contributed to the aura of oracular strangeness which helped to make the author of highly abstruse and technical papers into virtually a household name—at least in academic circles.


Wayne R. Dynes

WITTGENSTEIN, LUDWIG

although closeted about his love for other men, Carl had begun an active homosexual life at fourteen. "Kids can take care of themselves," he wrote, "and are sexual beings way earlier than we'd like to admit. Those of us who began cruising in early adolescence know this, and we were doing the cruising, not being debauched by dirty old men." Wittman came out in an anti-war magazine ("Waves of Resistance," Liberation, 13 [November, 1968], 29–33), where he held that resisting heterosexuality was related to resisting war.

Wittman was part of a gay contingent at a San Francisco demonstration in May 1969 against the States Steamship Line, a Vietnam war supply carrier. His essay, "Refugees from Amerika: A Gay Manifesto," was written after the Steamship demonstration but before Stonewall (June 27, 1969) and was first published late in 1969. Providing an ideology for radical gay males and widely reprinted by gay and left movement groups, the Manifesto never became dogma: "the gay liberation movement is in its polymorphous, unbureaucratic, anarchistic form," Wittman wrote gleefully in 1970.

In 1969, Wittman acquired land in Wolf Creek, Oregon, with his lover Stevens McClave, who committed suicide in 1974. Between 1973 and Wittman's death he and Allan Troxler were lovers. In Autumn 1974 the first issue of the periodical RFD appeared with a cover by Allan and an article by Carl. RFD promised "to build some sense of community among rural gay people."

In 1981, Wittman moved to Durham, North Carolina, where he worked in the Durham Food Co-op, was a leader in Citizens for a Safer East Durham, which closed the Armageddon Chemical plant, and helped write Durham's Convention
Center: In Whose Interest? while co-director of the North Carolina Public Interest Research Group in 1981–82. Carl was one of the founders of the Durham Lesbian and Gay Health Project and was active in AIDS work. He died on January 22, 1986, after he rejected hospital AIDS treatment and chose to die in dignity among friends at home. In choosing the time of his death, he demonstrated his 1963 principle that people must be “confident that they have some control over the decisions which affect their lives.”

Charley Shively

WOLFENDEN REPORT

The Report of the Departmental Committee on Homosexual Offenses and Prostitution, published on September 3, 1957 by the British government, is known as the Wolfenden Report after the Chairman of the Committee, Sir John Wolfenden (1906–1985), at that time Vice Chancellor of Reading University. This Report was destined to have momentous and far-reaching effects.

Creation of the Report. In the wake of several scandalous court cases in which homosexuality had been featured, the British Parliament on August 24, 1954 appointed a committee of 15 men and women whose task it was “to consider . . . the law and practice relating to homosexual offenses and the treatment of persons convicted of such offenses by the courts” along with the laws relevant to prostitution and solicitation. The committee met on 62 days of which 32 were devoted to the oral interrogation of witnesses. All the sessions were private, not only to avoid sensationalizing of the deliberations on the part of the media, but also because “only in genuinely private session” could the witnesses “giving evidence on these delicate and controversial matters” speak “with the full frankness” which the subject demanded. The proposals with respect to homosexuality were for the time a radical innovation: of the 13 members of the Committee who had served during the full three years, 12 recommended that homosexual behavior between consenting adults in private should no longer be a criminal offense. The Report did not explicitly define “consent” and “in private,” leaving these words to be interpreted as they would be in the case of heterosexual conduct; it suggested that the age of consent be twenty-one; and it tried to relieve from the threat of prosecution the victim of blackmail whose homosexual activity had been revealed to the police.

For the common law countries of the English-speaking world, the Wolfenden Report meant a break with a legal tradition that had gone virtually unchallenged since the enactment of 25 Henry VIII c. 6 in 1533. It urged that homosexual behavior cease to be criminal, that the religious sanctions against it were not grounds for bringing it to the attention of secular courts, and that there “must remain a realm of private morality and immorality which is, in brief and crude terms, not the law’s business.” The signers of the document recognized that “to reverse a long-standing tradition is a serious matter and not to be suggested lightly.” But the task entrusted to the Committee was to “state what we regard as just and equitable law,” and that consideration of the question should not be unduly influenced by “the present law, much of which derives from traditions whose origins are obscure.” This last remark evidently reflected the work of the Anglican cleric Derrick Sherwin Bailey, who had put forward arguments intended to exculpate the Christian Church of responsibility for the legal intolerance of homosexuality, preferring instead to place the onus on pagan, pre-Christian beliefs and laws.

Moreover, and against the testimony of nearly all the psychiatric and psychoanalytic witnesses, the Committee found that “homosexuality cannot legitimately be regarded as a disease, because in many cases it is the only symptom and is compatible with full mental health in other respects,” echoing what Iwan Bloch