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STONEWALL and IRIS

Welcome to Limehouse and our launch to the lesbian and gay world!

Work towards establishing THE STONEWALL GROUP and THE IRIS TRUST has now been going on quietly for almost a year. The idea began last summer when Ian McKellen and a few others who had worked on the Arts and Media lobbies and other campaigns against the Section considered how best to keep the momentum of those campaigns going in the future.

So, last September, some of the founders members of THE STONEWALL GROUP and THE IRIS TRUST signed a new "Limehouse Declaration" - one that is going to last a lot longer than the one signed next door. Planning for the new organisations has proceeded since then.

This autumn, we'll be telling the world at large about this powerful new force in campaigning for lesbian and gay equality. Right now its time for us to come out to our own in the lesbian and gay world.

THE STONEWALL GROUP is a company; THE IRIS TRUST a charity. They will complement each other in consolidating our strength and determination of purpose that arose in the wake of Section 28. Their existence is announced on 24 May, 1989 - a year to the day from the time that Section 28 came into effect.

THE STONEWALL GROUP

THE STONEWALL GROUP is a registered company, limited by Guarantee and entirely non profit-making. It has been set up by a group of founder members. Names and personal biographies are set out below. THE STONEWALL GROUP's objects are to campaign and lobby for lesbian and gay equality. It will provide a legal and parliamentary lobbying service on lesbian and gay issues, and aims to make real steps forward through media work and promoting progressive legislative change.

STONEWALL will work in partnership with existing gay and lesbian campaigning organisations, in pursuit of our common objectives. Both organisations are non party-political.

STONEWALL GROUP'S first projects will include :

1. A Parliamentary Group has been set up to consider new, proposed or potential legislation on issues that may particularly effect lesbians and gay men; and to work with MPs and legislators to ensure equality. A Parliamentary Working Party is being formed and will be supported and serviced by the Stonewall Group.

2. Organising a European study conference on "Rights for All", to be held in 1990; we are applying this month for funds from the EEC to host this international academic and political conference in Britain. The conference will work towards ensuring that lesbian and gay rights are fully represented and incorporated in the social institutions that will accompany increasing European integration.
3. In the third week of June, STONEWALL GROUP will advertise (in the lesbian/gay press and in serious newspapers) for an Executive Director. Soon after this, a national office will be established in London and our detailed plans for 1990 made known.
4. BENT. A benefit performance of BENT, by Martin Sherman, and starring Ian McKellen and Michael Cashman, has been organised at the Adelphi (?) Theatre on Sunday 25 June. This has already been advertised.
5. An early task for Stonewall's staff will be lobbying at this year's party conferences, laying the groundwork for new legislation.
6. The "Bricks for Stonewall" fund-raising scheme is launched today. "Buy a brick for your personal Stonewall", says Ian McKellen - who will personally sign and present some of the souvenir STONEWALL Gold Bricks being prepared for donors who offer £1000 or more to the Stonewall Group. Or you can have your own STONEWALL Pink Brick - and a celebrity presentation ceremony - for a donation of £250.
7. Stonewall members Ian McKellen and Duncan Campbell are working on a new campaigning book which Chatto and Windus plan to publish in their newly launched 'Counterblasts' series.
8. Long term legislative planning for lesbian and gay rights will be tied in to careful scrutiny of existing and current parliamentary legislation.

THE STONEWALL GROUP will be run by a Board of Directors. Up to five people will eventually be appointed as Directors. At the moment, there are three - Michael Cashman (chair), Deborah Ballard (company secretary) and Jennie Wilson. The Directors are appointed by the members. In due course, two further directors will be appointed. Directorships and other positions will be reviewed after the first year of operations. Up to twenty members may join The Stonewall Group, but who will form the full quota of 20 places has not yet been finally decided. Current members of Stonewall are listed below.

THE IRIS TRUST

IRIS will be a registered charity by the time we launch to the outside world this autumn. At the moment, the constitution for THE IRIS TRUST has been approved in principle by Charity Commission staff. Registration will take place shortly. IRIS will raise money to conduct research and education related to the needs of homosexuals who face suffering through social prejudice. Iris will fund work meeting these charitable objectives conducted by The Stonewall Group and by other lesbian and gay organisations. The Stonewall Group will also undertake administrative support for the Iris Trust.

IRIS will be run by Trustees, who have been selected in conjunction with The Stonewall Group. Up to seven Trustees may be appointed. At the moment, there are five : Ian McKellen (chair), Olivette Cole-Wilson, Dr Peter Rivas, Pam St Clement and Simon Fanshawe.

WHO ARE : STONEWALL AND IRIS ?

Michael Cashman : Formerly "Colin" in "Eastenders", as an actor and activist Michael took a leading role in the Arts lobby and other campaigns against the Section. In recognition of his efforts, he was named Gay Personality of the Year for 1988 by readers of Capital Gay. Michael will be the chair of The Stonewall Group.

Deborah Ballard : The company secretary of the Stonewall Group, Deborah is a solicitor in commercial practice in London. She has been active in gay and community organisations for 15 years, and recently worked with the Arts lobby and served on the management committee of the London Lesbian and Gay Centre.

Ian McKellen : Britain's leading Shakespearian actor came out through his prominent role in the Arts lobby campaign against the Section. He has personally raised hundreds of thousands of pounds for Aids organisations through his one-person show, "Acting Shakespeare", and a host of other celebrity performances. For all this work, Ian was voted Personality of the Year for 1988 by the readers of Pink Paper. Ian will be the first chair of the Iris Trust.

Pam St Clement : The well-known actress playing bar landlady "Pat" in "Eastenders", Pam has been an active supporter of Pride and other benefits, and of the campaign against the Section. She will be a trustee of the Iris Trust.

Matthew Parris : A former Conservative Member of Parliament, Matthew Parris was until recently the presenter of TV's Weekend World. He worked actively with members of both the Arts and Media lobbies against the section, and was instrumental in preparing the Media lobby's major advertisement in the Independent newspaper.

Jennie Wilson : A computer consultant, Jennie was one of the founders of the London Lesbian and Gay centre, and of the Organisation for Lesbian and Gay Action (OLGA). She chaired and helped organise the 1987 conference on Legislation for Lesbian and Gay Rights. Jennie will be a Director of The Stonewall Group.

Duncan Campbell : An investigative journalist with the New Statesman & Society magazine, Duncan joined Ian McKellen in coming out in response to the Section. He has won awards for writing and broadcasting on secrecy and civil liberties. He has written and campaigned for Aids scientific research and treatment, and against drugs companies, doctors and quacks seeking to exploit people with Aids.

Olivette Cole-Wilson : A social worker specialising in fostering and adoption, Olivette is currently working with and providing services to London Friend. She has been involved with the black lesbian movement since it began in 1979. Olivette will be a trustee of the Iris Trust.

Simon Fanshawe : Gay comedian and writer Simon Fanshawe is chair of the national charity War on Want, and brings a broad and deep understanding of fund raising and charity work to Iris and Stonewall. He has been actively involved in fund raising for lesbian and gay groups, and with Pride.

Lisa Power : A local authority Aids & HIV adviser, Lisa has been active for many years in lesbian and gay groups, notably the London Lesbian and Gay switchboard. She is currently one of the Secretaries General of the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA). She was an early lesbian co-editor of the Pink Paper, after it was launched in 1988.

Dr Peter Rivas : A senior doctor, Peter recently took early retirement as the Consultant and Dental Superintendent of University College Hospital London. He has been involved with the Lesbian and Gay Medical Association for the last 6 years, and was recently the chair of the Association. Peter will also be a trustee of Iris.

Fiona Cunningham-Reid : A camerawoman and independent film-maker, Fiona has produced and distributed videos of fund-raising benefits for lesbian and gay organisations.

Peter Ashman : The Legal Officer of Justice (the British section of the International Commission of Jurists), Peter has been closely involved with setting up the first-ever lesbian and gay charities, and with the Law Reform Committee of the Campaign for Homosexual Equality. He previously helped to found the Gay Lobby.

Dorian Jabri : An experienced senior local government officer, Dorian worked for the GLC's Ethnic Minorities Unit and later on lesbian and gay issues for the London Strategic Policy Unit. He has specialised in policing issues and helped establish the Black Lesbian and Gay Centre.