

The **Gay Liberation Front** (GLF) was formed in New York in 1969 shortly before the Stonewall riots - a series of violent conflicts between the police and LGBT people in New York. The UK Gay Liberation Front first met in 1970.

GLF often used deliberately spectacular and visually conspicuous forms of direct action. When GLF made headlines, gay issues entered the public agenda. In 1971 they staged an alternative pageant in support of Women's Liberation outside the Miss World contest featuring "Miss Used", "Miss Conceived" and "Miss Treated". At an event organised by the evangelical Christian group, The Festival of Light, they dressed as nuns, released quantities of white mice and did the conga down the church's aisle.

In Nottingham, GLF joined with CHE to produce 2 examples of Gay Street Theatre - "Green Noses" and "Robina Hood and her Merry Men".



In 1977 **Mary Whitehouse**, anti-porn campaigner and Dame Edna Everage look-a-like, revived the offence of blasphemous libel to prosecute Gay News. The law had last been used in 1921 and had been presumed to be a dead letter. (Her successors are trying, with less success, to use the same law against "Jerry Springer, the Opera")

She objected to a poem and illustration in Gay News about a gay Roman centurion's love for Christ at the Crucifixion.

During the six day trial, columnist and TV personality Bernard Levin and Novelist Margaret Drabble testified that Gay News was a responsible paper that did not encourage illegal sexual practices. Editor Denis Lemon was convicted and given a nine-month suspended jail sentence and had to pay a £500 fine. Gay News reckoned that the case brought them publicity worth well over £1 million.



The "Clause" was "**Clause 28**", later enacted as Section 28 of the Local Government Act of 1988. It introduced one of the most patronising of legal phrases into British law ... "A local authority shall not promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a *pretended family relationship*".

The notorious air-head, Dame Jill Knight, who helped push the bill through parliament seemed oblivious of the fact that her government were simultaneously taking schools out of the control of local authorities, so they had no say in what schools did about homosexuality. The problem with Section 28 was not what it said, but what people thought it said.

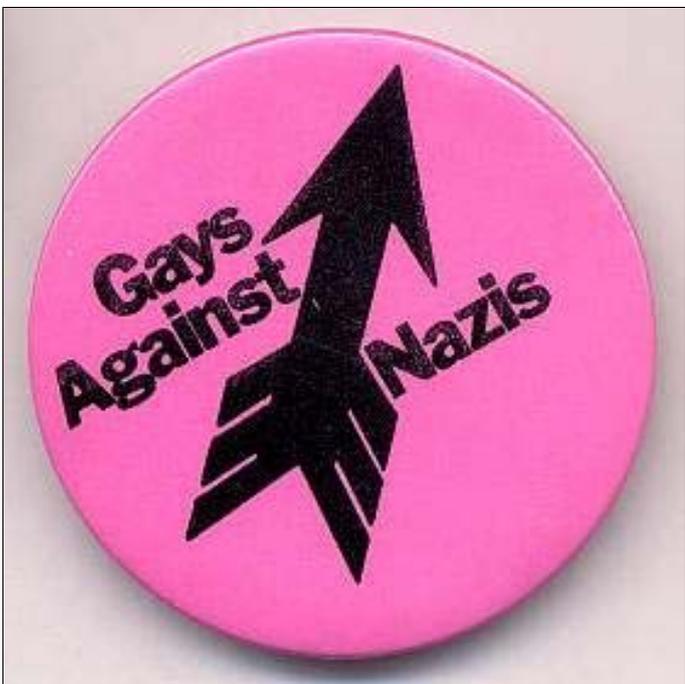
Perhaps the Conservative government should have considered allowing same-sex couples to pay pretend taxes.



**Gay Sweatshop** was formed in London in 1975 and had its roots in the lunchtime theatre club “Ambience” held at the Almost Free theatre. The intention of the group was to counteract the prevailing conception in mainstream theatre of what homosexuals were like, therefore providing a more realistic image for the public.

In 1976 Gay Sweatshop put on a lunchtime season at the Institute of Contemporary Arts. Productions included “Mister X”, “Any Woman can” by Jill Posener, “Randy Robinson’s Unsuitable Relationship” by Andrew Davies, Ian Brown’s “The Fork”, Stone” by Edward Bond and “Indiscreet”.

One of their most memorable productions was “As Time Goes By”, a three part productions set in 1896 after the Oscar Wilde trial, in 1930s Berlin and in 1969 when Gay Liberation was born.



**Gays Against the Nazis** was one of a number of anti-fascist groups which sprang up in the 1970s to counter the efforts of the National Front.

The National Front was the equivalent in its day of the British National Party and its scapegoating techniques were often applied to lesbians and gays.

Other groups included: Women Against the Nazis; Trade Unions Against the Nazis; School Kids Against the Nazis and Civil Servants Against the Nazis.

Applying the principle that many homophobes are people who repress their own homosexuality, it will come as no surprise that several of the leading members of the National Front were later outed as being gay.



The **Tom Robinson Band** hit the club scene in 1976 in the middle of London’s punk explosion. Their live shows got favourable reviews and soon A&R men were attending many of their gigs. Says Tom “As a broke, gay guitarist scratching a living on the fringes of the music business, I inhaled deeply. Our band nailed its flag to the mast of minority rights and set sail across the London pub circuit.

There was one small problem - a song in the band’s set called “Glad to be Gay” that is one of the most convincingly angry and sincere performances you will ever hear in rock music. Even some of the punk independents who were supposed to take chances shied away. Stiff Records president, Jake Riviera, called them “fucking queer music”.

As if to demonstrate the complexities of sexuality, Tom Robinson later got married.