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And an Answer

(Letter from an English Subscriber to the English Editor)

Dear Editor,

You showed me Gordon Westwood's letter when I was in Zürich last month and, of course, one must welcome any unbiased investigation into Homosexuality as affecting English citizens. It is unlikely that the views of any one person are of any particular importance but Mr. Westwood asks for information and I hope that this letter may induce other English members of THE CIRCLE to provide it. It is my belief that the joint information which the more articulate of us can provide is vitally important.

I feel that some general reply to Mr. Westwood's letter may provide a starting point. I can only write of my own experiences in England so that a few facts are, perhaps, pertinent. I am 31, a lawyer and a practising homosexual. Fortunately, I have had the opportunity to travel extensively and thus to observe and compare facets of homosexual life outside England. Like many of us, I have passed through the hands of psychiatrists and emerged unchanged and, indeed, reconciled to a sexual bias which has, to my certain knowledge, been part and parcel of my life since I was seven years old.

England has been for long a country strangely intolerant of anything outside the norm of ordinary behaviour. In sexual matters, this basic intolerance is strongly reinforced by the Puritan tradition which precludes talk of sex and makes it something both furtive and unclean. It must, however, be said that this tradition no longer greatly influences many of those under the age of forty. Whilst Homosexuality is repugnant to many people, it is my experience that many of the younger generation accept its existence virtually without comment. This is, of course, as much as we ask for coupled with a measure of legal reform. I myself always quietly inform the married friends of my own generation that I am a Homosexual. This disclosure has yet to disrupt a friendship. My point is that it would be unthinkable to do the same with the older generation. Thus, it seems to me that public opinion is becoming less reactionary on sexual matters.

Legal reform, however, lags as always behind public opinion. There has been much said and written lately of the reform of the Criminal Law as affecting Homosexuals. The existing law is certainly barbarous as affecting adults but, in my opinion, it provides a very necessary protection to minors. It is the duty of the State to protect the young but not to dictate the decisions of adults. In England, any adult Homosexual who follows his sexual desires is, at least in theory and sometimes in practice, liable to incur a sentence of imprisonment with consequent loss of job or profession. To a greater or lesser extent, he must live in fear and this fear vitally influences his imagination and may well intensify his sex life. It is this fear, I believe, which often provokes excesses which otherwise would not occur. It has been suggested that an amendment of the law to legalise homosexual practices will result in an increase of Homosexuality. This I do not believe. The proportion of Homosexuals

is not dictated or affected by laws but by factors, different with each generation which is difficult to assess.

The great difficulty of obtaining understanding tolerance beyond mere legal tolerance is one common to all European communities. It is true that many Homosexuals are promiscuous and I believe that this promiscuity is encouraged by external intolerance. Conditions do not assist a situation in which two men can live together on a permanent or semi-permanent basis. It is surprising how many enduring male partnerships in fact exist — far more than might be thought by an inspection of the gay bars of Europe. Yet it is in these permanencies that there lies the hope for the future. I believe that the community must learn to understand not only the background to Homosexuality but, beyond that, the love and great affection that there can be between one man and another. We know that this can be strong indeed for it is given to few of us to love more than a few times in life and sometimes once only. The existing attitude of English society predicates against the fruition of such a love and against its endurance.

From the last paragraph you will see that I am anxious that Mr. Westwood shall not lose sight of the hearts behind the facts and that he will allow himself also to be influenced, as I am sure he will, by considerations other than those which are purely clinical. For myself, I shall be pleased to meet him and to answer honestly any queries which he may care to put to me. It is, I think, sufficient condemnation of the position now in England that I have to sign this letter not with my own name and address (which may be divulged to Mr. Westwood) but just with
Subscriber No 3266.

And here is part of another letter received some time ago

I do not know what your experience tells you. You have been in frequent and fairly regular contact with a great number of homosexuals. Would you say that it is true that homosexuals are, by and large, childish and irresponsible and unstable in their emotional relationships? My feeling is that this is probably true. In Switzerland homosexuals do possess a considerable degree of freedom. How do the homosexuals utilize their freedom? Do they make good use of it?

Perhaps it is true that we are all neurotics. We can see it in others of our kind but like to pretend that when it comes to ourselves, it is not true.

I am still unconvinced that it is always possible or desirable, even, to turn a homosexual into a heterosexual. But I feel fairly sure that it may be possible to reduce a severely neurotic condition to a mildly neurotic one without necessarily changing the individual into a heterosexual. —

What I find objectionable and highly undesirable in most homosexuals is their childishness and irresponsibility and instability in their personal relations. I think more and more that it is a double-barreled problem, on one hand we must try and get society to accept homosexuals,

but just as importantly it is our job to help make homosexuals socially acceptable. In too many cases they simply aren't. Because of this childishness and irresponsibility and instability.

Well, I suppose all this is fairly obvious, really.

I still think that the defect in many writers on the subject is the failure to distinguish between degrees of neuroticism. If one can reduce a severely neurotic condition to a mild one one has accomplished a great deal. Also some homosexuals are clearly much more neurotic than others. The argument as to whether or not a homosexual is neurotic or the picture of psychological health is a foolish and profitless one it seems to me. I think it is nonsense when homosexuals insist that there is nothing wrong with them, that they have perfect emotional health. It is just as nonsensical when analysts and psychiatrists make them out to be cancerous. Most of the answers lie somewhere in between.

If therapy can develop a confused and emotionally undeveloped homosexual into becoming stable and responsible and reliable in his relationships then I'm all for therapy. For the good of the individual and for the good of society and for the good of the entire homosexual minority. But I would never recommend a therapist such as Bergler.

And I believe that a great many homosexuals are understandably afraid of therapy because the therapist might turn out to be a Bergler.

(Do you agree with the statements of this letter? If not let me know your own opinion. The English Editor.)

SEAN

For more years than I can remember I have been fascinated by the shape of the back of young men's heads (said Joe from his corner in the Club).

There is something about that delicious curve which to me is far more seductive than the more ordinarily accepted roundness of the lower part of the male anatomy. But it must, of course, be exactly right in its formation; no squared-up Teutonic type or round dome of the Far East will do.

And I never saw this shape in such perfection as in the case of Sean.

I was in Dublin and felt like a drink before dinner after a somewhat strenuous day's work so I popped into a bar which was only mildly gay before going back to my hotel.

And even before I asked for my drink I saw it — the perfect back-of-head. Curving incredibly downwards and inwards to the neatest of necks in a line which can only be found in the nicest and naughtiest of Greek sculpture, this fabulous head (which on the other side was absorbing Guinness and reading a book!) was covered with tightly curling black hair.

So there sat this head (the rest of the body had no significance to me — then) and for the time being there seemed little point in doing anything but just to sit in silent admiration and gaze my fill.