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27 January 1977

Dear sisters and friends,

Enclosed is the statement "In Supporting Louise Boychuk We are Supporting Ourselves" and the names of the organisations that endorsed it. You probably know already that the Tribunal upheld the employers' right to sack Louise Boychuk. This statement and the response to it is a counter-judgment. Within the space of the couple of weeks available to circulate the statement before the Tribunal's decision, endorsements were received from many individuals and over forty organisations. Many took it upon themselves to spread the statement further.

That such a variety of organisations, representing thousands of people, should take this public stand shows that no one fighting for her rights as a lesbian woman is on her own. One reason is that lesbian women are more organised than ever, so we're now able to give help and mobilise support for ourselves and for any woman whom the courts, employers, and landlords want to deal with in an isolated and therefore weak position.

Just after the decision Louise and others organised a picket of the firm that sacked her, and though it was the week before Christmas thirty people turned out for it. All this demonstrates how many people are prepared and even eager to take a public stand with a lesbian woman and against the right of employers to sack whom they please. Heterosexual as well as gay individuals and organisations, men as well as women all saw the attack on Louise as an attack on them and were ready to defend themselves by supporting her.

The statement with these endorsements was sent to gay, women's and other community publications as well as to the national press. The national press so far has not printed anything except the Tribunal's decision.

A Louise Boychuk support group has now been formed. The endorsements have been sent to that group through Louise. Louise is appealing the Tribunal's decision, and this support group may call on all of us for further action. At the Tribunal the judge made clear his own view of lesbianism as a "perversion", and backed up his bias by quoting from Genesis. He has a right to his "views", but not to decide on the basis of them which of us will eat and which will not.

Industrial Tribunals such as this sit in judgment on thousands of paid workers; women fighting for equal pay, women making charges of sex discrimination, women and men sacked on all kinds of grounds, etc. Through endorsing and circulating this statement, and through future actions, employers and tribunals are being shown that we challenge the right of such people to judge any of us.

Wages Due Lesbians  
59 Wrotesley Rd.  
London N.W.10  
tel. 961 3709/452 1338

IN SUPPORTING LOUISE BOYCHUK WE ARE SUPPORTING OURSELVES

On the 11th November, Louise Boychuk applied to an industrial tribunal for compensation from an international insurance company. She had been sacked by them for wearing a "Lesbians Ignite" badge at her job. (Like millions of other women, she is an office worker.) The tribunal has not yet given judgment.

It is not only Louise Boychuk that the tribunal will be judging, but all lesbian women. More and more lesbian women are refusing to lead a double life, one life in a paid job or as unpaid wife and mother, and another secret life among a few friends or in the few clubs and bars where they can be with other women without having either to hide or explain.

Thousands of other women will be watching the tribunal's decision on Louise Boychuk's case to see whether they have to stay in the closet or whether they can come out publicly as lesbian women without losing their jobs.

For mothers, being lesbian has not only meant a threat to their paid jobs but to having custody of their children. To establish publicly and legally that women are not to be punished because they want to live with other women is a strength to lesbian mothers who are threatened with the punishment of losing their children.

In addition, custody is increasingly given to the parent who has more money -- the father. Women are always in a more vulnerable position because so many are completely financially dependent on men, and because they have less choices of jobs outside the home, and less wages on that job. With the "crisis", many women are finding it harder to get Social Security. To have that job outside the home taken from them therefore weakens them in fighting for custody of their children.

We the undersigned completely support Louise Boychuk's right to refuse to live a double life in order to make a living. We support her refusal to be ghettoised because she is a lesbian. We agree with her that "It is quite a natural thing to be lesbian". In stating this publicly, Louise Boychuk is showing just how many women, lesbian or not, are refusing to put their own needs last.

In supporting Louise Boychuk's stand we are protecting and extending our own rights. In supporting her stand, we are supporting ourselves.

AFFIRM (Alliance for Fair Images and Representation in the Media)

Annie Besant House

Birmingham Campaign for Homosexual Equality

Bristol Wages for Housework Group

Cambridge Gay Women's Group

Cambridge Wages for Housework Group

Campaign for Homosexual Equality (National)

City University Student's Union Executive

Coventry College of Education Women's Group

Coventry Lesbian Group

Coventry Women's Liberation Group

Coventry Women's Self-Defence Group

East London Gay Centre

English Collective of Prostitutes

Falling Wall Press

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Finchley Women's Centre  
Friend  
Gay Social Workers and Probation Officers  
Hampstead Women's Group  
Icebreakers  
International Socialists, Salop  
Librarians for Social Change, London  
London Wages for Housework Committee  
Luton Campaign for Homosexual Equality  
Milton Keynes Gay Group  
Moulin Rouge Boycott Committee  
Nalgay (NALGO Gay Group)  
PROF (Preservation of the Rights of Prisoners)  
RAP (Radical Alternatives to Prisons)  
Rights of Women  
Sappho  
Scottish Minorities Group  
Shrewsbury Campaign for Homosexual Equality  
Shrewsbury Housing Advice Centre  
Shrewsbury Mother and Toddlers Group  
Shropshire Women's Action Group  
South Hertfordshire Campaign for Homosexual Equality  
South East London National Abortion Campaign  
Wages Due Lesbians  
Warwick University Women's Group  
West London Gay Community Centre  
Women Against Rape  
Women's Directory, Writers