

COMMENTBOX

### Lest we forget

Entrepreneur Ivan Massow looks back at his first Pride march and reminds us why it is still the most important two mile walk of our year.



Massow: March is vital.

A strange thing happened to me. I was just in the process of sending off a suggestion for a new advertising slogan for Lynx antiperspirant: "Black people's sweat only attracts other Blacks - is that all you want?" and the phone rang. It was Radio 4. "Mr Massow - we want to run a debate about whether Stonewall should close down now that the partnership bill is going through and Section 28 has been abolished?"

It's an easy assumption to make - gay rights have come a long way. But, as ethnic groups or woman's rights campaigners will tell you - legislative reform is only the tip of the iceberg.

Gay people are still at the bottom of the pile in almost every way. In the work place, by insurers, and still in law - we suffer terribly. When I first went on the Pride march 15 years ago there was a real feeling of solidarity through oppression similar to that shared by Londoners during the Blitz.

Unlike Londoners, we had few soldiers fighting for us. Stonewall (the brainchild of Ian McKellen, Michael Cashman and Matthew Parris), backed up by the indispensable guerilla tactics of Peter Tatchell.

Meanwhile all we, the "collateral damaged", could do was endure the constant bombing: Homophobic bishops citing HIV as God's retribution, disgraceful laws, abuse in the work place, a totally unchecked media and HIV itself.

The new changes may have given us more ammunition for our fight - but it is just the beginning. We must still stick together, and speak with our votes, our money, and our actions.

Enjoy the party. But remember the march.

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# Children's charities say scrap clause



Shame: Activists call for an end to the hated Section 28.

By Jane Czynszelska

Children's charities are calling on the House of Lords to repeal Section 28, when it is debated this week, because it is damaging to young people.

ChildLine, the NSPCC and the Children's Society are among eight organisations that have written separate statements of support for the scrapping of the hated clause.

"Legislation that directly or indirectly supports prejudice and damages children has no place in contemporary British society," said Lisa Payne of the National Children's Bureau.

"Teachers, youth workers and other professionals must feel confident and able to meet

the needs of all pupils whatever their developing sexuality, and to create safe environments in which they can grow and develop. Schools are key players in challenging homophobic prejudice and need a clear mandate from the Government to take on this role."

Stonewall director Ben Summerskill said the move by the eight children's charities was an important step in repealing Section 28 which has been law for 15 years.

"It's hugely significant that so many organisations who are expert in the protection of children have entered the debate in this way. "It demonstrates how valid their view is and undermines the claims of the Christian Institute that somehow Section 28 serves as

any real protection."

If the law is abolished, Royal assent is expected in the near future but Summerskill said it was not clear if the Lords would repeal the legislation this Thursday.

"We have worked very hard to target the right people but the Lords has showed itself to be very prejudiced in the past. In the event that the Lords choose not to repeal, we will be pushing the government to introduce a one clause bill repealing Section 28 and to use the Parliament Act to force that through the House of Lords, but we hope the need for that won't arise."

## INFOBOX

■ Section 28 is the common name for Section 2a of the Local Government Act 1986. This section prohibits local authorities in England and Wales from "promoting" homosexuality. It also labels gay family relationships as "pretend".

The 1988 legislation, which pre-dates the setting of a national curriculum and the current rules for teaching sex education, has never been used - and the Department for Education has expressed doubts as to whether it ever could have been used against schools.

However, even though it is now redundant, the existence of Section 28 continues to cause confusion and harm. Teachers are confused about what they can and cannot say and do, and whether they can help pupils who face homophobic bullying and abuse. Local authorities are unclear as to what legitimate services they can provide for lesbian, gay and bisexual members of their communities.

# Teachers' plea for kids' sex lessons as hated Section 28 is scrapped

By Erica Roberts



Sacha Deshmukh: "We need good sex education."

Campaigners and education experts have called for better teaching about sexuality in the wake of the scrapping of Section 28.

The House of Lords finally voted 180 to 130 to repeal the hated legislation on 10 July, after 15 years of lobbying, protest and struggle by activists.

The clause, which bans local authorities in England and Wales from "promoting" homosexuality and labels gay families "pretend", will be removed by September when the bill obtains Royal assent.

But activists stressed that repeal did not mean the fight for rights had been won.

"We can't be complacent and expect some

kind of domino effect now," said Sacha Deshmukh, director of parliamentary affairs at gay lobby group Stonewall.

"Changes happen because you build on campaigns step by step, so we will now be able to build on this. But public support for bigotry and prejudice has definitely waned and the lack of newspaper coverage, that followed the repeal of Section 28, reflects this."

Section 28 was never used to prosecute schools and was made redundant by the Learning and Skills Act 2000, which removed local authority control over sex education. But many people involved in education were glad to see the legislation finally kicked of the statute books.

John Bangs, head of education and equal opportunities at the National Union of Teachers said: "The purpose of Section 28 was to intimidate teachers and young people. It helped fuel ugly prejudice and create an atmosphere of fear."

Sue Sanders, spokeswoman for Schools Out, the organisation for gay teachers, said, "We will be pushing for the [Department for Education and Skills] to publish guidelines on training teachers about LGBT issues.

Homophobia is rife in schools - it is now no

longer possible to hide in Section 28."

Health workers also slammed the clause for blocking safe-sex messages to gay pupils.

"As a piece of legislation which deterred teachers and youth workers from addressing issues of sex and sexuality properly, it has contributed directly to rising HIV infections in young men," said Michelle Reid, chief executive of George Trust House.

"The repeal of this legislation is the essential first step in the right direction to ensure that all young people receive life-saving sex education."

Stonewall stressed that more work was needed to combat homophobia in schools now that the clause had been repealed.

"Organisations like DfES and Ofsted need to work together to make sure that there is healthy and good quality sex education and effective preventative measures against bullying," said Deshmukh.

Stonewall is now campaigning in unison with representatives from the disabled community to widen categories of hate crimes to include sexuality, disability and gender, after a bill was turned down in early June.

■ Why it went, Comment, page 14.

■ History lesson, Cover Story, page 16.

## VICTORY BOX

### Celebs, activists and politicians welcomed the repeal.



■ Jimmy Somerville, singer: "Another victory and another piece of progress. As The Communards once sang 'there's more to love than boy meets girl.'"

■ Chris Smith, MP: "I remember all too well the dismay I felt when this vicious piece of legislation first appeared in front of the House of Commons. Now after all these years, I'm relieved and overjoyed that we've finally seen the back of it."

■ Stephanie Theobald, lesbian author: "I am delighted. The papers are usually full of really tedious things like fox hunting so it was fantastic to discover that this heinous piece of legislation has been removed."



■ Ivan Massow, financial advisor: "I can't quite believe it. It's wonderful news. Section 28 was a totem issue for the Tory party but finally it's gone. There were two terrible things that hit the gay community in the 80s: HIV/AIDS and Section 28 which has symbolised intolerance even though it was impotent as a piece of legislation. And at last it's dead."

■ Sarah Waters, Tipping the Velvet author: "It's appalling that Section 28 ever got on to the statute books, and shameful that it was allowed to stay there so long. I remember demonstrating against it in the year I first came out, and it's great to have finally got rid of it!"



■ Peter Tatchell, activist: "Repealing Section 28 doesn't go far enough. We need a new legal obligation on local authorities to combat discrimination and promote understanding and acceptance."

# GOODBYE CRUEL CLAUSE



THEN

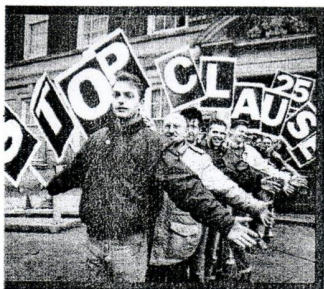
**June '87** Conservatives hold onto power at the general election, with a 100 seat majority, amidst a wave of anti-gay hype suggesting local education authorities and schools could and were encouraging pupils to experiment with homosexuality, and so become gay.

**Dec '87** Dame Jill Knight, Conservative MP for Birmingham Edgbaston, draws up and introduces Clause 28 (then Clause 25) to the Local Government Act, at the last minute of committee stage. It aimed to prevent local authorities from the "promotion" of homosexuality or publishing materials which promote it and from promoting the teaching, in any maintained, of the acceptability of homosexuality as a "pretended family relationship". Thatcher's Tory government supports Knight.

**Dec '87** More than 1,000 people swoop on the Houses of Parliament to plead with MPs to stop the anti-gay amendment to the bill.

**Dec '87** The Strangers' Gallery in the House of Commons is cleared by security guards for the first time in six years as protesters make a racket.

**Jan '88** 12,000 LGBs march through central London with 33 arrested and charged with criminal offences.



**Jan '92** Many MPs follow Edwina Currie's admirable lead, and - having supported Section 28 - make a U-turn, with their support for the lowering of the age of consent - but only to 18, not 16.

**April '91** Lancashire County Council tries to suppress local LGB groups and magazines because of the section.

**Dec '90** Section 28 continues under new Prime Minister John Major's administration, although Edwina Currie - who voted for the clause - comes out in favour of lowering the gay age of consent

**April '90** The National Union of Teachers condemns Section 28 and call for education of all their officials to the dangers of "heterosexism"

**March '90** University College London Union bans a handbook which contains LGB information for students.

**April '95** Telford Lesbian and Gay Group wins a milestone battle with Shropshire County Council, who allow them to re-open six months after closing them down citing Section 28. This follows a similar successful challenge by another gay men's health group in Calderdale, West Yorkshire in March that year.

**May '97** Blair's New Labour party sweeps to power promising anti-gay discrimination legislation, but failing to make any specific pledges to scrap the section.

**Oct '97** - Institute of Education research (Playing It Safe) shows over half of the 300 schools surveyed had difficulty addressing the needs of LGB pupils because of fears of Section 28 and didn't know what is meant by "intentionally promoting homosexuality". Over 80 per cent said they were aware of incidents of verbal homophobic bullying, with 26 per cent aware of incidents of physical homophobic bullying. Nearly a third were aware of gay pupils and 62 per cent said that schools were an entirely appropriate setting for providing sexuality information to such pupils.

**March '98** 15-year-old Darren Steele from Staffordshire hit the headlines when he hung himself after being burned with cigarettes for being gay and because he enjoyed drama and preferred cookery to sport.



NOW

**July '03** The House of Lords votes 180 to 130 to repeal Section 28 on 10 July. Baroness Blatch opposes its repeal but is ignored. Notably, the repeal was supported by the Bishop of Newcastle and former Tory ministers like Patrick Mayhew and Leon Brittain, key figures in John Major and Margaret Thatcher's cabinets. **D**

**March '03** The House of Commons votes 356 to 127 to repeal Section 28 on March 10. Tory leader Iain Duncan Smith and most of the shadow cabinet oppose its repeal. They had planned to replace it.

**Jan '03** The government backs another Section 28-scraping push and receives backing from Tory modernisers including Michael Portillo and John Bercow who writes about it for the Pink Paper.

**Nov '02** - Iain Duncan-Smith promises not to force Tory MPs to defend Section 28, following a spectacular Tory rebellion by party leaders following his disastrous hard-line whip approach on gay adoption rights.

**July '00** - The Times in London reports a study, commissioned by Nottingham's Gay AIDS Initiative Project, found that children who are subjected to verbal and physical harassment because of their real or perceived sexual orientation were more likely to leave school at 16 rather than completing their A-levels and therefore getting the chance to go to university.

**July '00** Tony Blair's Labour government introduces legislation to repeal Section 28 in England and Wales. Tory MPs oppose the move under a three-line whip and the bill is defeated by bishops and Tories in the Lords led by Lady Young.

The introduction of the hated Section 28 has been one of the blackest tales in gay history. But like all good fairy stories this one has a happy ending. By **Adrian Gillan**. Additional reporting by **Debbie Saum** and **Jane Czynselska**.

Cover photo by Scott Nunn. Posed by model.



**Feb '88** House of Lords passes Clause 28 at committee stage by an overwhelming majority, the only very slight concession being to include the word "intentionally" before the word "promote". A group of lesbians abseil down from the public gallery shouting, "lesbians are angry".

**Mar '88** Clause 28 is passed back to the House of Commons where it is then passed by 251 to 201 majority despite all the protests.

**April '88** Around 30,000 angry and anxious activists, including Michael Cashman, Chris Smith MP and Peter Tatchell, march from London's Embankment to Kennington Park in an attempt to Stop The Cause. This follows a similar 20,000-strong march in Manchester.

**24 May '88** Clause 28 officially becomes law as Section 28 of the Local Government Act, despite four brave lesbians storming the BBC's 6 O'Clock News show just hours earlier chaining themselves to Sue Lawley's desk. Dissenters still refer to the new legislation as "the clause".

**June '88** "The Arts World Against Section 28" show is held including stars Vanessa Redgrave, Judi Dench, Simon Callow and Ian McKellen, the founder of lobby group Stonewall.

**Oct '89** Avon Touring Theatre becomes first theatre casualty of Section 28, losing its state funding. The decision is arguably following a play it produced with gay content in the previous year.

**Feb '89** Essex County Council becomes first authority to implement Section 28, shutting down the only LGB group in the area (a ban they repeal later that year).

**Oct '88** The Conservative government slips through, unnoticed, an extra so-called "morality clause" to further tie the hands of local authorities, stating: "Publicity should not attack, nor appear to undermine, generally accepted moral standards."

**July '88** Birmingham City Council contributed to the publication of 80,000 copies of an information booklet for young people aged 14-17. The booklet contained information on alcohol, eating disorders, bereavement, racism and sexuality. Following legal advice that the booklet could fall foul of Section 28, the Council withdrew their plans for distribution.



**23-25 May '98** LGB groups organise marches, pickets and vigils throughout the UK to mark the tenth anniversary of the introduction of Section 28, as it re-emerges as a hot issue off the back of campaigns to lower the age of consent.

**Dec '98** Government scrap guidelines that had urged teachers to inform parents if they discover that their child is gay. The old policy had discouraged young LGBs from seeking advice support and the breach of confidentiality had also opened young gay men to criminal action since the age of consent is still set at 18. Teachers welcomed the news.

**Oct '99** Stonewall tours an anti-Section 28 road show around the country in the run up to the Queen's Speech in the hope of repealing it.

**Dec '99** Despite pledges assuring their commitment, the Government shelves plans to repeal Section 28 via the introduction of a Local Government Bill in the Queen's Speech citing fears that the initiative would be blocked in the Lords.

**June '00** The Scottish Parliament overwhelmingly vote to scrap Section 28 by 99 votes to 17. Activists face a tough struggle south of the border thanks to the Lords.

**May '00** The Scottish Executive dismisses this as a publicity stunt. Keep the Clause campaign commissions research claiming to show that 87 per cent of Scots are in favour of retaining Section 28. Local LGB groups and leading members of the Scottish Executive dismiss this as a publicity stunt.

**Feb '00** Newly empowered following devolution, a Labour-Lib Dem coalition in Scotland presents draft legislation to repeal Section 28. Homophobic Stagecoach tycoon Brian Souter gives £1 million to bankroll a high-profile Keep the Clause advertising campaign. The Lesbian Avengers hijacked a Souter owned London bus in Piccadilly Circus and sprayed it pink in protest.



**STATSBX**

- Four out of ten children bullied because of their sexuality attempt suicide or inflict harm by intentionally cutting or burning themselves
- 17 percent - nearly one in five - of children display symptoms associated with post-traumatic stress disorder later in life as a result of homophobic bullying
- Of the 3,000 clients seen by gay counselling service PACE, 70 per cent are actively suicidal
- 30 per cent of them are under 25
- 90 per cent of young gay people have been verbally abused at school because of their sexuality and 80 per cent have been physically attacked
- 28 per cent of gay youngsters seen by PACE have been bullied so badly that they were forced to drop out of school
- 80 per cent of teachers report negative attitudes about gay and lesbian people