GenderServe Newsletter

Issue No. 5 Hamilton, Ontario Summer, 1988

Challenging Guelph Conference

The 10th Annual Guelph Conference on Sexuality was held in the University of Guelph, Ontario, June 13-15, with Dr. Ruth Westheimer as the keynote speaker. An audience of 700 enjoyed her speech In Search of Healthy Sexuality and were glad of the opportunity to see her in person, but she said nothing new that had not already appeared in her syndicated columns. In a sense, she was preaching to the converted.

The keynote address always opens the proceedings on the evening before full day sessions begin. On the mornings of Tuesday and Wednesday, June 14-15, the main conference began with plenary addresses. Dr. Edward Herold, the originator of the conferences, supported by Ms. Linda Shortt (Toronto East York Health Unit) and Dr. Steven Manning (Toronto AIDS Committee) spoke on The Impact of AIDS on Sexuality and Sex Education. The risk of contracting AIDS in a homosexual relationship is greater with anal sex. A dramatic decline has been observed in the number of sexual partners in the gay community as well as a drop in the frequency of one-night stands, but Dr. Herold expressed the fear that appeals to young people will not work. There is a risk that the AIDS scare may result in adolescent paranoia of sex as a result of abstinence teaching.

The Wednesday plenary session was addressed by Dr. James Nelson, an ordained Methodist minister on the faculty of the University of Minnesota on the topic Religion and Healthy Sexuality. With a tongue-in-cheek comment that religion "can be dangerous to your sexual health", Dr. Nelson proceeded to identify seven signs of a new approach to human sexuality in the churches today. He feels that these are exciting, hopeful signs as we shift from "act-centred ethics" to "relationship ethics". To this writer this was the highlight address of the conference. A fuller report of his speech has been prepared for publication and may be had on request to **GenderServe**, price $1.00, post free.

Sue Johanson, the Toronto Sex Educator and Counsellor gave an excellent presentation on Kids, Sex and Rock 'N' Roll.

A pre-conference Sexual Attitudes Re-assessment Weekend, conducted by Drs. John Lambert and Sheila Nicholson, proved to be a most stimulating experience. For some years this writer had wished to attend an SAR and the sessions were not disappointing. A few participants found the occasional session too challenging, but workers in the field of human sexuality are strongly urged to avail themselves of such a workshop.

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OUR EDITORIAL POLICY

From time to time **GenderServe** receives notices from organizations of doubtful repute. Such material will not be given space in our pages, although reference may be made to the activities of these groups. It is not present policy to include advertisements in our pages.

Our primary concern is the welfare of all those with gender identity confusion. Because these problems may arise from sexual orientation, **GenderServe Newsletter** will include notices of gay and lesbian activities where these may be of interest to our readers. The publication of such information does not necessarily signify that the activity has **GenderServe** support, but it does indicate that some of our readers may find relief in participation.

There are many similarities between the needs of the gender dysphoric community and those of gays and lesbians. Chief among these is acceptance and understanding. Our editorial policy will always be to support the best interests of both groups. On the other hand, **GenderServe** does not support activities of an erotic or pornographic nature. It is our belief that such material leads to gender confusion in many impressionable young people, especially those of the male genetic sex, and encourages unrealistic fantasies that are the downfall of many gender dysphoric persons.

The next issue of the **Newsletter** will be published towards the end of September.

Don't Eat Grapes?

The United Farm Workers of America are calling for a boycott of fresh table grapes from California. The purpose of this action is to force the banning of poisonous pesticides with which the fruit is sprayed. They state that "Many pesticides sprayed on grapes have an oil base and cannot be washed off by consumers." The pesticides involved are Captan, Parathion, Phosdrin, Dinoseb and Methyl Bromide. A well-publicized UFW/grower testing program for pesticide residues on grapes sold in the stores is advocated. Wines or raisins are **not** included in this boycott.

Thank You!

S. Ruben, the researcher at the University of Kansas, expresses thanks to several volunteers in Canada who took part in the project. (See March issue. p.4)

Burn Out! - M.M.R.F.

As indicated in Burn Out and the Gender Worker (Issue No. 4, May, 1988), Rupert Raj has announced the end of Metamorphosis Medical Research Foundation. On March 21 he submitted his resignation to the Board of Directors who voted to dissolve the corporation because "they did not have sufficient human resources to carry on" without him. These are the same circumstances that have led to the dissolution of FACT as a viable support organization. The moral is clear, as was stated in our last issue: "If people feel a real need for support, they must be

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BOOK REVIEW

The publication of **Deviance: Tolerable Differences** by Robert A. Stebbins, Professor in the Department of Sociology, University of Calgary, (McGraw-Hill Ryerson, Toronto).was announced in our last issue.

Dr. Stebbins has attempted a formidable task in reviewing a very broad field: gender identity (mistakenly referred to as "sex identities"), sex practices (sexual orientation and activities), alcohol, drugs, gambling, mental disorder, deviant lifestyles and deviant belief systems all come under his scrutiny.

To whom is this study addressed? In his preface, Stebbins states that the most publicized component of deviant behaviour is crime. This is intolerable deviance; the field of tolerable deviance has apparently been neglected by sociologists and Stebbins is attempting to fill the gap. Unfortunately, university authors tend to write for academic consumption; one suspects that this book is intended for undergraduate students in Sociology. The question must therefore be asked: "What attitudes will the student absorb from this book?" In this, Dr. Stebbins must surely be found wanting.

His field of endeavour is so large that he cannot be expert in every aspect that he has attempted. His opening chapters admirably set the sociological context, but he gets into trouble immediately afterwards. The relative importance of gender dysphoria syndrome when considered as a fraction of the whole population is very small, yet Stebbins plunges straight into this topic after establishing his terms of reference. From the beginning he confuses the issue by referring to deviant sex identities and promptly tackles transsexualism and transvestism. It is now generally accepted that the condition is one of confused gender identity and not of sex. The rational gender dysphoric (as opposed to the psychotic) knows perfectly well what his or her physical sex is even though s/he may fantasize and attempt to rationalize the condition. The transsexually-inclined patient wishes to change that sex because the gender does not agree with the sex. This reviewer has examined this subject at some length in **Gender Review** (September 1983) Gender or Sex Dysphoria? The transvestite does not wish to change sex, so his deviance is obviously one of gender and not sex. His gender identity may swing back and forth between two poles, but his sex remains male. Stebbins has fallen into the semantic trap of equating sex with gender.

Each chapter is rounded off with conclusions, notes, a list of suggested reading and full references. Some readers of this newsletter will throw up their hands in horror that books by Feinbloom and Raymond are included among the suggested reading on this particular subject and this reviewer is uncomfortable that immature undergraduates will read these as gospel truth, not

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CANADIAN GAY ARCHIVES

Book Review (cont. from p.3)
realising that Feinbloom's sample was skewed and that Raymond is a rabid feminist with an axe to grind. Admittedly, a list of references may be dated before a book leaves the printer and the daily press is a most unreliable source of correct information (as opposed to opinion); Stebbins' professional references on gender dysphoria syndrome are much out-of-date.

It is unfair to judge a book on one particular aspect, but it is Stebbins' third chapter which will be of most interest to readers of this newsletter. Perhaps his best chapter is that on Cannabis and Prescription Drugs.

In conclusion, it may be said that if, as appears probable, this is a pioneer work in this field, Stebbins has made a valiant attempt to raise our consciousness in a very broad field.

S.C.H.

(A more comprehensive review has been submitted to the **SIECCAN JOURNAL**.

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Burn Out - M.M.R.F. (from p.2)
prepared to share the work load". A tribute to **Rupert Raj** will be carried in the next issue of **GenderServe Newsletter**.

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FACT Clearing House

A lonely Afro-American, M, 35, confined in a State Prison, requests a pen-pal. Details from **GenderServe** (G29.002)

A SPECIAL COMMENDATION

Gender dysphoric persons, both those who see themselves as transvestite and those who are heterosexual and see themselves as transsexual, are urged to read the April issue of **OUR SORORITY**, a publication of The Outreach Institute, Attention: Our Sorority, P.O. Box 11254, Lincolnia Station, Alexandria, VA 22312.

The Editor of **GenderServe Newsletter** has not always seen eye to eye with Betty Ann Lind, the Editor of this publication, notably on the matter of transsexualism. However, in this issue of Our Sorority she has done a first-class job of interviewing the wives of cross-dressers and in presenting the views of wives and the attitude of the male cross-dresser. The issue contains a booklet compiled by a small group of partners of cross-dressers who met at **Fantasia Fair 1986** and it expresses the feelings and fears of wives and significant others. An added bonus is a set of suggestions by Niela Miller which both TVs and TSs might well use in breaking the news of their desires to family members.

This issue alone is well-worth a subscription of $5.00.

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TV/TS TAPESTRY

Subscribers will be sorry to hear that Merissa collapsed from exhaustion and pneumonia last January. See next issue.

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