

D.O.B. SAYS NO

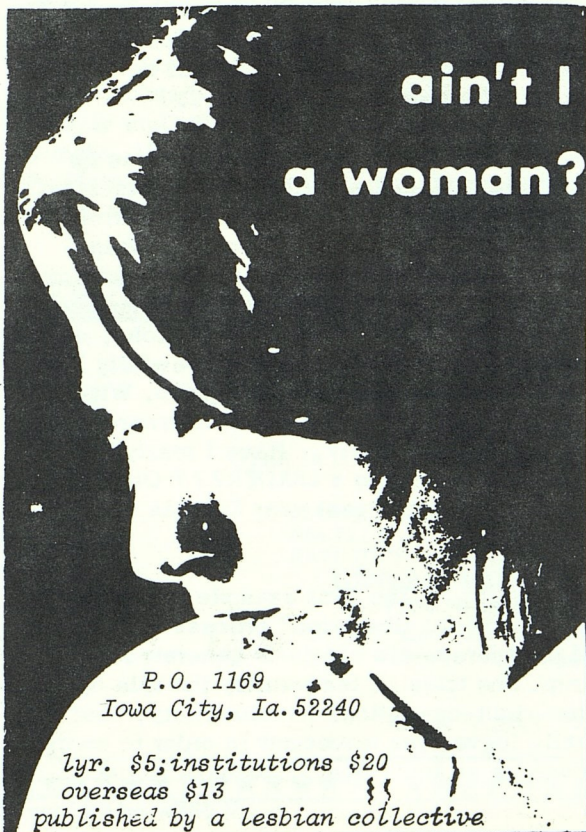
by Jeanne Cordova

On tuesday, Nov. 17th, the membership of San Francisco's Chapter of the Daughters of Bilitis voted against admitting transsexual persons into their organization.

Ending a several month long "very heavy issue", Del Martin, co-founder of D.O.B. and member of the San Francisco Chapter said, " D.O.B. has always been set up as a woman's organization. A person before having the operation (to become a woman) is not legally a woman. Phyllis (her lover and co-founder of D.O.B.) and I understand both sides of the issue...it's regrettable that it had to come up this way."

In a last minute telephone interview with the Lesbian Tide, Ms. Joanne Darcy*₁, the only transsexual active in S.F. DOB reported, " I lost, not as badly as McGovern...but they voted 'no'." Ms. Darcy has been vice-president of this organization for many months and is well known in California as a lesbian feminist activist, writer and singer.

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A COLLECTIVE EDITORIAL:

In recent months the subject and matter of transsexuality has become once again a controversial issue among gay groups and organizations.

In the San Francisco chapter of the Daughters of Bilitis, the issue has threatened to split that organization in half. Insisting that transsexuals are "only synthetic women", who "should start trying to relate to each other and get out of our space", a number of S.F. D.O.B. members recently went on a campaign to oust two transsexual members of that organization. They stated "We don't like them voicing their opinions as lesbians. They are not lesbians. Even after surgery it would be hard to accept these people as lesbian women. There is no excuse for this 'passing'. These people should accept themselves for what they are. Their oppression is different than the lesbians' oppression."

Other DOB members, in an article written from the standpoint that male-to-female transsexuals are women, and should therefore be allowed in DOB, have stated: "A transsexual is a woman who is born in a man's body or a man who is born in a woman's body, and who goes through reconstructive surgery to bring his or her body into harmony with her mind...Actually the entire issue regarding transsexuals in DOB really boils down to whether or not one accepts science's definition of a male-to-female transsexual as a woman; whether or not one accepts that any such woman who feels love for only women, who relates to only women, who identifies herself as a lesbian, is a lesbian."

They say, further, "It is wrong to say that a lesbian woman in a male body is 'passing as a lesbian woman. You don't 'pass' for something you ARE," and, that "the true transsexual wants not just to be a woman (or man) inside, but also to have the physical body of their true sex. Despite all the disadvantages involved with being a woman and a lesbian, the transsexual woman, with the alignment of her body with her psyche, gains her self-identity and her self-esteem. And that is everything."

These statements appeared in articles recently sent to all members of S.F. D.O.B. in preparation for a vote on the issue. The proposal: "Any transsexual who considers her/himself to be a woman will be eligible for membership and participation in S.F. D.O.B."

The Tide Collective also received these articles. The matter was discussed and a vote of the collective was taken. A telegram was then sent to S.F. D.O.B. The words of that telegram are the essence of this editorial:

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GROUPS & SERVICES ANNOUNCEMENT

Tuesday, December 5th, at the Gay Community Services Center, 1614 Wilshire Blvd. will be the first meeting of the new parent's group at 7 PM. This is an open invitation to all members of the Gay Community who are interested in the expanding issues surrounding this greatly neglected faction of our community.

We are a unique group with an important potential to realize by the united participation in support of one another. By coming together as a group we can begin to define our problems and move toward a more cohesive management of these.

Among the issues of concern to be discussed are the relationships with our children, their relationship with friends and community as well as our own, how to best accomplish the inherent adjustments to gay life and the family situation, how to deal with outside discrimination both legal and social. In short, it is hoped that a general pooling of resources will result in a concerted effort to offer direction and resolution in these areas.

Babysitting services and activities are being planned for the meeting time and also outside social get-togethers will be proposed.

For further information, please call Donna Smith at 764-9118.



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"Our common oppression is based on society's insistence that we perform certain roles: wife, husband, mother, father, masculine, feminine, etc. We cry out, 'You cannot define us. WE DEFINE OURSELVES!' Those who vote no tonight vote with our oppressors. Those who vote yes recognize that none of us is free unless all of us are free." Please advise our transsexual sisters that, if they are not welcome in the liberal city of San Francisco, they are most welcome in the city of Los Angeles."

Will the struggle for compassion and freedom please take one giant step backward.

GAY NEWS

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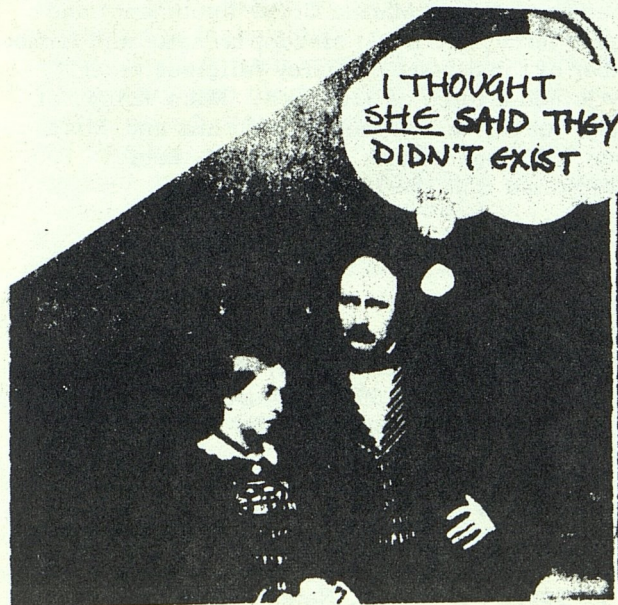
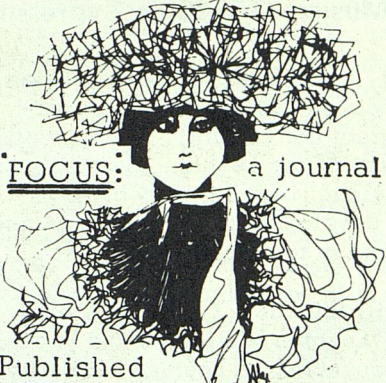
When asked how they stood on the issue, Ms. Martin replied, "We (she and Phyllis Lyons) were for a compromise. We felt the issue should be decided as it was but we felt there should be an exception made for Joanne who has been so active for so long." Martin and Lyon's compromise was not accepted however and Ms. Darcy has been expelled from her membership.

Ms. Martin went on to explain, "DOB is the only active all lesbian group in the area. This issue was taking a lot of time away from other concerns of lesbians. Also, when new women came in they are just trying to handle themselves as lesbians ... to meet transsexuals is another added difficulty." When it was pointed out that this rationale is reminiscent of some feminist groups attitude toward lesbians, Martin replied, "the issue was so controversial that there was no other choice but to leave it to the membership."

STAFF WALKS OUT

In what was a heated and deeply felt debate, the entire staff of SISTERS magazine, a two year old SF DOB monthly, resigned their positions and their membership in protest. As of this writing neither editor Karen Wells nor other staff members were available for further comment.

*1 Because the Lesbian Tide does not have permission to print the real name of this woman we have given her this pseudonym. See January issue for in depth account of this story.

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Eve spoke on her reasons for her present asexuality. "Right now the feminist movement is taking all my energy. When I find someone, woman or man, who is as warm and real as I need them to be, then I might be willing to engage in a relationship with them."

The last speaker was Muriel, the mother of a lesbian. Muriel grew up realizing the oppression of women. She resolved not to be treated as a "beast of burden" or a "second class citizen." Though she didn't get involved in the women's movement until after her children were older, she appears to have a deep sense of feminism. When asked what her first reaction was when discover her daughter was a lesbian, she said, "This to me, in a way, was an advance. She has really developed as a person. As a mother I can only be grateful." When speaking on the lesbian movement she stated, "I really feel that in the lesbian movement there's really a thing of women coming together. This is an advance, an advance of womankind."

