

Minutes of the Second Annual General Meeting of the ORGANISATION  
For LESBIAN AND GAY ACTION. OLGA (National).

September 17/18th 1988. Edinburgh.

SESSION 1. Saturday 17th September. 1988.

Meeting opened. 10.45a.m.

Maureen Oliver to chair.

Ian Berridge to take minutes.

Lisa Power and David Smith to act as tellers for voting.

Maureen Oliver thanked the participants for arriving and read the office report as follows:-

The founding conference in December 1987, could hardly have been expected to anticipate the advent of clause 28. The clause, now section 28, came to our notice barely a week after the conference in Manchester and since then most of the work we have been involved in has been spent campaigning around the legislation and dealing with information requests about it. Such was the demand at one stage, that activity in and around the OLGA office became positively frenetic. OLGA executive committee members and workers spent time answering requests for speakers on the subject and travelled to diverse venues nationally and internationally. A very worthwhile result of the campaign has been the very powerful links we have made with international groups who have supported us. This work has proved to be very valuable and it is expected to continue. As well as receiving help from lesbians and gays from other countries we are also supporting their struggles in whatever ways we can. This network of support that has been established could prove vital in any future campaigns. Some of the international visits we have made include: Kris Black and Dennis Killin toured Belgium for five days doing speaking engagements and press and radio interviews; I myself went to Holland to speak in March and returned there to address Dutch Gay Pride in June, I also visited a Womens Centre in West Berlin and took part in a radio interview there; Lisa Power went to the International Lesbian and Gay Association conference in Oslo in Norway and became elected Lesbian Secretary General of that organisation; Helen Greenwood from OLGA Scotland and S.H.A.G. went to Barcelona for a conference and for Catalan Gay Pride; Ian Berridge from the Youth caucus went to West Berlin to represent us at the International Gay and Lesbian Youth Organisation conference. In October/November Dennis Killin and myself have been invited to travel on the European Bus Tour. We should be visiting Switzerland, Italy and Germany

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as part of a fundraising and publicity campaign for the repeal of Section 28. The bus will also tour Britain and there will be an international conference in London on November 26th.

Another aspect of the international work has been the setting up of the International Group Against Section 28 - IGAS-28 - an umbrella group with members of several involved organisations. This group was originally based at the Triangle Translations collective in London, but owing to Peter Norman of Triangle leaving shortly for Belgium will now be based at the OLGA office. We are building a list of members with translation skills and if you feel you can assist in this work please contact the office.

We need to do more work on the national growth of the organisation. The existence of groups in Scotland, Bradford, Leeds and Shropshire is valuable but growth on a national basis has not really taken off in a way that we need it to do to continue to grow as a national organisation. However interest shown in us by groups in Wales and the setting up of new groups in Bristol and Nottingham are encouraging. We have produced a letter to be circulated to all local Lesbian and Gay groups so that we can have a contact name and telephone number in each area. If you know of any local groups that would be interested in joining with us or liasing with us please could you let us know at the office. We would like to stress the importance of contact being maintained and we would especially like to know of discrimination being experienced at a local level.

The Section 28 campaign has reached a point where work is continuing but is of a long term rather than an urgent nature. Therefore we have taken up the work on the three original campaigns as set out in the founding conference. These are: Lesbian Custody, Education, and the Anti-Violence campaign. Education has been functioning throughout the Section 28 campaign and now works fairly autonomously. As a lesbian mother myself I'm very aware of the need for us to work on strategies to deal with issues around Lesbian Custody. I'd like to contact local lesbian mothers groups in order that liason work be set up and so we can get as full a picture of the situation as possible. Considerable work has been undertaken on the Anti-Violence campaign in the last few months. A survey is in the planning stage and should be prepared by mid-January. The Press and Publicity group of the campaign is based at the office, as is a sub group Lesbians and Gays against Racism and Facism. This group was initiated after involvement with a local Anti-Racist-Anti-Fascist Action group. A security and information leaflet is being prepared and work is being done on support for lesbian and gay victims of violence. All of this work is still in its early stages however, and there

is a need for people to organise at a local level and to keep in touch with the office about instances of violence and harrassment of Lesbians and Gay men in their areas. I think it important that we retain both of these campaigns as part of OLGA's work for the coming year.

We have also given support to other groups in struggle such as City of London Anti Apartheid Groups picket of the South African Embassy and the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign. We feel that our committment to these groups is part of our constitutional committment to anti-racism. Immigration issues are a possible area of work for the coming year. We also recently made contact with a member of the South African OLGA, The Organisation for Lesbian and Gay Activists, Sheila Lapinsky. She stressed the importance of these links and for the solidarity of all people in strggle worldwide.

The need for fundraising to continue the vital work of the organisation and to keep the office running is an urgent matter. Members of the organisation were active in the setting up of the Section 28 Fund - Account 28 - by helping to put on benefits such as the Piccadilly Benefit and the Hackney Empire Benefit. However we have no particular access to this fund ourselves. So if any members who have fundraising or marketing skills would like to help would they contact us at the office. We shall shortly be setting up a Fundraising group to deal with the problem.

One aspect of our caucus structure and something that we see as vital to protecting and furthering the rights of under- represented groups within the Lesbian and Gay movement is to be able to provide facilities for such groups as Lesbian Mothers and Lesbians and Gays with Disabilities. These facilities - Accessible venues, signers creche provision etc. often prove particularly expensive but it is important that we continue to provide them and that our committment to particular needs of caucus members not only continues but grows in strength.

Members in the London area who have skills that might prove useful in the office are urged to contact us. Currently the office is staffed by unpaid, unwaged volunteers and an equally unpaid, unwaged co-ordinator, (myself) and help is always appreciated. It seems clear that there is a lot of work to be done but also that a great deal has been achieved. We would like to stress the need for members who are elected to the Executive Committee to be able to give a full committment to OLGA and the campaigns as full support is required in order to ensure the efficient running of the Organisation.

**This Ends the Office Report.**

Tim (Scotland) asked if we had any access to the money raised at the benefits. Jennie Wilson replied for the Account 28 committee with a

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The accounts were presented to the meeting by Phillip King.

The accounts are only a rough estimate as they have not been audited as yet.

Total income.....£8,358.

Total expenditure.....£10,947.

£2,589 exceeded was invested in a typewriter, computer, answerphone and other equipment.

Telephone Bill.....£626. (we needed at least two lines).

£955.....Foreign Travel. (Majority of money refunded by International Groups however). Speaking Engagements Section 28 campaign.

From July we are left with £7,586. £300 per month must be met for the rent plus the cost of the telephone and other running expenses.

We have taken out an agreement with Pitney Bowes for a Franking Machine.

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**The Accounts were Adopted.**

**Rob Cook was appointed Auditor.**

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Proposal regarding the Use of the Franking Machine.

Proposed by Tim of OLGA Scotland and seconded by Maggie.

'We are alarmed to hear that the Executive Committee is planning to buy a Franking Machine which will mark envelopes with OLGA or Organisation for Lesbian and Gay Action. It is particularly important for some members, e.g. lesbian mothers and those in isolated communities that their confidentiality is respected and monitored.

We propose that as a general principle of operation, the Executive Committee ensures that none of its actions put at risk the confidentiality of the general members of OLGA.'

After a brief discussion and reassurances on the use of the Franking Machine the motion was passed unanimously.

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**A Proposal on a Charter of Human Rights and OLGAs Strategy put forward by David Smith was discussed.**

Lisa Power suggested we should not vote on this now, but include it in the next OLGA newsletter as a discussion document. This was agreed.

A motion was proposed that the membership fees should go back to the regions in proportion to the amounts recieved. It was agreed that this be deferred to the next meeting.

An Open Statement on Bisexuals was read by Jennie Wilson.

OLGA exists to fight discrimination against lesbians and gay men and against the lesbian and gay community. OLGA is working towards equality for all, regardless of age, gender, ability, colour, class, creed, race or sexuality.

OLGA believes in the right of self-definition. This right must include the right of self definition of sexuality.

Bisexuals are discriminated against by society on similar, if not the same grounds as lesbians and gays are. Heterosexism is an attack on the life styles of bisexuals as well as an attack on the life styles of lesbians and gay men. On the whole bisexuals and lesbians and gay men have common aims and share common oppressions.

OLGA is an organisation to promote and support those who identify as lesbian or gay. OLGA willingly accepts as members self defining bisexuals who identify with the aims, objectives and struggles of OLGA.

For the above reasons and because of the evolution of the caucus structure, we do not believe there is a need for a bisexual caucus within OLGA.

The statement was discussed and put to the vote.

A proposal to amend the statement by deleting the term 'on the whole' was defeated as follows:-

8 for,  
14 against,  
8 abstentions.

It was agreed to amend the wording on the membership form so that it now reads ' I identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual for the purposes of the organisation.' rather than ' I identify as lesbian or gay for the purposes of the organisation'.

It was agreed that a Bisexual meeting could take place to discuss the possibility of symposium status for bisexual members.

**The Statement was Passed as Follows:-**

In favour of the first 4 paragraphs:-

26 voted for,  
2 voted against,  
3 abstentions.

In favour of the last paragraph:-

22 voted for,  
2 voted against,  
7 abstentions.

The Open Statement was therefore adopted by the meeting.

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**A Proposal That OLGA adapts Telephones for use by the Deaf by a Vistel System was put to the Meeting.**

Paul Hinshaw felt it was wrong to separate one disability from another and spoke against the proposal.

**The Proposal was Passed as Follows:-**

29 voted for the motion.

1 voted against the motion.

0 abstentions.

**It was unanimously voted to keep the membership fees the same.**

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**OLGA's Three Major Campaigns Were Discussed.**

A discussion took place on the three major campaigns.

Savi Hensmen of the Anti-Violence campaign spoke about the work that had been done. Publicity was being produced around the issue. A leaflet was being prepared. A survey was being prepared.

Dennis Killin mentioned that support work had become part of the campaign. Links had been made between lesbians and gays experience of violence and racist and sexist violence.

Jennie Wilson stated that she had been unhappy that the Anti-Violence meetings had been closed at an early stage.

Savi replied that constant coming and going of different members made the ongoing work difficult.

There followed a heated debate on the subject. However it was agreed that an Open Meeting on the subject should take place as soon as possible. It was agreed that the campaign should continue.

(Final decisions on the three major campaigns to be voted on the following day),

Dissappointment was expressed that members from major campaigns such as Education were not present to represent those campaigns.

Reports had been prepared for the A.G.M. However.

**It was Agreed that an open meeting take place within two months. (anti-violence)**

28 for.

0 abstentions.

2 against.

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**2nd Session Ended 6.p.m.**

OLGA Annual General Meeting. Sunday. 18th September.

Meeting Commenced 10.30.a.m.

Discussion on OLGA's Three Major Campaigns Continued.

A national lesbian mothers conference to be organised by the lesbian mothers caucus with the help of the Lesbian Custody Project will inform the Lesbian Custody Campaign about the direction of the campaign.

Jennie Wilson asked about the involvement of gay men in the campaign.

There was a discussion on whether or not to widen the scope of the campaign to include gay men and general parenting issues.

It was felt important to continue the campaign as an autonomous lesbian mothers campaign in order to be initially effective and to ensure involvement of lesbian mothers groups. A narrower campaign would have more impact.

There was a discussion on the issue of the involvement of gay fathers.

It was explained that discriminations experienced by gay fathers could be dealt with in the general work of OLGA.

It was agreed that the proposed conference would decide upon how much input would be desirable from gay men in the campaign.

The continuation of the **Lesbian Custody Campaign** was put to the vote the continuation of the Lesbian Custody Campaign was passed unanimously.

**Education Campaign was Discussed.** It was explained that the campaign had become autonomous. However a wish had been expressed by Jonathan Louw, convener of the group, that OLGA's involvement should become greater not less. However it was not felt that it was necessary for **Education** to continue as a Major Campaign in order that that involvement continue. OLGA would still continue to be supportive of the **Education Campaign**. The campaign is self-financing, however we can be supportive by helping in mailing and in other ways after discussion with the group. **A Recommendation was made that one Executive Member be given Responsibility For Each Campaign.** This was agreed.

A vote of thanks was made to Jonathan Louw for the excellent work of the campaign. **It was Proposed That Education No Longer Continue as a Major Campaign But That Work on the Campaign Would Continue.**

This Proposal was Passed Unanimously.

Jennie Wilson Proposed that AIDS be taken up as a Major Campaign.

It would be worthwhile lesbians working with gay men on the issue. There is a problem that AIDS work is being done on a pan-sexual or heterosexual level. AIDS charities have a problem regarding campaigning.

It was felt that there should be discussions upon the involvement in the work of people who are HIV positive or who have AIDS. Interest was expressed in the work of ACT UP in the U.S.A. regarding the political issues around AIDS.

**Immigration was Discussed as a Possible Major Campaign.** It was felt that much groundwork was needed to be done. Involvement of members of the Black and Other Ethnic Minority Caucus would be needed. Savi from the group left a message stating support in general but with some reservations. Much groundwork is needed. Some involvement has been started but is at an early stage. OLGA has commitment to the issue because of its commitment to Anti-Racism.

**Anti-violence was Unanimously Passed As a Continuing Major Campaign.**

**AIDS was passed as a Major Campaign voting as follows:-**

27 voted for.

4 against.

0 abstentions.

**Immigration was not passed as a Major Campaign at this Stage but a Commitment was made to Continue the Work and to do Groundwork for the Future.**

4 voted for

27 against.

0 abstentions.

**The Three Major Campaigns of OLGA for the Year are therefore: Lesbian Custody, Anti-Violence and the AIDS Campaign.**

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**The Elections To The Executive Committee.**

**The Caucuses and the Scottish Symposium.**

Scottish Symposium.....Tim Hopkins and Maggie. (Jobshare)

Lesbian Mothers Caucus.....Maureen Oliver.

Lesbians and Gays with

Disabilities.....Dennis Killin.

Youth Caucus.....Ian Berridge. (provisional).

Lesbian Caucus.....Sally Brignall.

Black and Other Ethnic

Minority Lesbians and Gays....Kris Black. (provisional).

Places Remain Open for the Older Lesbian and Gay Caucus and the Young

Lesbians and Gays who are or have been in Care Caucus.

**Voting for the Three Open Places Reserved For Lesbians.**

Carol Rawlings. 20 votes. (carried Forward.)

Emma Healey. 24 votes. Elected.

Lily Greenan. 24 votes. Elected.

**Voting For the Two Remaining Open Executive Committee Places.**

Carol Rawlings. 28 votes Elected.

Phillip King. 10 votes.

Martin Corbett. 5 votes.

Arthur Law. 19 votes Elected.

There were some reportbacks from Caucus meetings. Discussion took place on the naming of the Lesbians and Gays with Disabilities Caucus. Jennie Wilson reporting back from the Lesbian Caucus Meeting felt the term 'Differently Abled' would be acceptable to more people especially people with life threatening diseases and mental health system survivors. It was felt that there would have to be more discussion on this within the Disabilities Caucus.

The Outgoing members of the Executive Committee, Jennie Wilson, Phillip King and Martin Corbett were warmly thanked.

Thanks were also given to the members from Scotland who had provided such a warm welcome and worked hard to provide the facilities.

**The Meeting Closed at 1p.m. prompt.**

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