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# On Lesbian/Gay Liberation

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**Lesbian/gay movements have grown considerably in numbers and spread to every continent since the late 1960s. They have managed to win significant reforms in some countries while many other movements have been on the defensive. Since the 1980s lesbian/gay movements have emerged in many Asian, African and Eastern European countries where they did not exist before; regained strength in key Latin American countries (Mexico, Brazil, Argentina) where they had experienced setbacks; and on several occasions mobilized hundreds of thousands of people in Western Europe and North America.**

The key lessons that we have learned during our participation in these movements and that are expressed in this text are:

**1** The oppression faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) people is a reality in all countries of the world. The association of HIV with homosexuality has led to global stigmatization of sex between men and of sexual acts outside the monogamous heterosexual family. Sexuality in general is a political issue.

**2** The link between the oppression of LGBT people and women's oppression is key to our understanding and the struggles for liberation are consequently closely linked.

**3** We defend the necessity of autonomous movements of LGBT people, understanding that oppression cannot be overcome without self-organization.

**4** We fight for an understanding of the link between the lesbian/gay struggle and the workers' movement, while avoiding subordinating the lesbian/gay struggle to some other movement.

**5** We fight for an internationalist approach to this question. LGBT people are oppressed everywhere, albeit in different ways. The movement needs to organize internationally and in solidarity with the most oppressed.

**6** In order to carry out these tasks we have to put our own house - the revolutionary left - in order. This requires changing our organizations in many ways.

[<https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/47udf.jpg>]

Lesbian/gay leftists' fight for understanding and support in the workers' movement has been a long, hard one. They have had to contend with opposition and prejudice from every current of the left, into the 1970s and beyond. Social-democratic parties and labour movements for example have not in general responded well to issues of sexual freedom. But attempts to build links with the workers' movement have also led to successes, almost from the time of the lesbian/gay movement's birth at the end of the nineteenth century.

In the first decades of the twentieth century the demands of the German Scientific- Humanitarian Committee (founded in 1897) and other European 'sex reform' organizations were often supported by social democratic and communist parties, rarely by bourgeois parties, and by the Bolshevik government of Soviet Russia alone of the then existing governments. Even under the Bolsheviks support for sexual freedom could not be taken for granted, as can be seen from the works of Kollontai. The triumph of Stalinism in the Soviet Union led to the overturning of many gains for women's and sexual emancipation, and spread antigay prejudice among almost all Stalinist and Mao-Stalinist currents from the 1930s to the 1980s. But the emergence of the lesbian/gay liberation movement in the late 1960s

and early 1970s in Western Europe and North and Latin America coincided with a new rise of the radical and revolutionary left. Feminism and particularly socialist feminism were crucial to the rise of lesbian/gay liberation, in the context of a global challenge to society.

This text (i) defines the basis for revolutionary Marxists' support for lesbian/gay liberation; (ii) lays out the Fourth International's stands on some major issues; (iii) defines our tactics in building lesbian/gay movements; and (iv) suggests how lesbian/gay liberation can and should be reflected in our organizations' public profile and internal life.

# PART I - FUNDAMENTALS OF OPPRESSION

**1** Although degrees of persecution and toleration vary widely, nowhere in capitalist societies today is there complete equality or freedom for lesbians, gay males, bisexuals, or transgendered people [see the definition in point 18]. Heterosexism, the oppression that they are subjected to, is like sexism 'expressed in all spheres - from politics, employment, and education to the most intimate aspects of daily life', in the words of the resolution on women's liberation adopted by the Fourth International in 1979.

**2** Heterosexism is rooted in the heterosexual, patriarchal family institution characteristic of capitalism. The family is the 'primary socioeconomic institution for perpetuating the class divisions of society from one generation to the next', in the words of the 1979 resolution on women's liberation. In the form it has developed under capitalism, it 'provides the most inexpensive and ideologically acceptable mechanism for reproducing human labour' - by using unpaid, largely female labour to care for the young and old as well as working-age adults - and 'reproduces within itself the hierarchical, authoritarian relationships necessary to the maintenance of class society as a whole'. This family form is particularly oppressive to women and children. Central to the relationships that the family reproduces more or less adequately in capitalist society from generation to generation are monogamous, heterosexual love, which is ultimately supposed to be the basis of marriage and the creation of new families, and parental love, which is supposed to bind adults to their biological children in a connection combining affection, responsibility and authority. The state and medical and psychiatric establishments are structured so as to promote stable, procreative heterosexuality, and to stigmatize, discourage or even suppress other forms of sexuality, often defined as abnormal, pathological or irresponsible.

As long as society is organized in a way which assumes that many basic needs will be met within the family, all those who are marginalized from it or choose not to live in it will have difficulty in meeting their needs. This family form under capitalism presupposes and reproduces a heterosexual norm, which pervades the state and society and is oppressive to anyone who deviates from it. As long as heterosexual love is the basis for forming a family, people whose emotional and sexual lives revolve largely around same-sex love are marginalized from family life. As long as the family is a central place where children are raised, lesbian/gay/ bisexual/transgendered (LGBT) children will grow up alienated - even more than children and young people in general are alienated in the family; and children's access to adults, especially unmarried adults, and other children to whom they are not biologically related will often be limited. As long as only heterosexual desire and romance permeate capitalist consumer culture, LGBT people will feel invisible. As long as heterosexuality is defined as the norm by the state and medical and psychiatric establishments, LGBT people will be explicitly or implicitly discriminated against and marginalized. Repressive laws and widespread social discrimination intensify this oppression in most parts of the world, but repealing repressive laws and combating social discrimination will not by themselves eliminate it.

**3** For millions of people around the world today, particularly but far from exclusively in dependent countries, same-sex eroticism can only be lived out episodically, in the margins of their family lives, often concealed from parents they still live with or spouses of the other sex. Millions of women marry in order to survive, given the extremely limited social and economic options available to them; these pressures also operate to a lesser extent on

men. For many thousands of men and women, failure to conform to the heterosexual norm goes together with blatant failure to conform to norms of masculinity and femininity, which makes playing heterosexual roles difficult or impossible. Thousands of transgendered people unable or unwilling to fit into socially recognized families, unable or unwilling to live as 'proper men' or 'proper women', are banished to the furthest reaches of the labour market and of society, often supporting themselves in the sex trade or other stigmatized occupations, faced with general contempt and even violent attacks. Many LGBT people around the world contend with repression as a daily reality: prison, rape, torture and murder.

**4** Heterosexism takes on specific and sometimes particularly virulent forms in dependent countries. European conquerors from the sixteenth through the twentieth centuries often used rooting out 'sodomy' as an ideological justification for conquering and ruling other peoples. Many countries that are now formally or politically independent still have laws against homosexuality that were imposed by former colonial rulers.

Maintenance of oppressive laws, policies and customs is often defended on the basis of religion - in dependent as in imperialist countries - including Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism, and perpetuated through legally established religious or communal jurisdiction over family and personal life in countries where separation of religion and state has not been won. Often the religious right and fundamentalists argue that the 'moral' code they defend is a deep part of the traditional fabric of the society in which they organize.

Often in fact many of the most reactionary practices they follow, particularly those directed against women and against sexual 'deviance', do not have such roots but are thoroughly modern as well as thoroughly reactionary. A second crucial ideological myth is the idea that homosexuality in these societies is another negative legacy of imperialism. While arguing for a materialist understanding of the rise of mass lesbian and gay identities in the context they are held today as a product of industrialization and urbanization, we also promote an understanding of the history of same-sex relationships of different types within traditional cultures.

The absence or underdevelopment of welfare states and low wage levels in the dependent countries reinforce dependence on traditional families. Particularly in rural areas, the lack of non-traditional social or political organizations or cultural alternatives make nonconformity difficult. People in dependent countries are also particularly vulnerable to the most exploitative forms of the domestic sex trade and international sex tourism. The Fourth International sees LGBT organizing in such conditions as an important part of an overall project of national liberation, which necessarily involves challenging national and religious power structures as well as imperialism. Open LGBT participation in mass democratic upsurges in several Latin American, Southern African and Southeast Asian countries have shown how lesbian/gay liberation and national liberation can go together.

**5** Only substantially higher wages and the development of welfare states in the course of the twentieth century have made it possible for working class people on a mass scale to live independently of the families they were born in without marrying and founding new ones; to sustain long-term, primary emotional and sexual partnerships with people of the same sex; and to join and identify with open, enduring lesbian and gay male communities. At the same time, heterosexual marriage has increasingly come to be based on sexual attraction and romantic love, although there are still strong material pressures to marry, and arranged marriages are still the norm in many countries.

Particularly in the imperialist countries and particularly among men, gay lives are lived to some extent in the commercial scene that is capitalism's way of responding to LGBT people's needs for places to meet and socialize. Where the commercial scene has expanded and room for LGBT people to live freely in the surrounding society has remained limited, the result is contradictory. It is a step forward that LGBT people have the possibility of being open about their sexuality in this context - but not acceptable that this is not the case in the broader society. The existence of the scene has in many cases given the impetus for the lesbian/gay movement to develop.

There is a further issue in that the scene itself is very limited in the way it permits people to relate, even though it has become more diverse as it has expanded. In general it remains male-dominated, and perpetuates images of sexual attractiveness that are ageist and racist - in short it projects sex as a commodity and does not provide an environment in which people can relate very easily as full human beings. Informal networks, clubs, community centres and activist groups that are the result of LGBT self-organization provide some alternatives to the alienation of the commercial scene, but often lack the visibility, glitz and resources that the commercial scene has.

Lesbian/gay communities, which include all women and men of all classes who identify as lesbian or gay, along with the identities and subcultures that have grown up within them, have been the basis on which lesbian/gay movements have arisen. Much of the lesbian/gay subculture has been attacked on the basis that it is very alienated, but when this criticism comes from the media or the right it ignores the fact that all sexuality is increasingly presented as a commodity under capitalism.

Lesbian/gay movements have mostly been directed against specific laws or policies repressing same-sex sexuality or LGBT people; towards laws that would ban various forms of social discrimination; and towards laws granting same-sex relationships equal recognition and treatment under existing laws and policies.

**6** Since the 1970s young people's relationship to their sexuality has changed in many countries, in contradictory ways. Youth sexuality has become less of an absolute taboo; young people's bodies and sexuality have become more visible in the media, and commercial publicity increasingly uses and abuses them to sell products. The setbacks caused by AIDS and the rise of a new moralism have not stopped this trend.

But young people's sexuality is still repressed, particularly young women's and young LGBTs' sexuality. Children and teenagers are still pressured at home and in school to conform to approved gender roles; prejudice, being ashamed of their bodies, and fear of transgression are essential parts of the lesson that is taught.

And as much or more than ever, young people lack the material conditions to live their sexuality freely. Young people's economic dependence on their families has increased with attacks on social programmes. Lesbian/ gay gathering places are often strictly commercial, thus excluding many young people who have little money. There are also still limits on young people's access to information about sexuality and to their access to contraceptives and information about them.

Lack of access to condoms and to information about sexuality is a particular issue in terms of the transmission of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. While images of homosexuality are more common in the media in many countries, the images are often distorted or stereotyped. While young people are often more open-minded and less homophobic than in earlier generations, coming out is still a painful process for many young people even in ostensibly tolerant cultures, as is shown in the very high suicide rates among young lesbians and gay men.

**7** "Today", the resolution on women's liberation noted over twenty years ago, "faced with deepening economic problems, the ruling class is slashing social expenditures and trying to shift the burden back onto the individual family". The intervening decades have only made the situation worse. Together with stagnant or declining wages and growing unemployment, these cutbacks threaten basic prerequisites, in terms of housing, health care, child care and other forms of social support, for LGBT people to live decently apart from heterosexual families and to sustain their communities. The effects have been particularly devastating for newly emergent communities in dependent countries, as seen particularly since 1982 in Latin America and since 1997 in Southeast and East Asia, and tend to reinforce pro-family ideology. Where lesbian/gay movements exist, they should participate openly in fight-backs against capitalist austerity; in any case, such fight-backs should take up the specific demands of LGBT people for specific services or their inclusion in the existing ones.

The movement for a different globalization that has grown up from Seattle to Porto Alegre is joining together many fight-backs against capitalist austerity, making them broader, more participatory and more democratic, and providing a new opportunity to recompose the left and internationalize struggles.

It confronts all progressive social movements, including LGBT movements, with the need to go in new directions and redefine themselves socially and politically. The inclusive, participatory spaces opened up by the evolution of the World Social Forum into continental and national social forums give LGBT movements a chance to look for new allies, point out the importance of LGBT issues to movements like the workers' movement that have often neglected them, and integrate other radical social demands into LGBT movements' own programmes.

In a time when 'LGBT markets' are putting new normalizing and divisive pressures on LGBT communities, and when most LGBT political currents internationally have focussed increasingly on institutional and lobbying work, it is essential that LGBT movements be part of the wider social debate and contribute to mobilizations against neo-liberal globalization.

They must introduce LGBT perspectives into different struggles for political, social and economical change, rejecting pressures to postpone specific LGBT struggles in the name of any 'structural issue'. No structural change will be complete if the structures of sexual oppression, which affect all human beings, are left untouched.

## PART II - OUR STANDPOINTS

**8** Beginning with the radicalization of the late 1960s, activists have called for going beyond struggles for lesbian/ gay rights in order to demand full lesbian/gay liberation, which implies a withering away of the capitalist family as an institution and challenging the heterosexual norm imposed by the capitalist state. Although this call has become less prominent in the movements since the 1980s, the Fourth International sees complete equality and freedom for both women and LGBT people as requiring socializing the functions of the family, which can be fully achieved only with the overthrow of capitalism. In supporting struggles for lesbian/gay rights we seek to build bridges between current demands and the ultimate goal of lesbian/ gay liberation, which we see as linked to the ultimate goal of socialist revolution.

As we deepen our vision of the socialist society we are fighting for, we will strive to integrate the vision of lesbian/gay liberation with it. In opposing oppressive, limited conceptions of masculinity, femininity and sexuality, we work towards a society in which gender will no longer be a central category for the organization of social life, and in which the concepts of 'heterosexuality' and 'homosexuality', to the extent they exist, will not have any legal or economic consequences. We work towards a socialization of the different functions currently served by the family: diverse forms of collective, community responsibility for care of children and the infirm; an economy which does not force people to migrate from their local communities; diverse forms of households and of cooperation within local communities; and diverse forms of friendship, solidarity and sexual relations.

**9** In most cultures sexuality and sexual activity are still aspects of our being as humans which are treated as dangerous or as the 'property' of the society, not the individual. But revolutionary advances in reproductive technology in the 1950s and 1960s contributed greatly to the emergence of aspirations for sexual liberation and further separated sexuality from reproduction. A cultural radicalization emerged in the 1950s and 1960s among young people and students in the imperialist countries which began to challenge, among other things, the traditional classification of gender. These new challenges to the traditional culture included new approaches to sex.

The struggles for abortion rights and accessible birth control, like the struggle for lesbian/gay rights, directly

challenged the traditional notion that equated acceptable sex with reproduction, marriage and the family. New perspectives on sex and sexuality promoted a new valorisation of sexual pleasure in general, but especially for women. When the women's movement advanced demands for women's sexual health and information, it did so with the fundamental idea that women are sexual beings, and have the right to the sexual pleasure and control of their sexual relationships men have historically enjoyed. One of the main messages promoted in this struggle for women's sexual autonomy was that there was no one right way to sexual enjoyment, but in fact there were a plurality of possibilities.

Lesbian/gay liberation is part of a broader, human sexual liberation we are fighting for. We seek to free human sexuality from what the 1979 resolution on women's liberation called 'the framework of economic compulsion, personal dependence, and sexual repression' in which it is now too often confined. Sexual activity that is freely consented and pleasurable to all those taking part in it is its own sufficient justification. We work towards a society in which our bodies, desires and emotions are no longer things to be bought and sold, in which the range of choices for all people - as women, men, sexual beings, young people, old people - is greatly expanded, and people can develop new ways to relate sexually, live, work and raise children together. It is impossible for us, who have been formed by the alienated society in which we live, to envisage how sexuality will develop in this context, and therefore it is important to avoid making predictions based on our own individual aspirations.

**10** The first battles that gays and lesbians fought and are fighting, which have often provided the impetus for the formation of politically active lesbian/ gay movements, are actions against the criminalization of homosexuality. The 1969 Stonewall rebellion in New York, a reference point for the whole Western lesbian/ gay movement, consisted of physical resistance to police raids on bars where lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered people went to meet each other. Today there are still many countries where homosexuality is forbidden by law. In the Middle East, Africa and Asia, countries that do not forbid homosexuality are more the exception than the rule. Several states in the US forbid heterosexual as well as same-sex anal and oral sex; other US states forbid only same-sex anal and oral sex. Many other countries, including many Latin American and European countries, do not explicitly ban homosexuality but use terms like 'public scandal' as a basis for imprisoning people, or have laws against 'promoting homosexuality' or 'soliciting homosexual contacts'. The vaguest concept in laws that are used to criminalize LGBTs is 'indecenty': experience shows that judges see 'indecenty' more often between people of the same sex than between people of different sexes. We support the demand for repeal of all such anti-gay laws and the discriminatory policing policies and practices that accompany them.

Even when the initial battle for legalization of homosexuality has been won, other discriminatory criminal laws often still need to be challenged. Many countries have enacted special laws to 'protect' minors from homosexuality, for example. Starting from the dogma that young people can be 'influenced' and 'seduced' by homosexuals, they established a higher legal age of consent for same-sex contacts than for heterosexual contacts. In the European Union today, Austria, Britain and Ireland still have higher legal ages of consent for same-sex contacts. We support the lesbian/gay movement's demand that the age of consent for same-sex sex be lowered to the age of consent for heterosexual sex wherever this legal discrimination exists.

**11** Alongside the fight against criminalizing laws, many lesbian/gay movements in different countries are struggling for laws explicitly forbidding discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. South Africa occupies a striking place in an overview of countries: since the adoption of its new constitution, it is one of the few countries in the world (along with Ecuador and Fiji) to include protection from discrimination against sexual orientation in their constitutions. We support the battle for legal and constitutional bans on anti-gay discrimination.

The political importance of this struggle must not be underestimated. The battle to win legal protection against discrimination opens up major opportunities to challenge the second-class and marginal status of LGBT people. It makes the argument for equality in the most forceful way, because resistance to it has to be rooted in an attempt to justify discrimination. It also focuses campaigning on the political process.

While supporting and advocating such campaigns, socialists also understand that achieving legal protection will not itself remove discrimination and prejudice. These campaigns provide an opportunity to explain the social foundation of oppression and the need to change society, not just laws, to bring about such change. But there is a connection between changing law and challenging social attitudes. It is important to understand the impact of achieving legal protection and the consequent increase in LGBT people's confidence, with increasing openness about sexual issues, for example at work. This will have a significant impact over time in changing public prejudices and changing the perception of other issues of discrimination against LGBTs. There also appears to be a clear connection between the existence of strong women's movements, rights won by women, and equal rights for LGBTs.

When legal change is secured, it is then necessary to campaign for effective implementation. This can be done by monitoring the effectiveness of the law, and focussing campaigns on areas of resistance which are identified.

**12** One of the key areas where progress in achieving lesbian/gay rights has been made, and a vital arena for revolutionaries, has been the struggle to secure recognition that lesbian/gay equality is an issue for the labour movement, in particular the trade unions. The campaigns of the lesbian/gay movements have found their reflection in the trade unions. At different times and in various ways, lesbian/gay workers have organized to challenge their trade unions to recognize their specific demands, and have now secured a place on the agenda of the most progressive unions. Two related sets of demands have been most significant: winning union recognition for lesbian/gay rights at work; and securing union recognition of the right for lesbian/gay workers to have their own structures (self-organization) within the union. Success in the second has often been necessary before real progress can be made with the first. Alliances have often been made with other workers whose needs have been traditionally ignored by reformist leaderships: women, the disabled, and minority communities.

The struggle has particular importance for revolutionaries, in that it challenges the divide between 'economic and political issues', and can 'help the working class to think in broad social terms' (1979 resolution). The demand for the right to self-organization has often been resisted by both the right and the reformist left on the grounds that it divides the movement. We should be arguing that on the contrary, it is the exclusion and marginalization of lesbian/gay workers which causes the division, and that recognition of self organization is an essential step towards the integration of all sections of the members.

The particular demands for rights at work will vary according to the country, the legal status of homosexuality, and conditions in each particular industry. Some of the main demands are likely to be:

- protection against unfair dismissal, discriminatory recruitment, failure to promote etc;
- protection against harassment by management or fellow workers on grounds of sexuality;
- access to benefits provided for heterosexual workers, for example, partnership leave and concessions granted to workers' partners such as travel in the transport industries;
- equal access to benefits such as pension and insurance schemes;
- recognition that lesbians and gay men may also have childcare responsibilities.

It will also be necessary to link such demands with the demand that the union give its active support to the struggle for lesbian/gay equal rights in society more broadly. This means, for example, having the union mobilize in support of lesbian/gay rights campaigns, and support activities of the lesbian/gay community such as Pride Marches.

An essential part of the struggle is to move beyond the acceptance of a self-organized structure, to the integration of these demands into the concerns of the union as a whole. This will require long-term and consistent work to transform the dominant cultures of many unions, and usually will only succeed by securing firm allies for this process among other groups of workers.

We must also remain alert to the permanent possibility that the winning of such demands, which of themselves are not revolutionary, can be accomplished within a reformist framework. The most conscious union leaders have often managed to accept integration but in reality to co-opt or disarm, or manage to establish a bureaucratic stranglehold. The remedy for this is to press uncompromisingly for the union to take an active campaigning role on lesbian/gay rights issues, which will keep it engaged in mass activity, and to continue to encourage lesbian/gay workers to mobilize to advance their own demands, not allowing 'friendly' bureaucracies to take over, and using success in one as a stepping stone to the next.

**13** In opposition to the growing chorus of voices calling for young people's protection from the dangers of sex and from sexual images and information, we believe that more information and autonomy, not less, are the best tools to 'protect' young people. They are indispensable to young people's sexual liberation, consciousness and free choice. They can also help young LGBTs to find the sexual identity and way of life that suits them best, and to resist pressure to conform to existing lesbian/gay lifestyles. Sexual education at school that fully includes same-sex options, with an emphasis on pleasure and diversity; reinforcement rather than destruction of welfare programmes; free access to contraception; and conditions for the economic emancipation of youth - these are all immediate demands that must be made on the state, in both imperialist and dependent countries. At the same time that we demand an equal age of consent for same-sex and different-sex sex, we oppose any repression of consenting sexual exploration among young people of approximately the same age.

**14** Immigrants and black people need to be welcomed and included in lesbian/gay organizations in imperialist countries. This will require a conscious fight against racism in these organizations. In addition we support black and immigrant LGBTs' own, autonomous self-organization within minority communities characterized by particular, multiple forms of oppression and discrimination. We will permanently seek alliances with them without seeking to impose a model of emancipation on them. We will oppose the use of the issue of lesbian/gay rights to stigmatize Muslim immigrants in the context of the 'war on terrorism', emphasizing the rise of self-organization among LGBTs of Muslim origin and the indigenous homoerotic traditions of the Islamic world.

The existence of links between LGBT immigrant groups and their members' countries of origin (through Internet, visits, etc.) has also made possible concrete, international solidarity actions, and can sometimes facilitate the creation of LGBT groups in dependent countries.

**15** The mid-1970s saw the rise in much of the developed world, particularly in the US, of a right-wing backlash directed against the gains of the women's movement, as well as the lesbian/gay movement. Extremely conservative, well-financed and strongly militant religious organizations have developed political agendas against sexual issues affecting women, the gay and lesbian community, and youth. Many of these rightwing organizations and their sympathizers have also made LGBT people targets of physical intimidation and, in some cases, extreme violence, often instigated by a vicious, homophobic rhetoric of hate. The strength of this rightwing backlash, which has since extended its influence to much of the underdeveloped world as well, against the gains of the social movements of the 1960s must not be underestimated. More recently in some countries of imperialist Europe, parties of the populist or neo-liberal right have attacked immigrant communities on the grounds of their oppression of women and gays, which is supposedly contrary to 'Western values'.

Along with their strong condemnation of racism and xenophobia, anti-fascist movements must also vehemently denounce and militantly organize against the anti-gay violence that is present in society. We support LGBT

self-defence against the violence of the organized right or unorganized bigots.

Similarly, lesbian/gay movements must seek allies in other sectors of society attacked by the far right, such as immigrants, youth, people of colour, Jews and the political left, in order to more effectively fight the common enemy, the religious right and fascism. At the same time lesbian/gay movements must expose the hypocrisy and contradictions of the neo-liberal and populist right. In challenging the political power and anti-gay campaigns of the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches and Protestant evangelical groups, as well as Islamic, Hindu and Jewish fundamentalists, lesbian/gay movements should ally with others to fight for complete separation of religion and state.

Particularly in countries where LGBTs are harshly repressed, making links with general human rights organizations and raising LGBT issues inside them can be a useful way to begin lesbian/gay organizing. Given the level of repression LGBTs face in many countries, we support the right of asylum for LGBTs from countries of origin where LGBTs are persecuted, threatened or simply cannot live because of their sexual orientation.

**16** Since AIDS was first identified among gay men in the USA in 1981, the association of HIV has led to global stigmatization of sex between men, and a repathologizing of homosexuality. Lesbian/gay activists have sometimes dropped other lesbian/gay political work in face of the urgency of the epidemic or succumbed to pressures towards institutionalization or professionalization. But also the necessary responses to HIV in many countries have allowed a new social and political space, which has been expressed in particular by a challenge to the power of the medical establishment, a questioning of the way the authorities fulfil their responsibilities with regard to public health and the demand that people with AIDS themselves exercise control over public health measures. This also makes possible increased resources for the development of gay organizations and more open public discussion of sexuality and sexual practices. In many countries a new generation of lesbian/gay activists, both in terms of their age and their process of radicalization, have taken leadership in AIDS advocacy, education and service organizations while gay communities have borne heavy loads of care-giving and grieving. The experience of gay activism has often been channelled into the leadership of the peer organizations of people with HIV, and lesbian and gay organizations have found themselves in activist alliances with drug injectors and people who make their living in the sex trade.

AIDS is now the fourth leading cause of death in the world; in Africa it is the leading cause of death. In the African and Asian countries where the AIDS epidemic is the most intense, unprotected heterosexual sex, not unprotected sex between men, is responsible for the greatest majority of infections. Yet in Southern and Western Africa, in Latin America and in Southern Asia, gay communities are experiencing very high levels of infection, illness and mortality.

The global fight against HIV requires the linkage of several dynamics of struggle:

- against stigma, discrimination and isolation
  
- against heterosexism and sexism
  
- against racism and imperialism
  
- for democratic rights and the right of oppressed groups to organize autonomously
  
- against censorship and religious control of education, welfare and health services
  
- for the defeat of the 'war on drugs'

– for free and effective health care

– against the super-profits of the international pharmaceutical companies.

In particular we stand in solidarity with those who are battling against drug companies who are barring access to drugs in the Third World at more affordable prices. The success of the campaign against the pharmaceutical companies in South Africa has many important implications. The battle brought together AIDS activists, trade unionists and anti-globalization activists in a broad and successful alliance. Most of those involved, notably COSATU and the Treatment Action Campaign, have subsequently recognized that the battle now needs to be joined on two new fronts: (1) to demand that the South African government - and also the employers - provide drugs; and (2) to build opposition to the US government's actions in taking Brazil to the WTO over the question of generics.

All this has meant that the fight against HIV has become integrated in the minds of millions with the fight against globalization.

In addition to the intrinsic, human importance and urgency of the struggle against AIDS, doing AIDS work among men who have sex with men can be a useful way to begin work for lesbian/gay liberation in countries that do not yet have lesbian/gay organizations.

**17** In countries around the world there are growing demands for the legal recognition of same-sex relationships. The Fourth International's starting point on this issue is equal rights - for women and men, for married and unmarried people, for LGBT people with heterosexuals. Currently people acquire a number of rights by marrying - and some of these rights devolve only or primarily to men. So we are for example in favour of the right of all people whatever their sexuality or partnership status to be able to adopt children or gain custody of children. All decisions about custody, access and adoption should be made in the real interests of the children involved rather than on the basis that a nuclear family, however violent or unpleasant, is always in their interests. Neither do we support the idea that children should be treated as the property of adults; children should be given a real voice in such decisions. We are also against tax laws that benefit people who are married or in long term sexual partnerships.

While fighting against those laws and regulations that privilege married people, we recognize that the demand for partnership rights and in some contexts for the right to marry is one that is mobilizing large numbers of LGBT people. This does not surprise us, both because discriminatory practices against unmarried people still exist and because we know that ideology has its own dynamic. In the alienated world of capitalist society marriage not only brings material benefits but promises emotional security (whether this is delivered or not in practice). We support the demand for fully equal same-sex marriage.

We also demand better legal rights for couples - same-sex or different-sex - who do not want to marry. Couples should be able to establish and secure recognition for mutual rights and responsibilities in a variety of ways, not just through the single model of marriage. Every option must be equally accessible for same-sex and different-sex couples.

For example, where existing law automatically recognizes a birth mother's husband as a parent or allows a birth mother's male partner to 'recognize' her child as his, a birth mother's same-sex partner must have those same rights. We also fight against differential waiting times for legal registration for same-sex partnerships and the denial of (or greater hurdles to obtain) residence permits to immigrant partners in same-sex couples.

It is also important to increase individuals' rights regardless of whether people are coupled or single. Women's individual rights in particular should not be dependent on their relationships with men. Real individual rights require

social support. Neo-liberal austerity policies have cut social support to ribbons, privatizing what should be social responsibilities and imposing them once more on the family. Governments prefer to make wives and husbands, parents and children care for the sick, old, young, disabled or unemployed rather than shouldering their rightful burden. Lesbian/gay movements should try to avoid trapping even more people in these humiliating forms of dependency. Instead they should try to ally with women's groups and trade unions to change this situation.

Current debates on same-sex partnership and marriage are an opportunity for revolutionary LGBTs to work together with currents in lesbian/gay movements that seek to resurrect the movement's original call for genuine liberation. Together we can work to undermine the perceived 'naturalness' of heterosexuality, challenge gender roles, and question whether authority over children and rights of inheritance should be based so much on biological parenthood. We will work to open a door through which new possibilities can be glimpsed: new kinds of social and emotional relations beyond alienation and dependency, new patterns of ones, twos and mores that could flourish in diversity and freedom.

**18** Transgender people - those who do not fit into the hegemonic two-gender system, including cross-dressers, drag kings and queens, transsexuals, people who do not identify with a gender, and many others whose identities are rooted in indigenous cultures - are often among the most oppressed people with same-sex sexualities. In fact many people, whatever their sexuality, are oppressed because they do not fully conform to gender norms; in particular, men who are seen as 'effeminate' sometimes experience forms of discrimination common to women. Transgender people also have a long history of fighting back against their oppression. 'Hijras' in Pakistan and 'waria' in Indonesia organized for their rights in the 1960s before European and North American lesbian/ gay liberation movements were founded. Puerto Rican 'drag queens' ('locas') were among the first to fight back against the police in the 1969 Stonewall Rebellion in New York. As movements for lesbian/gay rights have gained respectability and consolidated reformist perspectives, however, transgendered people have been excluded, ignored, marginalized and treated as an embarrassment. We support the efforts of transgendered people to resist their marginalization, organize themselves independently, and win full inclusion in lesbian/ gay movements.

Transgendered people have needs and demands of specific importance to them, which lesbian/gay movements should take up. They are often particularly likely to earn their living in the sex trade, be discriminated against when they look for other kinds of work, and be harassed and attacked by police and thugs. We defend their rights to respect, safety, and equal rights to housing and employment. They also suffer from the refusal of the authorities to recognize their gender identity in a very wide range of circumstances. While we recognize the need to classify people at times according to sex so that women can organize against their own oppression, we question the impulse to register people's sex routinely on every form and for every irrelevant purpose. We reject the forced subjection of transgendered people as well as of men and women in general to socially and biologically stereotyped categories of masculinity and femininity (manifest for example in school/job dress codes, mutilation of hermaphroditic babies, hormone treatments for teenagers with so-called 'gender-inappropriate behaviour', and formal lessons in sex-stereotyped behaviour for transsexuals). We defend the right of every person to fully develop her/his individual personality.

Transgender people should have the right to such medical care as they deem appropriate, including so-called 'sex reassignment surgeries', hormone treatments and psychotherapy. They should have the right to health insurance coverage for such treatment, and to obtain appropriate changes in their documentation with or without surgery.

**19** We conceive of lesbian/ gay movements as broadly inclusive movements bringing together all those who wish to live freely their same-sex sexualities and love. In different countries and cultures they may include people involved in a great variety of relationships and ways of life who may identify in any number of ways. We are opposed to any conception of lesbian/gay movements that limits or conditions participation in them according to some standard of exclusive homosexuality.

In many countries and cultures men in particular often have sexual contacts with other men while outwardly conforming to cultural expectations of masculinity, fulfilling the family roles expected of men, and not identifying publicly or even privately as gay or as bisexual. In AIDS organizing in some countries such men are identified simply as 'Men who have Sex with Men'. One issue in this situation that has led to much tension is when people who do not identify as LGBT but have same-sex relationships treat their same-sex partners with disrespect as a result of their internalization of heterosexism. An important first step towards sexual liberation in this situation is for such men - or women - to treat their sexual partners who do identify as lesbian, gay or transgendered with respect and solidarity. A further positive step is for such people to support or even join lesbian/gay movements, however they may define their sexual identities in the process.

In some countries and circumstances bisexuals or other sexual minorities may choose to organize themselves autonomously, either inside or outside lesbian/gay movements, either around issues of specific interest to them or around broader issues such as AIDS, violence or diversity. We support their right and respect their choice to do so, while continuing to work towards the broadest possible alliance of all the sexually oppressed.

Bisexuals can find themselves isolated inside heterosexual society as well as lesbian/gay communities. Their sexual orientation often permits them to go unnoticed or appear 'normal' to society in general, and for their same-sex sexuality not to be apparent or to be considered merely 'experimental'. It is a step forward when bisexuals try to break with this invisibility - to 'come out' as bisexual - and to have their sexual orientation recognized and accepted as a legitimate expression of the diversity that exists in lesbian/gay communities and in human sexuality. This view that coming out is a positive stance is the same that we take for lesbians and gay men. Tensions that exist in the movement between people with different sexual identities can best be overcome by the building of an inclusive movement and the fight against heterosexism.

**20** We support campaigns against psychiatric definitions of homosexuality and transgenderism as pathologies and against barbaric attempts to medicalize and 'cure' LGBT people (through psychotherapy, aversion therapy and psychosurgery).

**21** The ideological legacy of Stalinism, which recriminalized homosexuality in 1934 in the Soviet Union after the Bolshevik revolution had decriminalized it, is still reflected today in discrimination against LGBT people in China, Vietnam, Cuba and other transitional societies. While the worst persecution is in the past and tolerance has increased in recent years, full equality has still not been achieved. The Chinese regime has so far not permitted any open lesbian/ gay organizing.

The Fourth International supports organizing for lesbian/gay rights in China, Vietnam, Cuba and other transitional societies as we do everywhere. We hope to see lesbian/gay movements there ally with workers', women's and others' opposition to the bureaucratic regimes and grow into movements for socialist democracy. Alliances with feminists will be particularly important in challenging sexist and heterosexist ideologies and policies that rely on the family. This will be a utopia, however, unless democratic and feminist movements support lesbian/gay struggles and do internal work against anti-gay prejudice and unless gay movements do work against male chauvinism.

**22** As socialists our struggle against sexism must include the struggle to change the role that sex and sexuality play in our sexist culture, to struggle for a freer, more conscious sexuality. This requires us to adopt a more critical and transforming attitude toward our existing definitions of sexuality. The basic premise for doing this should be that our definitions of sex and sexuality, our gender identifications, our sexual identities as lesbian, gay, bisexual and heterosexual, are fundamentally social, historical-cultural and sometimes even political constructions, which are therefore changeable. Thus, people can and do misunderstand their own sexuality. False consciousness, alienation, internalization of relationships of oppression, normalization of sexist cultural forms and repressive guilt feelings are real obstacles in seeking to understand and redefine our sexuality. This is what makes wider debate and criticism,

not censorship, of the sexism in culture so vital in the struggle to understand and change that culture to benefit human sexuality. We support efforts to give LGBT people more means of cultural expression, including through the mass media.

A new sexuality, freed of sexism, can only emerge through a long process of open debate and exploration, above all within feminism. We have few guidelines or indicators of what the results will be. There is no enlightened vanguard or minority that can claim to know what the 'correct', 'feminist' sexuality is and we should reject any attempts either from the religious right-wing forces or the various tendencies within feminism, such as the difference feminists, to impose a 'correct' sexual line. In many parts of the world, these forces of religious fundamentalism and conservative feminism have sought to legislate sexual codes of conduct which include criminalization of homosexuality and censorship of sexually explicit materials. Revolutionary Marxists should propose instead a path towards sexual self-emancipation which is critical, but democratic, participatory and tolerant of the diversity of our sexual desires.

The first demand for opening the path to such a process of sexual self-emancipation is the defence of consensuality and self-autonomy. Thus, an intrinsic part of our struggle for sexual autonomy must also articulate a struggle against all legal restrictions on consensual sex and the struggle against all forms of sexual discrimination. It must also include the struggle to enhance material conditions that would make it possible for all members of society (women, as well as children and men) to resist the impositions of those who would violate their rights and their sexual autonomy through unwanted sexual and/or emotional relationships or encounters. Thus, the fundamental demands for full employment, affirmative action programs for women and minorities, guaranteed income, reliable and quality child care, housing, health services and reproductive rights including abortion are essential underpinnings for sexual self-autonomy. The need to combine the struggle for a freer sexuality with the struggle to defend the social safety net and full employment is the key to confronting the right-wing backlash against women and the gay and lesbian community.

## PART III - OUR TACTICS IN BUILDING THE MOVEMENT

[<https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/51lisb.jpg>]

**23** All LGBT people are oppressed as such, and can potentially be won to a movement for their rights and liberation. The logic of the lesbian/gay liberation struggle itself, particularly in times when feminism and other radical movements are on the rise, can lead activists in it to embrace radical or revolutionary politics. It can and should lead them to ally with the workers' movement - but for this to happen, LGBTs must organize themselves inside and outside the workers' movement to fight against heterosexist prejudices, which exist in the working class as elsewhere. Our sections as a whole must fight to win labour movement organizations to champion the demands of LGBT people and support self-organization for these groups - as well as others - within labour movement organizations.

At the same time LGBTs cannot and will not postpone their struggle until the workers' movement or any other movement takes up their issues. This means that LGBT people need their own autonomous movements, which we respect, support and build. To paraphrase the 1979 resolution on women's liberation, by autonomous we mean that the movement is organized and led by LGBT people; that it takes the fight for their rights and needs as its first priority, refusing to subordinate that fight to any other interests; and that it is not subordinate to the decisions or policy needs of any political tendency or any other social group.

**24** As the 1979 resolution on women's liberation noted, 'Lesbians have organized as a component of the gay rights movement, generally finding it necessary to fight within the gay movement for their specific demands as gay women to be recognized. But lesbians are also oppressed as women. Many radicalized as women first and felt the discrimination they suffered because of their sexual orientation was only one element of the social and economic

limitations women face in trying to determine the course of their lives.

Thus many lesbians were in the forefront of the feminist movement from the very beginning. They have been part of every political current within the women's liberation movement, from lesbian-separatists to revolutionary Marxists, and they have helped to make the entire movement more conscious of the specific ways in which gay women are oppressed.' This has not always been an easy battle as the women's movement has often responded in a problematic way to lesbian-baiting from the right and has failed to campaign systematically around lesbians' specific demands.

Lesbians have also organized in many countries independently of either gay men or the broader feminist movement. Independent lesbian organizing has been essential to making mobilizations possible on the basis of lesbian demands, and have been an important factor in bringing about change. As a result of the persistence of lesbians, today the lesbian/gay movement has become less male-dominated and feminists have a better understanding that lesbian oppression undercuts the gains of the women's movement.

**25** Within lesbian/gay movements as in other movements, we advocate methods that actively mobilize as many LGBT people as possible, and supporters in the workers' and women's movements. Here as in every other field of work we are engaged we are consistently fighting against ideologies, leaders and organizations which would take us down dead ends. We must respond again and again to arguments that we fundamentally disagree with, including:

- the argument that we should avoid being too 'blatant' or radical in order not to alienate the straight majority or 'sympathetic' liberals, social democrats or populists;
- a reluctance to join in broad campaigns around demands for limited reforms;
- the argument that 'lifestyle' issues - meaning issues of sexual liberation strictly speaking - are distractions from the crucial economic and political issues;
- in the imperialist countries, the argument that we are already 'almost equal' so that major mobilizations are no longer needed;
- a reluctance to look for alliances either with the workers' movement or with other self-organized groups;
- a vision of the existing social categories of gay and lesbian as something eternal, and on that basis of gays and lesbians as a permanent minority of the population. This fails to recognize that lesbian/gay liberation has a universal and common human implication;
- an insistence on organizing only as citizens, as sexual rebels or as abstract human beings - this fails to recognize the importance of LGBT communities for day-to-day survival and as bases for organizing; and
- a reluctance to confront the divisions within our own movements, for example on questions of gender, race or class.

We push for the greatest possible unity and democracy within the movements, while acknowledging the right and need of women, black people, people with disabilities, bisexuals, transgendered people, oppressed nationalities and others to organize independently as well. In general we try in the movements to advance the participation and interests of working-class LGBT people.

While building lesbian/gay movements and respecting their autonomy, we also work with others in the movement to advance the demands of the workers' movement and internationalist perspectives. We raise revolutionary Marxist and feminist ideas, since we think they provide the best basis for taking the movements towards full lesbian/ gay liberation, and in this context we aim to play a role in their leadership.

### **PART IV - PUBLIC PROFILE AND INTERNAL LIFE**

**26** The sections of the Fourth International must support the struggle for LGBT liberation whether or not an autonomous social movement organized around these issues exists in the country in which they operate. In countries where such a movement exists, the section should encourage and support its militants to participate in it, as well as fight in progressive movements generally for support for the demands of the lesbian/gay movement. In some countries, the sections of the Fourth International have contributed decisively to the appearance of lesbian/gay movements. The international should draw on the lessons of these successes to help sections where there is no tradition of such work. In countries where no autonomous movement currently exists, the work of the section will consist predominantly in generalized propaganda and in taking up specific LGBT demands broadly within progressive movements.

**27** In our revolutionary Marxist current, we have a conception of social and sexual liberation for LGBTs that goes beyond the limited demand of formal equality within capitalist society. We seek a profound revolution in gender relations and a society where, as heterosexual privilege begins to disappear, sexual identities are unlikely to be constructed in the same way as today.

The 'private' sphere - where women as well as LGBTs are more oppressed and where their oppression is more complex - is where we have to question our habits. That struggle is fundamentally an ideological one against patriarchal and heterosexist society, as well as their value systems and practices, which demands organized discussion in the sections, not only at the leadership level, but also in our base structures and cadre formation. Heterosexist prejudice must be fought in the sections by all their members.

In the words of the 1979 resolution on women's liberation, 'We have no illusions that sections can be islands of the future socialist society floating in a capitalist morass, or that individual comrades can fully escape the education and conditioning absorbed from the everyday effort to survive in class society... But it is a condition of membership in the Fourth International that the conduct of comrades and sections be in harmony with the principles on which we stand... We strive to create an organization in which language, jokes, personal violence and other acts expressing chauvinist bigotry are not tolerated'.

Prejudice, inside a revolutionary party, concerns all of its members. Often LGBT members - especially younger people - are not enough at ease to express their points of view or bring up their subjects as the other comrades are. The same happens between female and male comrades. It must be taken into account that self-esteem and self-confidence are factors at stake when mainstream education has taught people to be ashamed of who they are. Frequently a comrade might be a dedicated supporter of the organization's position on 'homosexuality' and yet, in his/her personal life or in the personal relations established in the party, might be extremely oppressive.

When this happens, it is not just a personal issue, but a concern for the party, and it must be openly and fully discussed. Some comrades - and even sections? - have very conservative positions on homosexuality. Beliefs which have become ingrained for many years can be very difficult to change. Many of the radical changes that LGBT movements propose are not generally accepted in society or even among revolutionaries, because they belong to that dimension we usually call 'private'.

But that is where changes begin: it is a necessary effort if we want to be recognized and take part in the LGBT movement, with all its subversive potential. And, as is said in the text on 'Sanction policies in a feminist party' approved by the 1989 congress of the Mexican PRT, 'this is not a matter of giving recipes or models for life. The search for new men and women is just that: a search. We know that our total liberation is not possible in the capitalist system, but precisely that is one of the contributions of our internationalist current, to recognize the necessity of struggling for change, starting today.' These changes cannot wait for socialism.

**28** Conditions must be created for the existence of LGBT work in our organizations, which allows LGBT members to prepare an organized intervention in the LGBT movements - where they exist - and to have their own discussion structures, whenever they feel they need them. We should look critically at the conditions we have to offer, in our own organizations, to LGBT militants. Sections must be welcoming for LGBTs, as well as able to support the affirmation of this area of political struggle.

Gay males, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered people are all oppressed by the heterosexism of patriarchal capitalist society. However, that oppression manifests itself and is experienced in different ways by each of these groups. While this means that within the autonomous movements themselves there will often be the need for separate groups for all or some of these groups, this is practically difficult to replicate on a permanently structured basis in most of our sections as long as we have not become at least small mass parties. We should therefore adopt structures and norms which allow for the ad hoc caucusing of these groups if and when the need arises, but give priority to the construction of LGBT caucuses as such.

**29** The European youth organizations are the sector of the FI in which lesbian/ gay issues have most regularly been a political concern although of course this remains uneven. One of the important elements encouraging this has been the visibility of the issue in the youth camps since the beginning in the early 1980s and the introduction of a lesbian/gay space from 1989 on. Not only has this put the question on the agenda for all the participants but it has provided an opportunity for young comrades from different organizations - where they can feel isolated given the small size of our youth organizations - to meet together and draw political and social encouragement from each other.

Campaigns against the sexual repression of youth should be a central feature of the activity of our youth organizations and present sexual orientation as a choice. Such propaganda or action campaigns should also challenge reigning sexual and gender roles.

While continuing to demand that the state fulfil its responsibility for sexual education and health care, they should help educate their members, to the extent possible, about contraception, sexual choice, gender, machismo and homophobia. Particularly at youth camps, schools and other activities of our organizations where participants may be sexually active, we have a responsibility to make sure condoms and information about sexual health are available in order to prevent unwanted pregnancies and the spread of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Demands around sexual education and health care can also be effective tools for mobilizing students and youth outside our ranks. Youth organizations' commitment to raising lesbian/gay issues as one of their focuses for political organizing is in fact essential, because it is among youth that we can find greater understanding of these difficult issues that mix the personal and political - this has been demonstrated in practice in countries where the Fourth International has organized lesbian/gay work.

**30** The heterosexuality of our members should not be assumed in our organizations' internal discussions. Doing so excludes other possibilities - just as heterosexist education does - and is equivalent to the 'invisibility' to which heterosexist, patriarchal society condemns the LGBT reality in many countries.

Most of the time LGBT members choose to do LGBT work because they personally feel the need of it. But joining an LGBT group is not the same as joining, for example, an anti-racist group. The intimate and political questions around sexuality involve particular difficulties of approach and must also be treated on a personal level. Often, taking on LGBT issues implies revealing something about our own intimate lives, a process which is sometimes not easy to face. So every member of the party must feel absolutely welcome to take part in LGBT work, without feeling that his/her sexual orientation is being judged and without being told that other areas 'are more important'.

**31** The sections of the FI must consciously fight to limit the extent to which the oppression of LGBT people in society is reproduced within our organizations. This does not only mean that jokes or sexist/heterosexist behaviours must be avoided. It also means creating conditions for LGBT members' full participation in the organization's life, both as revolutionaries and LGBT militants. For this to be possible, integrating LGBT issues in the political agenda is fundamental.

As said in the previously quoted text of the Mexican PRT, 'we, as women require a certain balance of forces so that the gender question can be present at all times.... For this to happen, we need ... to create discussion space for women where there is none, and where there is, we must strengthen it.' We think this also applies to LGBT comrades.

**32** In countries where the sections have organized LGBT groups, it is necessary that the whole organization have access to what they produce and discuss it. Systematic internal discussion around LGBT issues is a condition for collectivization of the theme, for changing discriminatory habits that may exist in our organizations, and even for helping LGBT comrades - especially those who are very active in the LGBT movement - to have a revolutionary perspective on LGBT issues.

It is necessary that the sections stimulate and are open to the organization of commissions and caucuses, as well as the formation of fractions around this issue. But more than just being prepared to discuss LGBT issues, every member of the sections must be willing to actively support LGBT actions and campaigns.

"As in every other question", in the words of the 1979 resolution on women's liberation, "the entire leadership and membership of the party must be knowledgeable about our work, collectively participate in determining our political line, and take responsibility for carrying out our campaigns and propaganda into all areas of the class struggle where we are active."

Lesbian/gay issues should be part of our discussions at the branch, regional, national and international levels. All our members should be educated about lesbian/gay liberation at our local, national and international schools. This also means that our organizations' press should cover and comment on the LGBT movement.

**33** LGBT issues must be integrated into the public statements of the sections and the daily intervention of their members. Members who are active in movements such as trade unions, antiracist movements, etc., must raise lesbian/gay demands in their political work. LGBT members of our sections should be encouraged to have an active and organized presence in the LGBT movement outside, in a revolutionary perspective.

Where it is possible depending on the political opportunities in each country, we try, as in other fields of work, to agree joint positions and carry out joint work with other left forces that are active on these issues. Since revolutionary militants are a minority inside the LGBT movement, contact with LGBT organizations - outside - is important even when the sections have no LGBT members involved in the movements.

One of the effects of oppression on LGBTs is that their personal capabilities are questioned because of their sexual

## On Lesbian/Gay Liberation

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orientation and not on the basis of an objective evaluation. Our organizations should take advantage of opportunities to have openly LGBT members speak in the organization's name on LGBT issues, and make participation in LGBT work, like participation in all forms of mass political work, one of the criteria for the election of LGBT comrades to their leaderships.

The same criterion should be taken into account when our organizations choose candidates for electoral campaigns; and they should try to run openly LGBT candidates as well. In addition, all our elected officials at every level must take up lesbian/gay demands within representative institutions and include them in their public statements. They must also relay the demands of lesbian/ gay movements and attempt to give the movements access to the political processes the bodies conduct.

**34** Often LGBT members of revolutionary organizations have difficulties in feeling integrated in our organizations as well as in the LGBT movement. On the one hand, being a LGBT militant necessarily means more than just concrete political activity: since LGBTs are a socially excluded group, LGBT communities, linked by the fact of oppression, have particular forms of socialization and resistance to heteroculture.

Thus, LGBT members, especially those active in LGBT movements, often tend to separate their political and social lives. It is not always understood in our organizations that LGBT members' activism may take this particular form. But in a community based upon common exclusion, that social and cultural life is an indispensable aspect of political work, as well as a personal need of LGBT militants.

On the other hand, being a revolutionary militant often means that people do not feel at home even in the LGBT 'scene'. LGBT comrades tend to live in two separate worlds, with different, often incompatible rules. Building links among LGBT comrades in different branches and in different sections, and encouraging the growth of LGBT activities, discussions and social gatherings inside our movement, are some of the best ways to fight against this 'risk of split personality' and to keep lesbian/gay activists in the International.

Efforts in these directions should be welcomed and supported in our organizations.

**VOTE: 95 - 0 - 1 - 0 CARRIED**