

Establishment of the Queen's Homophile Association (QHA)

On September 26, 1973, a homophobic article published by the engineering paper, *Golden Words*, entitled "Fred Fudpucker," acted as the catalyst for the establishment of the Queen's Homophile Association. In response, "Three Campus Homophiles" wrote a letter to the editor of the *Queen's Journal* that condemned the "naked intolerance and antagonism" within the column and expressed the need for a homophile organization. Until such a group could be formed, they felt that "the prevailing attitude on campus [would] continue to be one in which homosexuals, normal citizens in every other respect, [would] be compelled to hide their real natures for the sake of security and be obliged to cloak their real natures in the shadows on the fringes of the underworld." Given their reference to a student being physically assaulted that very summer, it is not surprising that these "three homophiles" were reluctant to identify themselves by name.

Generally speaking, the public responded favourably to establishing a homophile association at Queen's, but some opinions published in the *Queen's Journal* did not reflect this attitude. Peter Strahlendorf, the author of the homophobic column, criticized the three homophiles in a letter to the editor of the *Journal* entitled "Fudpucker replies." He claimed that to "take violent offence at such trivia is indicative of extreme paranoia and insecurity," adding that he had "talked to several members of the Gays of Ottawa organization" who were "sincere enough in their convictions to be humourous about their own sexual preference." In his second faulty attempt at humour, Strahlendorf wrote a letter to the editor of *Golden Words* justifying his column by claiming that he and most people he knew enjoyed it, "some people use it to roll with," and that it "provides an excuse for paranoid gays to sound off." Both these and subsequent letters to the editor similarly contributed to derailing the conversation from its original focus on the discrimination faced by homosexual students on campus to making a joke of, and engaging in personal attacks on, the "three homophiles" who had written the original letter.

Some students did voice their support for the founding of a homophile association. One letter to the *Journal* written by an individual identified as H.I.G., wrote that "[a]s a homosexual myself I would be interested in such a group in which gays, bi-sexuals and heterosexuals could learn more about each other," emphatically concluding that "[w]e need a legitimate means of communication. NOW." It is interesting to note that at the end of H.I.G.'s letter, the *Journal* editor's note reads as follows:

It appears that the only action being taken on this question is in the form of letters to the editor. Your points we feel, have been well taken. However, as it has been previously stated, the aim of such an organization could be too [sic] 'get out of the closets and into the streets.' For this reason, correspondence on this question is closed. Your actions will speak louder than your words. At this point, may we reiterate that all letters to the editors must be signed, in full, by the writer and be accompanied by his-her phone number. While the *Journal's* new policy required correspondents that were interested in establishing a homophile association to include a name and a phone number, the conditions were not extended to the person(s) that wrote an anonymous spoof of the three homophiles' original letter in that very same issue.

On November 2, 1973, a letter to the editor appeared in both *Golden Words* and the *Journal* announcing the formation of a campus homophile association. The letter was signed by

Terry Watson, which was a gender-neutral pseudonym that could be used by members to preserve their anonymity. They invited anyone on campus that was interested in joining or learning more about the group to contact them by phone on the Rap Line “at 547-2893 between 7:00 p.m. and 11 p.m., Monday through Friday,” or by mail “c-o Victoria Hall, Queen’s University.” Watson maintained that “[a]ll calls will be treated in the strictest confidence and will be answered.” Within a year, the Queen’s Homophile Association had produced a constitution to receive formal recognition from the Alma Mater Society, held several meetings and parties and had a fully functioning Rap Line.