



Out at Work Kamp

14th and 15th May 2009

Raumati

SETTING THE SCENE

The first morning of the Kamp was spent setting the scene. Introductions were given and it was a good spread across the unions. Some unions had more delegates than others with the PSA topping the slot with about 10 members but overall it was a great mix of people from different regions as well as different unions..

Andrew Campbell from FINSEC then gave the history of the Out@Work Network and its role in Union organising. This presentation included the objectives and achievements over the last few years with feedback on our remit last time to the NZCTU Conference. The attendees were all pleased to hear that the Montreal Declaration had passed unanimously.



The delegates then broke into groups and half the groups were to explain what the Out@Work Council did and how it functioned within the CTU and the other half were to explain what the role of the NZCTU was in relation to workers.

The final session of the morning was taken by Robin Duff and Jo Belgrave who talked about the Safe Schools campaign that the PPTA runs and the issue of homophobia in schools, both for teachers and for students.

ISSUES FACING QUEER WORKERS

The afternoon session was focussed on the issues facing queer workers in the work place.

Human Rights

Human Rights Commissioner Joy Liddicoat gave a session on the Human Rights Act and the Employment Relations Act. She spoke at length about the issues facing trans workers and talked about the Transgender Task Force and where it was up. Under Labour there was a real belief that the recommendations from this task force would be implemented but they are unsure whether it will still go ahead.



She also talked about the issues facing GLBTI workers internationally and talked about the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission that is working at combining LGBTI rights. Joy is in the centre of the photo and Barbara is in the back.

Legal Rights



Bill Bevan from the Whiteria Community Law Centre came and talked about what Community Law Centres do and how they can help workers. He then talked about their very extensive on-line web page and the number of resources available for download from this website. The resource he spoke to most was the one created by the Law Centre for Queer Workers. It is a very extensive document and it has now been placed on the Out@Work web site for easy reference for queer workers within the union movement.

Dealing with Discrimination

Ian Gordon, PSA Delegate and Co-Convenor, then took a session on dealing with discrimination at work. He had 8 case studies of discrimination (names had been changed to maintain confidentiality and no worksites were mentioned). He talked to each one but never talked about the outcome. The delegates were again broken into groups and each group was given one of the cases. They were then to look at what assistance the union could give them and what resources were available. This was a very interesting exercise with a lot of discussion afterwards.



POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS

There was a political panel discussion planned for the evening between rainbow MPs and a local District Councillor. However, with the House sitting in urgency Kavin Hague from the Greens and Grant Robertson from Labour were unable to attend (Chris Finlayson had declined our invitation to join the panel discussion). Lyndy McIntyre, Kapiti District Councillor, still attended the meeting but was joined by Andrew Cambell on behalf of the Greens (and who read from notes supplied by Kevin Hague, and Michael Gibbs on behalf of the Labour Party. Lyndy was known to a number of the people and brought a different dimension to the discussion as she talked not about local politics but also about union politics, her personal politics, and the issues of being queer.



The final speaker of the night had the After Dinner slot and was the hit of the conference. Bill Hastings is the Chief Censor at the Office of the Film and Literature Classification. He was appointed as Deputy Chief Censor by the National Government in 1998 and confirmed as Chief Censor by the Labour Government in 1999. He began his talk about explaining what the role of the Film and Literature Censor is and what type of media is covered (almost everything, including e-mails and other electronic media).

He talked openly about the continual complaints he has faced being an openly gay man and having an openly lesbian as his Deputy Chief Censor from such pillars of society as the former Leader of the Christian Heritage Party and now convicted paedophile Graham Capill, Brian Tamaki of the Destiny Church to name just a couple. He also talked about the sort of things people try and get censored, for instance, he is often turning down those people trying to get the Bible censored. He had the audience in stitches as he read from the numerous e-mails he has received from the Christian Right and also as he talked about the same of the items he has had banned, including a very offensive t-shirt.

DAY 2

WORKING WITHIN THE MOVEMENT

Helen Kelly, President of the Council of Trade Unions, opened the morning with a discussion on her vision for where the union movement is going to as she felt it could not stay on the same path. To work towards this vision, there were a need for 4 workgroups:

1. Law
2. Unions
3. Future Leaders
4. Resources



She talked about the need for unions to change so that we can unionise those areas currently under-unionised: construction, retail, agriculture. Some of the ideas put forward included a family membership, free membership for young workers in exchange for a commitment to attend at least 2 union members a year, working towards industry standards based on agreements negotiated with the large players in that industry, the different structure of the union movement and the role of future leaders to work towards this and the need to combine resources, for instance, membership systems, so that there is a lot less duplication and ease of accessing information on a national level.

Next, the delegates were shown a DVD from Komiti Pasefika on how they chose to make contact with their young people and to inform them about workers' issues. Clips were shown from the internet where cartoon characters were used to get the union message across. The meeting felt that this was a really good way of contacting young people.



Unions Waikato then explained what they did to start an Out@Work Network in their area earlier this year. Jo (NZNO) and Ru (SFWU) had looked at doing something within their unions but decided it would be better to have a multi-union meeting to see what sort of things people wanted out of a network.

They worked closely with Jo from the PPTA because of the work that is being done in relation to creating safe schools for GLBTI staff and students at high schools and colleges. They have had one meeting so far and there is a real enthusiasm to have more. The focus is mainly around social networking as it was an important part of how queer people actually communicate.

The delegates then broke into two groups and went with either Karl who was dealing with the issues facing people with HIV-Aids or with Brooklyn, who talked about the issues transgender people have to face. Barbara and I attended the second session whilst Colyn attended the first. Some of the issues that came out of the workshops were:

- Legal requirements surrounding pre-employment and employment disclosure for people with HIV-Aids.
- Issues for donating blood for people with HIV-Aids
- Toilet facilities for transgender people, especially during transition
- References etc from previous employers for people who have newly transitioned
- Delegate phobia of people with HIV-Aids or Transgendered people

BUILDING STRONG AND VISIBLE NETWORKS

I then presented a session on how we can best use electronic tools to build our networks. I went over the Out@Work home page (can be visited at <http://union.org.nz/outatwork>) and we then talked about what information people would like to see on the web page and how often they would want it updated to make it a page worth bookmarking.

We then talked about the many different places people use to socially network. This included:

- Facebook
- Bebo
- YouTube
- Twitter
- E-mails
- Telephone Trees



The group decided we should only concentrate on a small number and ensure that we were on-message with those sites. It was pointed out that we could not control who set pages up on these social networks and what they were saying. All we could do was require people to take off the CTU Logo (pictured right) if the site was not authorised by us and people had chosen to put it on. The meeting decided we would concentrate on the CTU Homepage, Facebook and YouTube. The reason why YouTube was chosen as it was a good way of making our Homepage more interactive by loading up useful YouTube sites that people could go to. Facebook was seen as a way of contacting more socially and being interactive with the people on there. We felt that the Homepage should remain a static information sharing page that would be the link to the outside world.



Finally we broke into groups and worked on what our Utopic organisation would look like and what was a couple of things we could do now to work towards that. Each group felt the most important thing was to have educational modules that could be delivered either as a stand-alone package or as part of formal delegate training. Delegates often don't know who the GLBTI people are on a worksite because they do not always choose to tell people about their private lives and they can "pass" as heterosexual. It was decided that the remit from this conference would be around this area and that we

would ask the CTU to develop training modules and include them within their training, and hope that other unions would see the value and incorporate it into their training.

The other area we thought was about visibility – t-shirts, badges, bumper stickers – to advertise the Out@Work network. We don't have much money but the feeling was that we could do some of these quite cheaply. The meeting encouraged the Out@Work Council to look into this at their next meeting. The Council was also asked to encourage unions to have links on their home pages to the Out@Work home page and have the name of a contact person within each union who could manage an e-mail network that people could ask to belong to.

REPRESENTATION

The final part of the Kamp was to talk about the representational structure of the Out@Work Council and to encourage participation from those who attended the Kamp. Though Unions elect just one person to be on the Council, it was stressed that observers were more than welcome. There was also a discussion held on making the meetings more accessible by having video conferences more often and to have the ability for people to teleconference into these meetings.

Each Union then went away and had a caucus about identifying who their representative was and who they wanted it to be over the next two years. Nominations were then called for the positions of Co-Convenors and the following people were elected:

Ian Gordon – PSA
Karena Brown - EPMU

I was also endorsed as the person who has responsibility for the content of the Out@Work Homepage. Thanks were given to the outgoing Co-Convenor Jo Belgrave from the PPTA for all the hard work she had done over the last 2 years. Jo is second in from the left in the picture.



Karena Brown
Co-Convenor
Out@Work Council