

# We can't speak up for ourselves says transsexual Christine

LONDON: Transsexuals and transvestites cannot speak up for themselves in public or carry banners in demonstrations as their whole object in life is to merge into their chosen gender identity.

Leading a discussion with

Integroup, the Golders Green based gay-het integration group at the Unitarian Rooms on Thursday October 5, Christine, a transsexual, said that this was one of the reasons for general ignorance on the subject. It was, she said, obviously a myth that people cross-dressed to attract people of the same sex as the deception would be detected almost immediately.

The dividing line is blurred between transsexuals (people who believe that they are really of the sex opposite to their apparent one) and transvestites (those who like to cross-dress but would not want surgical treatment). A person, she said, might start as a TV and move to TS or vice versa.

Generally it was considered that there were five almost distinct divisions: the first the

fetishist, a person who was sexually motivated by certain items of clothing—like a man with women's knickers. The second were those who cross-dressed from time to time but did not make up the real manners and mannerisms of the chosen sex—the man in women's clothing who could still prop up a bar and down a pint. The third group she described as true transvestites—people who go as far as possible to produce an image of the opposite sex without any actual body changes. Then there is the non-surgical transsexual who may take hormones and former males may have their beards removed by electrolysis; they act and dress as a person of the opposite sex but do not wish for surgery. Christine made it clear that it was not possible to change sex surgically and the operation was cosmetic only. Men who had the operation to become women could not become pregnant and the opposite sex could not father children.

Some transvestites were homosexual but probably the majority were not. The relationship between married transsexuals who continued to live with their former spouses after the change might be described as homosexual. Dudley Cave, Secretary of Integroup, said that many transvestites telephoned Gay Switchboard (837 7324) and it seemed to him that many lived very solitary lives and obtained their satisfaction in the act of dressing up rather than in any genital activity. Transsexuality, Christine said, was inherent and was in no way capricious. She pointed out that persecution of the TV and TS was considerable and rarely reported. If one were set upon and beaten up by a group of roughs, she could be charged with "causing a breach of the peace" and even being out in public could be regarded as incitement to a breach.

One member of the audience believed that transvestites were traitors to the Women's Movement and to feminism generally, but Christine, who was formerly a man, said she was a feminist and saw no conflict with being a transsexual and being concerned with women's rights.

Christine said that cross-dressing was very old, not a modern phenomenon—probably as old as dress itself.

*(Another transsexual talks about the experience in Gay News this issue punk rocker Wayne County. See page 30)*