

Who Are the Gay Scientists?

Responding to numerous accounts of discrimination, the AAAS Council, in January 1975, recognized the problems of gay and lesbian scientists in the conduct of their science and passed a resolution in support of the rights of sexual minorities. In this resolution, the AAAS deplored "any form of discrimination on the basis of sexual behavior between consenting adults in private." It noted that "because of this discrimination, some scientists are denied the opportunity to practice their profession and others are treated unequitably in terms of salary, promotion, or assigned duties." Subsequent to passage of this resolution, scholarly research questions related to homosexuality and issues of homophobia have been raised at other Annual Meetings. Most notably in January 1980 in San Francisco, a group of gay and lesbian scientists convened to discuss such issues and to set up a national organization.

In June 1980 the Committee on Opportunities in Science (COOS) offered a statement, later transmitted to the Council, which encouraged continued cognizance by the Office of Opportunities in Science (OOS) of the resolution by reiteration of AAAS advocacy of policies of nondiscrimination; assuring the airing of relevant scholarly issues in open forums in the scientific community; and working with the Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility in defining specific and general cases of discrimination for appropriate action. At that same time, however, COOS advised OOS to continue its program emphasis on groups who face barriers related to career access, that is, minorities, women, and the physically handicapped.

In the 18 July 1980 issue of *Science*, a letter appeared from a number of the organizers of the national gay and lesbian scientists group. It outlined some of the specific problems faced by gay and lesbian scientists who seek to conduct their science without the discriminatory behavior and stumbling blocks placed in their paths by those who would put issues of sexual orientation above issues of scientific merit and ability as professionals. The authors cited a number of

examples of rights violations based on sexual preference, such as the effect on gay scientists of immigration practices which bar U.S. admittance to homosexuals.

But who are the gay scientists? Where are they? What are they doing? The staff office for the Committee on Opportunities in Science—the committee charged in the Council resolution with overseeing Association activities regarding sexual minorities—recently received a number of letters from gay and lesbian scientists urging that nondiscrimination on the basis of sexual preference or orientation be included as an advertising requirement of *Science*. Some scientists merely endorsed the request; others gave a more detailed account of the problems and barriers which they have faced as scientists who have had varying amounts of difficulty in their professional life because of being gay or lesbian.

While stereotyping might lead one to think that such letters probably came from a few enclaves within the United States where homosexual life-style is not punished either legally or socially, such as California, New York, or the Washington, D.C., area, letters were in fact received from scientists all over the United States, from Massachusetts to Florida, from Iowa to California. Stereotyping might also lead us to expect that gay and lesbian scientists might choose some fields over others; this proved to be false. Letters were received from persons working in nutrition, psycholo-

gy, chemistry, astronomy, mathematics, anatomy, engineering, public administration, biology, that is, any field which anyone else would enter. Gay and lesbian scientists and engineers are employed in industry, academia, and the federal government. Letters were received from persons employed at major Ph.D. granting institutions as well as 4-year colleges, again the full range that one would expect of any other scientist.

Gay scientists, following the lead of minority and women scientists, have formed caucuses within a number of professional societies where they can band together as a political unit or as an action group to demand rights within the profession. At the San Francisco meeting on homophobia in the workplace, speakers noted, for example, the existence of a caucus among the psychologists; there is a group of gay dentists and several groups of gay engineers. The Los Angeles Gay Scientists and Triangle Area (North Carolina) Gay Scientists are but two local and regional groups with whom the Office of Opportunities in Science has corresponded.

Perhaps too many of the arguments advanced to date have focused on discrimination against gay and lesbian scientists and engineers, without enough corresponding attention being focused on the effect such discrimination has on the rest of the scientific community. The nongay scientific community may be denied the opportunity for interaction and exchange with persons whose scientific ability and competence is unrelated to their sexual preference. They may be denied the talent of a scientist who cannot obtain a security clearance, or who has given up many professional activities

Call for Nominations: 1982 General Election

The Committee on Nominations will meet this fall to select candidates for the 1982 general election. The Committee invites AAAS members to submit nominations, including self-nominations, for the positions of President-Elect and members of the Board of Directors for consideration at that meeting.

A list of current Board members is given on the contents page of *Science*. Candidates for terms to start on 9 January are listed in the 21 August issue.

Nominations should be sent to the Executive Officer, at the AAAS address, no later than 9 October 1981. Each nomination must be accompanied by a curriculum vitae of the proposed candidate.