BEFORE THE ACT

A CELEBRATION TO COUNTER THE EFFECTS OF SECTION 28
Dear Friends,

Thank you for being here tonight and for your contribution to the Organisation for Lesbian and Gay Action (OLGA) in our fight against Section 28 of the Local Government Act.

OLGA is a national organisation which campaigns on issues affecting lesbians and gay men. Membership is open to anyone who shares our concern, whatever their sexuality, and our constitution ensures that no one political group can take power. Currently, apart from our direct work on Section 28, we have three campaigns - on education, on lesbian custody and on violence against lesbians and gay men.

We are a new organisation, formed in 1987 only days before backbench MPs proposed what was then Clause 14, outlawing ‘promotion’ of homosexuality by local authorities. OLGA is the outcome of more than a year’s planning, consultation, discussion and a national conference on our needs. For sometime, many of us had felt the need for a national organisation which could truly bring together a wide range of all the different sections of lesbian and gay society and through which our many different voices could be heard. Never has that need been more urgent than now.

Since Clause 14 (later 27, 28 and 29) was announced, OLGA members throughout the country have worked non-stop on action against it. We raised its public profile by organising the first national Stop The Clause Rally in January and by organising and speaking at meetings all over Britain. We have lobbied Lords and MPs repeatedly and prepared briefings for them, for councils, for trade unions, for journalists and for the general public. Our tiny make-shift office, staffed entirely by volunteers, has been inundated with calls and letters requesting information and help. More recently, we have also begun to offer support to groups prematurely penalised by local authorities only too anxious to implement the new law.

The money raised by Before The Act will go into a special account, which will be administered by two people from OLGA and two people from the show. It will be used to counter the effects of the Section throughout the country and to offer support to those affected by it. OLGA has adopted the motto ‘Lesbian and Gay Rights Are Human Rights’. Thank you for giving your support to the fight to make that a reality.

Jennie Wilson, Kris Black, Phil King
on behalf of the OLGA Executive

The Arts Lobby exists to campaign against all attacks on freedoms restricted by Section 28

Works so far include:

- Organising a triumphant national press conference
- Winning back funding for a threatened gay play
- Successfully supporting a beleagured bookshop
- Mobilising Equity to liaise with all companies over censorship
- Fighting for the rights of lesbian and gay students at a music college

We continue to monitor, advise, help and inform

01 631 1353
Mr. Tony Banks: I will be brief, but I want to say something about the speech made by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight). I feel that her speech owed more to imagination than to truth. I listened to an interview that the hon. Lady gave on Radio 4’s “Today” programme. Mr. Brian Redhead asked her to support her statement that she had a great deal of evidence about schools promoting homosexuality. Mr. Redhead asked about schools promoting homosexuality. The hon. Lady replied that she had not brought her files with her, but she claimed that she had evidence when she was pressed even further. When she was pressed even further, she had said “I didn’t offer to name any schools.” I am not surprised that the hon. Lady has received letters from parents who have been alarmed about the position. They have been alarmed by what the hon. Lady said.

Dame Jill Knight: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Banks: No. If the hon. Lady will wait a moment, I will give way to her, and that is more than she did to me or to anyone else.

It is not surprising that parents have become alarmed by the kind of scare stories and fantasies that the hon. Lady has propagated in her various interviews and speeches. She has never been able to produce evidence, other than that which comes from her over-fertile imagination.

Dame Jill Knight: I have repeatedly given a list of local authorities in whose areas this has been going on. It seems odd to me that Opposition Members are apparently unaware that local authorities run local schools. [HON. MEMBERS: “Name the schools.”] I have repeatedly given all the names of the local authorities, and this is local authority policy. I must also say that parents were complaining long before—

9.30 pm

Mr. Banks: Which schools?

Dame Jill Knight: I have named them. The hon. Gentleman must not nit-pick with me. If he does not understand that local authority education runs the schools, he ought to go back and start learning about how these things are done—/Interruption./ Let me complete my remarks to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), who was good enough to give way.

None of this clause would have come into being without ample evidence, some of which I have read out tonight. All the parents complained long before that broadcast. A young pregnant woman was kicked in the stomach and jolly nearly lost her child long before it.

Mr. Banks: The hon. Lady has not mentioned one school. She is clearly guilty but insane. I rest my case.

Miss Joan Lester (Eccles): Some Conservative Members, among them the hon. Member for Edgbaston, said that they were not concerned with reverting to the law as it was before and did not want to discriminate or make life difficult for homosexuals—they wanted only to protect children. The hon. Lady, who started all this, offered no evidence that children were in danger. When challenged, she has never been able to bring forward evidence, and none has been produced. If hon. Members are concerned on the basis of no evidence, they should not support the clause.
Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): My hon. Friend has asked for examples and perhaps I can assist. I have in my hand a leaflet that was handed out to 15-year-olds at a Bristol school. I will not read out the details of that leaflet because I do not think that I should—[Hon. Members: "Go on."] Opposition Members may want that, but suffice it to say that the leaflet describes and illustrates homosexual activity and underlines that description with: "Good night! Share the pleasure with a friend." That was handed out to 15-year-olds at a school in Bristol.

Mr. Squire: I can only take at face value what my hon. Friend has said. Of course, it is deplorable and I am afraid that such leaflets exist and I would believe that is a serious abuse of the House.

Dr. Cunningham: I believe that the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) should get his facts right. There is no information on the leaflet that he brandished as to who was responsible for its publication or distribution. I was responsible for its publication and distribution. I believe that he should be more accurate in what he says and precise in his allegations regarding such sensitive matters.

Mr. Squire: I almost feel that there are two debates here. The first is a discussion as to the extent that I have caused an abuse to the House. The second is a discussion as to the extent that I have caused an abuse to the House.

Mr. Holland: First, I should like to comment on a charge made by the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) concerning a Lambeth nursery group. I sought to intervene in her speech to ask for her evidence and I am sorry that she is not in the Chamber at the moment. With a constituency in Lambeth, I share the views of my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) who was able to intervene. The hon. Member for Edgbaston said, "When parents complain," I have not had a single parent alleging what the hon. Member for Edgbaston alleged concerning any school in Lambeth. There has not been a single individual complaint from parents on those grounds. I have not had a single letter supporting the charge. I have received many letters and representations opposing the charge.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) for passing across the literature alleged to be from the Terrence Higgins Trust, which was referred to earlier. The hon. Gentleman may agree that it is not evident that that literature was published by the Terrence Higgins Trust. It looks rather as if it was produced by a local group advertising the Healthline service of the Terrence Higgins Trust. The whole thrust of the trust's argument is precisely to combat AIDS. It is widely recognised that unless literature concerning AIDS is sexually explicit it will not reach its target audience and will in no way serve to combat AIDS.

While there is next to no evidence that that literature has been presented by Conservative Members as abuse, the abuse has been quoted by Conservative Members in schools and by homosexual advocacy groups. The only evidence that has been preferably quoted by the evening standard and the Daily Telegraph. Is my hon. Friend still in the Chamber? From a point of order on 9 March 1988, The Daily Telegraph
BEST WISHES

to everyone involved in ‘Before the Act’.

All of the people listed below are opposed to Section 28 of the Local Government Act and have made a financial contribution to tonight’s fundraising efforts:

Dame Peggy Ashcroft
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Your editorial on clause 28 (March 13) expressed the hope that the clause, now clause 29, “will be proved to be as unworkable as its critics predicted... that having been put on the statute books, it will now be forgotten”.

Though we appreciate the stand taken by you against the clause, we think it must not be forgotten. The House of Commons did confirm it, and anyone who wishes to invoke it may do so if she or he feels that a local council contravenes it. Contravention of the clause is open to interpretation, both arbitrary and subjective. The mere possibility that anyone may now initiate what are in effect procedures of censorship will also result in self-censorship by libraries, museums, galleries, theatres, and so on funded by local councils. In a country without a declaration of human rights, this clause is a real threat to civil liberties.

David Hockney is not alone in perceiving the pernicious implications of the clause. Any person who is concerned about the erosion of civil liberties in this country must agree that this clause constitutes a grave danger, not just to the arts, but to the future of our society.


This letter followed up on David Hockney’s public outrage against censorship in England.
**Works written by:**
(in alphabetical order)

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<td>Tony Holland</td>
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**Extracts directed by:**

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**A BENEFIT AGAINST SECTION 28 FOR THE**
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Devised by: MICHAEL CASHMAN, SEAN MATHIAS, IAN MCKELLEN, STEPHEN OLIVER and MARTIN SHERMAN

Produced by: 20TH CENTURY VIXEN PROMOTIONS

Director: RICHARD EYRE
Musical Directors: JONATHAN COHEN and JOHN OWEN-EDWARDS
Design: PHILIP PROWSE
Lighting Design: MARK HENDERSON
Costumes: SPYROS COSCINAS

ORGANISATION FOR LESBIAN AND GAY ACTION
BEFORE THE ACT

20TH CENTURY VIXEN PROMOTIONS CREW

Stage Director: Trina Cornwall
Deputy Stage: Director: Wendy Martin
Chief "Gofah" Kim Nagle
Sound Technician: Teg Davies
Stage Manager: Sarah Hoxall and Beverley Ayre
Stage Crew: Sue Baynton, Kathy Lill, Cathy Kier, Kiri Caxton, Danielle Nelson, Caroline Burgess
Artiste liaison: Wendy Martin and Kim Nagle
Chaperones: Angela, Cathy, Corderia, David, Debo, Jeanette, Jules, Lisa, Mahesh, Paul, Steve, Tracy
Front of House Co-ordinator: Martin Girvin
Ushers: OLGA members

SPECIAL THANKS

Backcloths painted by - Glasgow Citizens Theatre
Costumes - English National Opera and Theatre Royal Stratford East
Courier services - Creative Courier, W1
Hair - Wish, Kensington Hilton Hotel
Hospitality - Devotes Dalston Deli
Poster & Programme Cover Design - Angela Spark
Programme - Stephen Burn and Stephen Burton
Props - Theatre Royal Stratford East


The Organisation for Lesbian and Gay Action (OLGA), without whose financial assistance this benefit would not have been possible.

BEFORE THE ACT

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Out every Thursday even if you're not...!

THE PINK PAPER

sends love and best wishes to everyone involved in 'Before the Act'

Subscription details Tel: 01 226 8905
And

HENCEFORWARD

together...

Good fortune to all tonight from
Michael Codron and David Sutton

From November:
Ian McKellen
Jane Asher
in Alan Ayckbourn’s
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Vaudeville Theatre
London WC2
wishes every success to all involved in tonight's show
Terry Higgins was one of the first people in the UK to die of AIDS - he was also gay. The Terrence Higgins Trust was set up in 1982 by some of his friends, and soon became the first organisation in this country to operate an AIDS helpline, offer counselling and support, and distribute safer sex advice. We currently provide the following services to the community:

Support, practical help and counselling to people with AIDS and their supporters; drug education and counselling to IV drug users, both in the community and in the prison; health education and training; legal and welfare services to people with AIDS; information to individuals, organisations and groups worldwide; advice and support to women affected by HIV and AIDS. This is just some of the work we do with the help of staff and volunteers of all ages, backgrounds and sexual orientations.

The Terrence Higgins Trust is concerned that Section 28 may affect areas of our work, as well as increase institutionalised homophobia, and for those reasons wholeheartedly endorses this event and the campaign. Without lesbians and gay men the Trust would not exist.

Helpline 01 242 1010 3pm - 10pm daily. Vistel 01 405 2463 7pm - 10pm daily (for the deaf and hard of hearing). Legal Line 01 405 2381 7pm - 10pm Wednesdays. Administration 01 831 0330 weekdays.

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Friday 17th
Black lesbian and Gay Pride at the West
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Thursday 23rd
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Paul De Freitas Casting

Love & Luck to you all
Paul xx

Good Luck to all in 'Before the Act' and to everyone after it

THE DRILL HALL ARTS CENTRE

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THE MURPHY GIRLS
BY SEAMUS FINNEGAN - DIRECTED BY JULIA PASCAL

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GAY SWEATSHOP'S
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WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY PHILIP OSMENT
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EVERYWOMAN 34 Islington Green, London N1 Tel: 01 359 5496
Wishes 20th Century Vixen and 'Before The Act' every success.
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moving against
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with
the Show
every success.

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