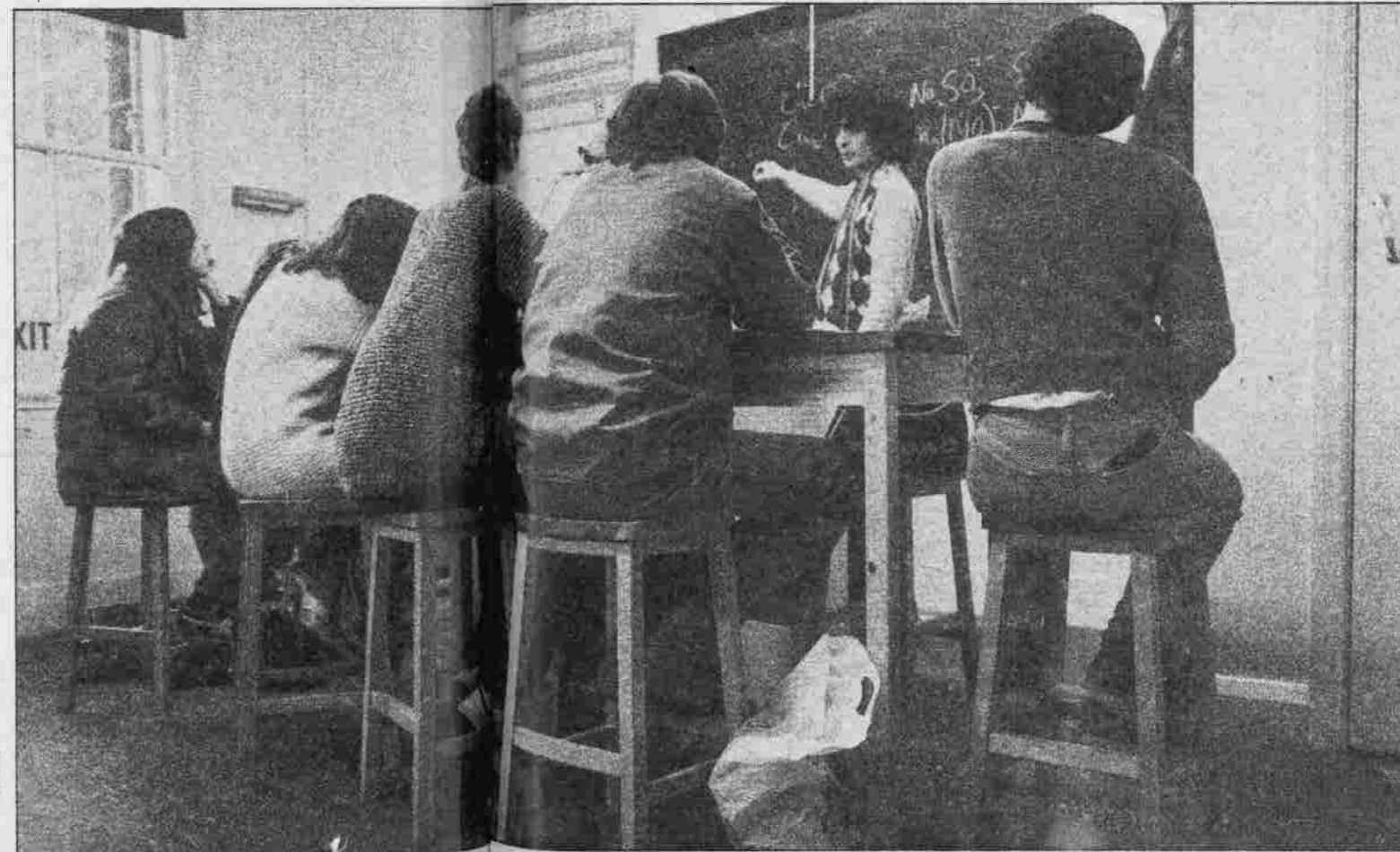
In talking to crammers of many types and sizes, I found they all said they were not crammers. They were independent colleges of further education, private sixth

form colleges, tutorial establishments—anything but a crammer with its pejorative overtones. Rolf Schröder, principal of Davies, Laing and Dick, London, agrees that the college used to be a crammer, but says it can no longer be properly so described.

"Eight or nine years ago, it was possible to get someone through an A level economics examination in six weeks," Schröder says. "That's now quite out of the question. We require most of our students to spend a full year with us whether they are retaking their A levels or starting from scratch. The examinations have become much more sophisticated and more difficult. You cannot cram in the same way as you used to, because the student is required to show a wider knowledge and deeper understanding of the subject. And the introduction of multiple-choice questions in examinations has meant that you can no longer miss out whole chunks of the syllabus, as the questions often span it all."

Another reason why colleges feel justified in abandoning their "cramming" image is that while many colleges used to cater mostly for pupils who had failed their examinations, they are now getting more and more students who study for their A levels from scratch. At Davies's, and Davies, Laing and Dick, two of the largest and longest-established tutorial colleges, only about half the A level students are doing

A success story among crammers. Mander, Portman, Woodward (below) has 300 students



Chris Cormack

"retakes." And at so-called sixth-form colleges like St Clare's Hall, Oxford, and Padworth College, near Reading, nearly all the students are taking their A levels for the first time.

The proportion of overseas students at tutorial colleges varies from hardly any at all to almost 100 per cent. Some colleges are concerned about allowing the numbers of overseas students to rise too high. This is partly because foreign students want to study with British students, but also because many British students, or at least their parents, do not like the feel of a college full of foreign students who may be unable to speak English fluently. On the other hand, the growing demand from foreign students is a boon to those colleges which are losing some British students because of the stiff competition introduced by the new tutorial colleges.

One of the great success stories of the recent boom in crammers is Mander, Portman, Woodward, in London. Set up six years ago by three Cambridge graduates with capital of £18,000, and 35 students in cramped premises in Fulham, it now has an annual turnover of £300,000. It has nearly 300 students who are accommodated in two spacious Victorian houses in South Kensington. There are three well-equipped science laboratories, and a staff of 50 tutors.

"There are only three rules here," Robert Woodward says: "regular attendance, punctuality and homework. We set the kind of homework which used to be expected when I was at St Paul's: it comes as quite a shock to some. A student doing three A levels gets 18 hours tuition a week in carefully selected groups of about six students, and is then expected to do at least 30 hours' homework on his own. We've always been incredibly tough about work. We chuck out five or six students every year for not working. I feel the public schools just aren't pushing their pupils any more."

Mander, Portman, Woodward have some impressive success stories. Of the 18 students who took Oxbridge entrance in December, for example, eleven got places including four with exhibitions or scholarships. One of the scholars had tried for Oxbridge twice before, but had failed to get even a place. However, it is always difficult to judge any academic institution on the basis of its examination results, because so much depends on the quality of the original intake. Mander, Portman, Woodward, for example, require their A level students to have at least five O levels with grade C or better, and their Oxbridge entrance students to have at least three Bs at A level, while Davies, Laing and Dick has almost no entrance requirements, and is willing to take the "thickies" along with the bright pupils.

Davies, Laing and Dick have a system of individual tuition which is better suited to coping with a wide range of ability than the group tutorial system used at Mander, Portman, Woodward. At Davies, Laing and Dick (and a similar system is used at Davies's), a tutor sits in a little glass cubby-hole in front of class of six or eight