

Queer Comments

This may be a fancy typewriter, but that doesn't mean I can type. and some folk got into some fancy graphics which paper duplicating stencils and my copying don't stand up to.
order of presentation is arbitrary.

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EXPLANATION OF 3rd PARA

In case I forget later on I'll say first that it has been really far out, worthwhile etc.

FEELING

I've been really into meetings: getting things done, rather than discussing. Co-counselling has been really important to me.

ORIGIN OF FEELING

I've felt that people behaved better in meetings than socially, probably because alot of people know each other & I've been expecting people to forget that they know each other here.

CRITICISM/COMPLIMENT

FEELING/ORIGIN

I was irritated that others could not see that as far as having sex was concerned there was more than two alternatives of "meat market" & not having sex with others. I'm not so sure about this now i.e there's more to it than I thought. Why didn't anyone(?) know what a Radical Sex group was? - even* though I'd just invented the term - why should I expect anyone to know?

No information except maybe with group as a whole

Socially individuals have intermitantly ~~xxxxxxx~~ emerged from a fairly amorphous mass & returned, but not completely. I felt that others and not myself have/ had control over my social life. But I know the situation from the other side i.e I have been a member of an established group and tried to communicate with newcomers on the fringe.

Metaphors

I got up to an incredible speed for the first half of the week → found myself out on a limb → started looking round to see where other people were/are.

I've got ideas for structures which I need to work out & bring back to some similar event.

Lots of things I must have forgot.

Love

Frank....."

(I wish I could type with everyone's differant handwriting - there's a alot of meanings that the typewriter misses)

66

Everyone's gone to bed except the Black Cat and me and I've just had a really nice chat with Tom which has clarified alot of things I felt about this week. I came here depressed with alot of things bottled

up. I will go full of hope & feeling much better able to cope with what I'll find when I get back to London. I've met and made friends with some beautiful men. The kind of week we have had together has allowed this beauty to come out from the shell we usually put around ourselves. It's been everything I didn't expect. The weather, and surroundings, but I think much more the games, dancing, massage, co-counselling helped us to break down our protective shells and made our discussions mostly informal, much more related to where we are rather than where we'd like to be.

What didn't we get around to? I've reread and read quite a lot of The Things other people have said in their 20 lines. It's been a celebration and renewal. I agree. It certainly has been for me. But I also think that there's a danger in the euphoria. It would be easy later on, when we may be feeling depressed to write off this week as being totally unreal or "it must have been the weather". It was real. Just as real as that world outside. It's just that the reality of what we experienced this week is usually suppressed and has no chance of coming out.

We've had a glimpse of the possibilities. I hope it will be like a worm in our tummies that never lets us really settle into a resigned complacency.

People have said that there were no cliques, but I think there were. Not too oppressive and somewhat loose, but still there.

We also next time will need to tackle the equality/autism or why we reserve some parts of ourselves for some people and other parts to everyone. It's horrifyingly difficult but without facing up to it we are being self-oppressive in just as fundamental a way as we were before we came out as queer/gay/homosexual.

I also feel I would have liked more discussion on "How do things change? How do we change?" What we got up to this week presupposed the answer - BY CHANGING OURSELVES. I also believe this but I don't think it's self-evident and is only a partial truth. I have periodic soul-searchings over this and don't always come up with the same answer.

I would like to copy some of the articles on effeminism and distribute them to everyone who was here. There is a danger that we will see it as black and white - accept it or reject it. I think they are saying some very important things for us to consider and many of their ideas, however they put them over, cannot be dismissed without ignoring a lot of our own contradictions.

Nigel. 39

♂ → QUEERS are Revolting ← ♀

66 Philip Smith:

for me the conference has been as unmale a men's gathering that I have experienced. There have been moments when individuals have, in the male tradition, strongly asserted themselves, but the whole atmosphere has been relaxed and tender. The one area in which I felt we have still been 'men' is in sexual competition, but even this has been less than I anticipated.

in the discussion on effeminism we began by looking at the Drabble ff Manifesto; - part of this states that 'camp' behavior is bad because it's insulting to women. I have felt that, by assuming stereotyped 'women's behavior' we could show how artificial the differences between the genders are. This opinion seems to be passé in Gay Lib circles now. I feel that I have now passed through a deliberately androgynous stage; a period when I tried to show through my appearance that it was people

and not genders that metaphorical. I believe there is a difference between effeminate behavior which is assumed and that which is natural. By assumed I mean behavior imitating & exaggerating the superficial characteristics of women: this type of behavior has long been used by gays as a defence mechanism in moments of insecurity; as both a flouting of their gayness & their preconceived ideas of how straights see them. I find it difficult to say what I mean by 'natural effeminacy' - I can't define it in a negative way; it's not assertive aggressive, etc. Perhaps it's allowing our inner feelings to come to the surface in a relaxed way. I feel that the whole tone of this gathering has been one of natural effeminacy: we may feel angry about many things but we must tackle them in a unmasculine way. Perhaps 'assumed' is concerned with the physical & 'natural' with the mind.

in one sense the conference has been highly artificial; thirty men in a beautiful country setting without any of the hassles of everyday living. With so much emphasis on body awareness (yoga, massage, dance, etc.) we could be accused of self-indulgence, but I'd defend this by saying that it is only by looking inwards and learning about ourselves that we can look outwards & learn, care and do something for ourselves and others. By thirty gay men coming together and sharing our own ideas we end up with something more than thirty men's ideas - it's only by collectively increasing our confidence and awareness that we can do something positive. I know I've got off on being with men who fundamentally share the same ideas: I feel that I've gained strength to aid me in the fight for how I want society to be.

I wish that more pressure had been on us right from the beginning (when there was hesitancy and uncertainty) to say exactly what we were feeling. But as we were a collective, where exactly was the pressure supposed to come from? The collective could hardly pressurize itself into something it was wary of. As an example of my own personal uncertainty I felt unhappy about being involved in co-counselling because I couldn't trust a stranger with the innermost thoughts of my mind, although I trusted everyone enough to leave my money and camera lying around. In the discussion near the end of the week, someone said it would have helped if we had begun with saying whom we fancied. Looking back at this it might seem that it would have eased any tension that was around, but I'm not so sure. At the end of the week I am infatuated with two people, but on the first day I could not have expressed this because I was not aware of the fact. Also many a straight & a large part of the straight gay scene assume that gay men are solely concerned with 'getting it on'. If sexual fancies had been on the top of the discussion list it would sustain this belief and strengthen the competitive male in us that we are trying to combat.

the asexual quality of the conference amazed me. As someone who can cope the the London straight gay scene & often being defined as young and beautiful, I felt that there would probably be much sexual activity here. I was surprised to find in myself very little need for sex, often finding it irrelevant to what was going on: I know I'm not alone in feeling monastic, my days have been so intense that I desired to sleep alone.

in discussions men have said that it has been the young and beautiful who have been most successful here & that all the futile eye games have got in the way. I've found myself responding to men here whom I wouldn't have given a second glance in a bar or disco simply because they were not physically stunning. I know I'm not the only one to feel this event has weakened the ageist and sexist in me. I could go on and on but I'll wait for round robin. 39

<u>FEARED</u>	<u>BUT FOUND</u>
intellections, dissections	new connections
house of corrections	plates of confections
long elections	brief erections
lists of sections	warm protections
verbal bells	herbal smells
messages	massages
theries + aims	therapies + games
yelpings	helpings
many meetings	much eatings
seminars	semolinas
talks	walks
scathings	bathings
marx	parks
papers	eapers
buggings	huggings
pairing + peevs	carings + sorrel leaves
TERV	
60V + XXXX	Laurieston Hall
	4/6/77

66. Calin's 20 (almost) lines.

This morning some of us were talking about our expectations of Gay men's Week and what we had grt out of it. I didn't say then (Big group intimidation again?) so I'll put it down here.

When I came to Laurieston I had almost no expectations of what it would be likw, mainly because I hadn't been involved in anything like it before, but with the feeling that to get away from my London way of life with a large group of gay men would be a way of renewing myself and getting a new perspective on the situation I live in.

I found it difficult to fight off intellectual lethergy whne it came to discussion groups, but other activities, such as trust games, morning dannce exercises, and the freedom to touch and be touched by other people helped me to break down barriers which I see shruld be unnecessary - patterns whhich say "don't do what you feel like doing, but what is permitted/expected."

~~X~~ this document may be copied by photographic or xerographic processes, stored in any retrieval system, garbage bin, compost heap, etc.,. 99

66 I had a dream the last night I was here; I was chasing a masked figure, and struggled to take off the mask and look at the face underneath.

I think that image of self-discovery symbolises my response to this week. I've learned some negative things about myself - about the barriers I keep between myself and my feelings, and between me and other people, especially men. I've been really frightened by the thickness of most walls and about my confusion about sex, and just what I'm wanting from other people. But I think I've learned that I can trust, and that I can work to break through those obstacles. On the other hands my real frustration about being able to express parts of me & find support for real dilemmas I feel as a socialist and marxist has cast a pall over things. Positively I feel my commitment to the left much more strongly, and I feel we've evaded many of the problems of relating whats happened here to a wider context. I feel that the downgrading of intellect that has been implicit in many of the discussions has made it more difficult for me to say how I see the world.

So I'm ambivalent about the whole week, but I think it's been really important for me, perhaps, despite the freak outs, leaving me stronger than when I came, and more sure of where I want to be.

Phil Derbyshire. 99



66 I almost didn't come; I'm glad I changed my mind. I felt defensive about my lack of "correct" attitudes & commitments, and expected criticism rather than the warmth and support that we generated.

That's been the trend of the week for me - a move from fear to wards confidence, a recognition that my main obstacle to being the way I want to be is my own fear, & that I can do something about it. I can release strong feelings through co-counselling and not be shaken to pieces. I can talk about my feelings to the people they involve, and reach towards solutions, rather than send them round in descending spirals in my head. I can believe in my capacity to learn things like massage and dance, though I've had very negative feelings about being touched ever since I dropped out of college. I feel good enough about my body and my sexuality to let the sun shine on them and not mind who's looking.

It might be ~~xxxx~~ said that we've had a self-indulgent week that hasn't taken us far in any radical/sexual direction, but feeling good about yourself is the only strong position you can start from, whatever direction you want to move your life in.

All this sounds very euphoric, and it's not to say that it's all been amazing, groovy, man. I've had days of feeling really low, but it's been a setting where I could find my way through that rather than cutting off from the feelings and thinking how much worse things could be. Like, the day after we played the trust games, I started to feel really isolated and frightened again, & that the feelings generated in the games weren't real. But it's all a question of small steps in the right direction, maybe three forward and two back, but it all helps.

I'm glad I came.

Ian. 99

66

"I hear you ran out of brown rice."
"True but tired, darlin, true but tired."

I'm exhausted, undermined, revived; clear-seeing, confused, elated, depressed, hopeful, defeatist, in love, loving, loved; angry, curious, cynical; hopeful again, bewildered, bemused, amused...

Back on my own again, but with a network of new friends sharing most of my feelings and my politics, not feeling like such a nutty freak. new friends wanting to be new men.

And I'm distrustful:

of euphoria, of self-congratulation, of queers using homosexuality to absolve male guilt, of large groups of men, of avoiding cathartic situations, of sexual attraction...

I'm distrustful of all these things in me.

This week has helped me begin to find out where and why guilt lives; what it does to me, how I hate it and use it, how it's useful, how it's destructive and constructive. How I learn through learning negative things about myself, how I grow through being patient and forgiving of myself. How I might as well see everything I think, feel, and do as being part of me being a man. It's helped me to find out what being a man is in relation to who I am.

I'm wary of trying to repeat what's happened this week. I think a larger group would lose sight of being a contradiction - how can a large group of men be constantly aware that large groups of men have always been oppressive to women? Do we really know how to be any different?

Someone wrote on the board "Men Can Be Men Without Oppressing Women". I doubt it. Not yet. What is really so different about being queer? Understanding our oppression is not necessarily also understanding our oppressiveness. To concentrate on the former could be avoiding being undermined by the latter. I don't know how large groups overcome their inertia when dealing with this - or even how we'd deal with it if we did.

Basically, I'm confused.

Jamie. 99



66

I knew that many of the people here wouldn't be strangers to me & so I thought I would be relaxed & secure here, but I have felt uneasy and guilty about feeling uneasy. Because of my anxiety I've concentrated on myself, but I know that rationality doesn't solve my problems & so I've really enjoyed physical events which enabled me to stop thinking. It has been a good place to be during a period of personal depression. The depression was caused by looking at my problems rather than avoiding them. I should think this must be of some long term benefit but in the short term it has left me confused and withdrawn. 99



BAD THINGS FOR ME

No orgasms
smoking, nasty taste,
bunged up nose, depression
at my "weakness", resentment
against those who will force
cigarettes on me,
horrid taste of kissing,
smelling breath of a smoker.

Little music I like.
Not enough time thinking/
talking about gay politics
outside the very personal.
GLF activity: relations
with the left: gay
organisations.
No alcohol (almost)

I DON'T KNOW THINGS

slightly
Falling \wedge in love
with people who
don't want to
have sex or
get very physically
close to me.

P.S If I'd got it together
to have it off
I would not have
spent so much time
lusting after people.

GOOD THINGS FOR ME

Lack of heavies, hierachical
structure. Lots of warmth, physical
contact, getting to know
new faggots. Investigating
gay living, loving.

TEKNIQUES THAT HELPED

Organised breathing, muscle exer-
cises. "Trust Games" on fist day.
Unobtrusiveness of organisers.
Kicking in of most people
into doing cooking, washing up.
Massage.
Organising discussion in small
groups of 4 or 5.

Having it somewhere
where energy is not
having to be put into
avoiding the fists/
beer bottles hurled by
homophobes.
i.e not Brixton, Leeds, etc.

Time to relax,
good weather
lots of baths

Time Table. lots of warmth, physical
contact, getting to know
new faggots. Investigating
gay living, loving.

99

WOW

66 At the end of it all I feel sort of solidly euphoric. Relaxed and well
in my body, let a lot of pain out, a lot of touching in. Not as inter-
ested in my young and beautiful (mirror) image, - much happier in the
naked body beneath. I'm usually ashamed of my body and obsessed by my
appearance. And the appearance of others. Here it didn't pull me for
or against people as strongly as in the city - step forward. I've
"fallen in love" again (?), but it was fun this time. And not so
differant from how I was feeling about everyone. I've learned alot
about myself, mostly that I can like myself, given the chance.

The collective trust games at the start sent me flying into an
unfamiliar high, and left me wide open and vulnerable. Vulnerable to
youth and beauty winning again, closer to the dull old plain fringe
majority. And I found the support to work thru it, it's familiar
ground, but it was new to be really feeling through it; in big meetings,
with strangers. Laying wide open and working through it i.e therapy.
The therapy things we did were like high points, but it didn't all just
fizzle away in rhetoric. I feel like I've really worked on alot of problems
and really moved ahead with them. Jealousy, insecurity, 'beautiful
people'. I've felt open to people sexually who I'd just normally treat

like a mate buddy fat ~~aldxxxx~~ and that's been a real turning every-
thing upside down. I've moved about on my own, felt mostly good and
excited about that. I forgot I knew most of my friends. I made alot
of new ones, chance talking, such big areas of common experience (appres-
sion) we'd need three months here to begin... There wasn't enough
time meeting and working and too much to meet and work on. Are you
secretly ashamed of picking at your toenails? I hope it happens again. I'd like to see something printed, sung,
painted coming out from this to transmit to the world, I've felt along
way away from the world here and I need concrete things to take back with
me, something to show the Man. We've been without women here, I wanted
to show them something too. Maybe it's enough to know the horrors are
felt by everyone here, and that ease and laughing and release can come
out of them, with other gay men. I've got alot of love and energy in
me to take back to the city ghetto struggles

hugs and kisses

love

Petal

Laurieston Hall 4th June 99

WOW
I've picked this quote from The New Woman's Survival Sourcebook...
"...however desirable the reduction of machismo may be for the
enrichment of the individual male personality, it has nothing to do with
women's freedom if it is divorced from the struggle to dismantle
institutionalized patriarchal privilege. Such male "liberation" can,
in fact, co-exist with the most ferocious subjugation of women. We are
only too well aware of the patriarchal cultures - Latin and Islamic?,
for example - that allow men unrestrained expressiveness, and even int-
imacy among themselves, where women are treated like shit." 99

David Callow

66
Good things about Gay Week - my feelings able to relax with,
be open to and responsive with: a) what for me is usually and un-
bearably intimidating group size of thirty people, b) a group, the
majority of whom were practically total strangers, in such a short
period of time. I feel I've learnt something about trust and caring.
The trust games on our second morning all together were a wonderful
way of releasing inhibitions and uniting everyone in a flow of relaxed
high spirits. The barriers to personal communication were continually
broken down in the ongoing dance, massage, yoga and co-counselling
events. Our discussion groups, although erratic in design and
performance, did reveal an enormous amount of interest in the discus-
sion of our sexual experiences, although time unfortunately prevented
a really intensive group event from being generated further than the
level of general personal statements onto a level of deep analysis
and exploration of feelings and ideas.

More generally the week has been free of the bitchiness (must I
use this fucking word again - tired typist) that has prevailed and often
destroyed events at all other gay conferences I can remember. Also
everyone has for once co-operated in the domestic routine without any
nagging. The weather has been amazingly sunny and hot and the country
setting has further contributed to a general feeling of ease and well-
being.

Maybe (probably) the general feeling of wanting to relax and
relaxation mitigated against structured or more vigorous attempts at

expressing, defining or challenging who or what we were/are. For my part I felt irresistably lured by the idyllic weather -- to sunbathing, wild-life spotting on wood rambles, boating on the loch, and a jaunt to the seaside. Yet I didn't arrive at Laurieston with high expectations of personal and political consciousness raising. In fact I was pleasantly suprised by the lack of over-polemicising and our ability to feel really good together, although in our country retreat it was possibly too easy to forget the everyday hassles of life in society at large, particularly in the cities, where most of us gay men live.

Finally, some odds and ends. The level of sexual picking up was less intense, less time and energy consuming than would have been the case had Gay Men's Week occured in a city like London. Like some other people, I began to feel less genitally sexual and more like just relaxing in the company of others and felt less sexually competitive. I seemed to feel less like having sex and more like falling in love. I fell in love at the beginning of the week and again at the end of the week!

Above all I felt this week's gathering of gay men to have been the first at which there was no pressure on anyone to simply spout ideologically; we would begin laughing, crying, and feeling real, some of us for the first time as a group of gay men together. 99

Except for one that I couldn't read, that's all the bits of paper I had by the end of the week -- it's enough for now -- although the scope of politics, feelings and reactions to the week seemed wider than is suggested here. Maybe that'll come out in the round robin. And in connection to that -- there's no money here after printing and posting this to print and post the round robin, so if everyone could send something -- what you can afford (here we go again -- about £1 I suppose) -- it's more likely that the thing will come together. There's no reason why it should be printed and collated from here -- if someone else -- or another group would like to do it, it would be something of a relief to me. But if you send the money here anyway, I'll forward it to whoever decides to print and post it.

I'm finishing this off in the Morning Room at Laurieston, looking out at the garden, some kids are swinging from the rhododendrum bushes by the stables. It's sunny, quiet, empty and familiar again and it seems like nothing ever happened. Almost. Laurieston Hall communards have been more-or-less enthusiastic about last week, and there doesn't seem like there would be any problem about using the Hall again, should people want that to happen.

On the last Sunday of the week some men did a mural on the wall in the dining room (where we had dance exercises most mornings). It feels very good to have left our mark on the Hall. It's also huge, colourful, and beautiful.

The graffitti on it reads:-

loving, trusting queers
in revolt.

LAURIESTON GAY MEN'S WEEK JUNE 1977