

Advancing the homosexual agenda

The Cranky Professor

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What do lesbians and gays want? What everyone else wants—good jobs at fair wages, health care, housing, education, civil liberties such as freedom of expression and freedom of association, opportunities for leisure and recreation, safe streets, well-run cities, responsible government.

But they have these things, at least to the extent members of any other group does. In Canada, no one may deny a person a job or a seat at the lunch counter in virtue of that person's sexual orientation. It's nobody's official business with whom Canadians have sex or how they have it, so long as everything's consensual. Same-sex marriage is recognized in law, and lesbians and gays may form families with children.

And so the battles have been won.

Well, not quite. There's still the more amorphous goal of social acceptance. Lesbians and gays still find themselves on the receiving end of mockery and hostility because of their sexual orientation. The quest for social acceptance is one large task that remains.

Now certainly people today are friendlier toward homosexuals and more accepting of homosexuality than people were three or four decades ago. The progress lesbians and gays have made in securing legal protection against discrimination would not have been possible had attitudes remained fixed.

Yet, despite this progress, more than a few people continue to be repelled or disgusted by the thought of homosexual sex, and would have nothing to do with homosexuals if they could. For many people it matters that, for instance, their children are not homosexual. Or it matters that homosexuality does not become any more prevalent in our communities than it already is.

Gays and lesbians, then, want not only fair access to goods like jobs and housing. They also want that people generally, but especially the people in the communities in which they live and work, are warmly accepting of homosexuality and homosexuals. They want their sexual orientation to make no difference to strangers or acquaintances, and to be appreciated as part of who they are by friends and family. In the jargon of some of those committed to the homosexual agenda, they want to normalize homosexuality.

Homosexuals are not, of course, entitled to these things, at least not in the same way they are entitled to fairness in jobs and housing. No one is entitled to people's acceptance or warm feelings. People may feel how they want about whomever they

want. Attempts by governments and commissions to identify and punish or remedy anti-gay sentiments or expressions of them are contrary to the ideals of a liberal democracy, and deforming of its public culture. It's right that the restaurant owner must serve the two men holding hands or face the law. But it's his business what he thinks about them and what he writes to the newspaper.

We must, that is, not only be concerned to advance the homosexual agenda, but be concerned with how we advance it. We must not try to advance it at the cost of civil liberties, even should we think such an attempt would succeed.

So how, then, are we to go about normalizing homosexuality? Through argument and example. And one place where argument and example will have good effect is in school, both elementary and secondary. Gay-positive teachers and students can do a world of good in promoting acceptance of homosexuality and homosexuals just by talking about homosexuality and about the condition and aspirations of homosexuals within our communities.

This talk had better not be preachy or sanctimonious, though, and it had better not slide into applying social pressure on people to have the right attitudes. But it's not hard to speak candidly and knowledgeably about matters of controversy while being respectful, conversational, and open to other points of view. Or at least it's a skill one can acquire easily.

Two positive developments with regard to the homosexual agenda are the formation of gay-straight alliance clubs in the schools and the inclusion of homosexuality as a subject of study in both biology and social studies.

Of course, teachers and students must be careful not to make the academic study of homosexuality an excuse to try to change attitudes. The point of the classroom is to impart facts and theories to children and to assist them in becoming good writers and good thinkers. Everyone suffers whenever this point is compromised, even for the sake of ends of which we approve.

Nonetheless, acquainting young people with facts and theories about sexuality and having them participate in critical discussions of social norms and people's attitudes cannot help but create gay-positive teens and young adults. By encouraging teachers to include homosexuality as an academic topic, we will be advancing a noble agenda through noble means.