

No to Sexophobia

Why the sudden concern about tearoom sex at the University of Minnesota? Why is a police-gay "coalition" being formed to address this concern? Organizers give these reasons:

- Three men have been "raped" in tearooms. One of these was an "incest survivor" who was dragged into a stall and raped.

- U of M police have received numerous and "vehement" complaints (from antihomosexual patrons) about the scene.

- U of M police threatened "mass arrests." The gay-police "coalition," spearheaded by the "GLBT" Programs Office at the U, is presented as a way of avoiding "mass arrests."

These reasons require clarification and explanation. Hopefully that will happen tonight. However, we must voice concern, and doubts about the arguments offered.

- If the police threatened "mass arrests," why was the response of the "GLBT" office to cooperate with the police rather than protest police sexophobia and overreaction? The very idea of "mass arrests" in the tearooms is ludicrous. Would the cops arrest *everybody*? Is there a conflict of interest in a group that is funded by the U cooperating with U cops rather than protesting police threats? The proper response would be to let the cops know that we will not tolerate efforts to further restrict space for gay men in an increasingly sexophobic society.

- Normally the tearoom scene is quite discreet (semiprivate activity occurring in a public space). Whatever scene may have been going on when a newcomer or nonparticipant enters is suspended till that person leaves—or joins in. If tearoom etiquette has not always been observed by U of M tearoom queens, thereby offending straight urinators, they should get their act together, but that would not justify allegedly "vehement" complaints from antigay sexophobes to the police—or automatic acceptance of police assertions. Studies show that complaints about tearoom scenes are rare (Laud Humphreys, *Tearoom Trade*, p. 87). Let the straights get a life.

- "Rape" has never been part of the tearoom scene. Use of the word "rape" or "assault" to describe anything going on in tearooms sounds like imposition of alien templates on gay male reality. If in fact anything nonconsensual has gone on in U of M tearooms, then it is gay men who have been the victims of it. If guys who went in to piss have in fact been coerced into anything, they should report it and the "coalition" should circulate a description of the perpetrator(s) to alert the queens to the dangers. Are charges of "rape" being used to whip up hysteria against a subset of gay and closeted men?

- Gay men have been the main victims of a vicious antisex crusade since the late 1970s. Many assimilationist gay men and lesbians, as well as many feminists and other p.c. types, have grotesquely joined with the right wing in this assault on gay male sexuality. (Since 1980, for example, the National Organization for Women has officially condemned pornography, pederasty, public sex, and sadomasochism.) The gay movement has also lost thousands of creative men to AIDS, and many male survivors are demoralized and frightened.

As presented thus far, the "GLBT"-police "coalition" is highly ambiguous, to say the least. Instead of working with police to restrict gay space, we should be defending homosexuality in the face of a prudish, sexophobic campaign to portray gay male sexuality as evil, dangerous, and out of control.

Dean Amundson
Cormac Brissett

Dallas Drake
Robert Halfhill

Don Perry
David Thorstad

Philip Willkie
ACT-UP/Gay Liberation Front/Minnesota