



Derek Speirs (Report)

THE FAIRVIEW KILLING

The Dublin Gay Collective speak out.

The brutal and sadistic killing of Declan Flynn in Fairview Park has aroused much controversy and outrage, particularly as the gang who admitted to the killing, and many other attacks on gays, were given suspended sentences. Concern over Justice Gannon's decision, however, has focused on the law and order aspects rather than the broader issues involved.

The 1861 Act, which outlaws both abortion and homosexual activity between males, remains on our statute books. That this Victorian law has remained unchanged means that the homosexual male is technically a criminal in Ireland. The significance of this law's continuing existence did not seem particularly serious until fairly recently. However, the fact that a vigilante group could "take the law into its own hands" and carry out a series of attacks on gay men demonstrate the serious repercussions of allowing this law to remain in force.

Another aspect of the legal condemnation of homosexuality manifests itself in the attitude of the police to gays. This became patently obvious last year during the investigations following the murder of Charles Self. Hundreds of gay men were harassed by the police in a manner closer to a witch-hunt than a murder investigation. The rigorous police activity

demonstrated last year was not applied in following up reports of anti-gay attacks in Fairview Park. Had they acted as thoroughly, Declan Flynn might not have been killed.

The attitude shown by the police towards gays, in consciously ignoring reports of attacks in Fairview Park, is a matter of concern. So too are the implications of the outcome of the Declan Flynn trial. The leniency of the court's decision is less important than its implications. The fact that extraneous factors, in this case the victim's sexual orientation, were taken into account in the judge's interpretation of the case has aroused much public controversy and anxiety. The recent imprisonment of the Ranks workers highlights the inconsistency of the way the law is applied.

The blatant prejudice shown both by police and the court, indicates the deeply rooted institutional and social prejudice against gays in this country. The victory parade held by the vigilante group in Fairview, on the night of the court's decision, was a frightening demonstration of blatant prejudice and an indication that they will continue their attacks. It also gives others the licence to attack, and even kill, gays with virtual impunity.

This whole situation has caused

fear and outrage in the gay community. The killing of Declan Flynn has compounded the hostility and prejudice towards us. We are not only exposed to social attacks, but live in increased danger of physical attack. It is essential that all institutional prejudice against gays be immediately changed in order to begin to redress the situation. The concern expressed by those in government about the judicial decisions will amount to nothing more than hypocrisy if they do not take immediate action to repeal the Victorian laws. Similarly all trade unions, political groupings and individuals should voice their protest and insist on the decriminalisation of homosexuality.

The danger of an escalation of violence, by both gangs and individuals, will not be confined to the gay community alone. The incidence of violence against women, racial minorities and others is already a serious problem in this country. Such violence is based upon prejudice, and its treat-

ment under the law contrasts sharply with crimes against property. For example, some years ago a judge allowed, as a "mitigating" factor, the fact that the murdered victim was a prostitute; in many rape cases an excuse is accepted that the woman contributed to the crime by not protesting enough or by being in a dark street by herself.

Thorough examination and radical change of our system of law relating to attacks on women and minorities is badly needed. Unless such changes are immediately instigated we will be forced to continue our existence as second class citizens and subjected to bias from the law and its enforcers.

The march, organised by the Dublin Gay Collective, from Liberty Hall to Fairview Park was to protest against the situation as it stands. The issue of gay rights and violence against women can no longer remain largely ignored. The threat represented by the trial of Declan Flynn's killers is only one example of gross inequity, but it must also be seen as the final straw.



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Part of the thousand-strong Fairview march.

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