

Model Resolution for Trade Union/Local Party

Following the raid by officers of HM Customs and Excise on Gay's The Word bookshop in London on 10 April 1984, in which more than 800 volumes were removed, the homes of staff and directors searched, and individuals interrogated for up to five hours without being allowed to seek legal advice, this . . . *[insert TU branch, Party branch name etc, as appropriate]*

1. Expresses alarm at this evidence of increasing censorship
2. calls for a review of the powers enabling HM Customs and Excise to seize and order the destruction of imported books and other publications without reference to the provisions of the Obscene Publications Act
3. calls on *[insert TU name, Party name, as appropriate]* to support the rights of specialist booksellers catering for the needs of lesbians and gay men and other groups to stock and supply foreign publications subject only to the same restrictions as to content as apply to works published in this country.

Please send copies of resolutions and letters, together with any replies to:

**Defend Gay's The Word Campaign,
38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1**

Briefing Note 9—What You Can Do

Write to:

Your MP
The Chancellor of the Exchequer (the minister responsible for HM Customs & Excise)
Your local council and/or local councillor
Trades Council
Your Trade Union and its gay group
Local party branch
HM Customs & Excise
Local or national press.

Propose:

Motions to your Trade Union branch/local party meetings etc.

Contact:

Gay's The Word bookshop, 66 Marchmont Street, London WC1; tel 01-278 7654. Linda Semple and Paud Hegarty
Defend Gay's The Word Campaign, 38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1

Donations:

Cheques, postal orders, payable to: Defend Gay's The Word Campaign (or DGTWC)

Posters, leaflets, information pack, available from:

**Gay's The Word Bookshop,
66 Marchmont Street,
London WC1**

Model letter to HM Customs & Excise

To: A.M. Fraser, C.B., T.D.
Chairman of the Board of Customs & Excise
Kings Beam House
Mark Lane, London EC3

Dear Mr Fraser

I am writing to express my real concern at the abuse by your officers of their powers in relation to imported books. There has, I understand, been growing evidence in recent months of the unjustified and discriminatory seizure by HM Customs and Excise of books of interest to lesbians and gay men. This culminated on 10th April with a raid on the bookshop, Gay's The Word, in which over 800 books and the shop's business records were removed.

Gay's The Word is a serious bookshop, and a focus of London's Gay Community, as well as providing, by mail order, the only source of quality fiction and works of academic research for gay women and men in isolated parts of the country. Your officers' raid is an alarming attack on the basic right of lesbians and gay men to read books which are of specific interest to them. I cannot imagine that a similar raid against a serious bookshop catering for any other minority would have been permitted.

I urge you to order the immediate release of the books and documents which have been removed, and to institute a review of the procedures governing imported books to ensure that your powers are not used oppressively and discriminatorily against the gay community.

I am sending a copy of this letter to my Member of Parliament.

Yours sincerely

Model Letter to Member of Parliament

Dear

I should like to draw your attention to the action on 10 April 1984 by officials of HM Customs and Excise against Gay's The Word bookshop, 66 Marchmont Street, London WC1. During the raid, over 800 books were seized, as well as records and personal belongings. The homes of shop directors and staff were searched. On 6 June 1984, a Seizure Notice was issued against 22 titles taken in the raid; in addition, it appears that HM Customs and Excise are withholding at port of entry all imports from America to the bookshop, as from the beginning of the year.

Gay's The Word bookshop is a non-profit making gay community resource, with the stated aim of providing the widest and most comprehensive range of literature and information for, by, and about lesbians and gay men. Books are surely the most important and fundamental source of information, enlightenment and entertainment, and therefore a truly vital asset.

As my elected representative, and a member of a party which is committed to [if Conservative, insert 'the ideal of individual freedom', if Labour, insert 'the view that the elimination of prejudice and injustice in our society is fundamental to the fight for socialism', if SDP/Liberal, insert 'the protection of private citizens' civil liberties against encroachments by the State'] I would like your assurance that you will defend my right to read the books I choose, and to socialise where I choose, subject only to exactly the same legal restrictions as apply to heterosexual women and men.

Yours sincerely