

The Shadow of Section 28

25 October 2013

Overview of session

- **How Section 28 came to be.**
- **The consequences of Section 28 for LGBT people**
- **Section 28 repealed**
- **The Legacy of Section 28**
- **2013...**

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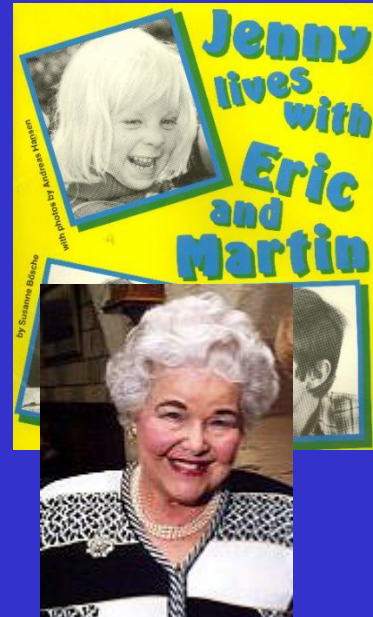
How s. 28 came to be (1)

- After decriminalisation, homosexuality went from being **'illegal but discussed'** to being **'legal but not always approved of'**. People were unsure of how to deal with it.
- Awareness of homosexuals changed from 'a bunch of camp but unthreatening comedians and entertainers' to a small group of dangerous political types.
- The Media began to scrutinise the policies of the 'Loony Left', especially where they thought that councils might be giving money to inappropriate groups.

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How s. 28 came to be (2)

- With the coming of HIV/AIDS (originally GRID), fear of homosexuals and their ‘practices’ began to spread.
- There was increased opposition to some school policies whose proponents felt were simply inclusive of sexual minorities but whose opponents believed were ‘promoting the homosexual lifestyle’.
- *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin* published.
- Jill Knight MP, later Baroness Knight, believed the gay rights movement wanted to ‘abolish the family’.



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Section 28 enacted

Section 28 became law on 24th May 1988.

The night before, several protests were staged by lesbian women, including abseiling into Parliament and a famous invasion of the BBC's Six O'Clock News, during which one woman managed to chain herself to Sue Lawley's desk, only to be sat upon by Nicholas Witchell.

There were 10,000 protesters in London and 15,000 in Manchester.



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**“Stop
Section
28!”**



**“Stop
Section
28!”**

“And I do apologise if you’re hearing quite a lot of noise in this studio at the moment. I’m afraid that we have rather been invaded by some people who we hope to be removing very shortly...”

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Section 28 said that:

... a local authority "shall not intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality" or "promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship".

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Some questions...

What do you think were the consequences for LGBT people?

How would you feel to hear that your relationships were ‘pretended family’?

What signal did this legislation send to homophobic people?

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Consequences of s. 28 for LGBT people

- A feeling of being cast out by society - overly dramatic?
- Homosexuality was no longer mentioned in schools - LGBT children grew up with only playground gossip to work with.
- A feeling of unfairness and hurt.

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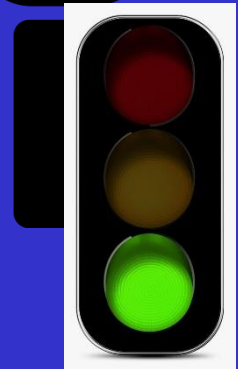
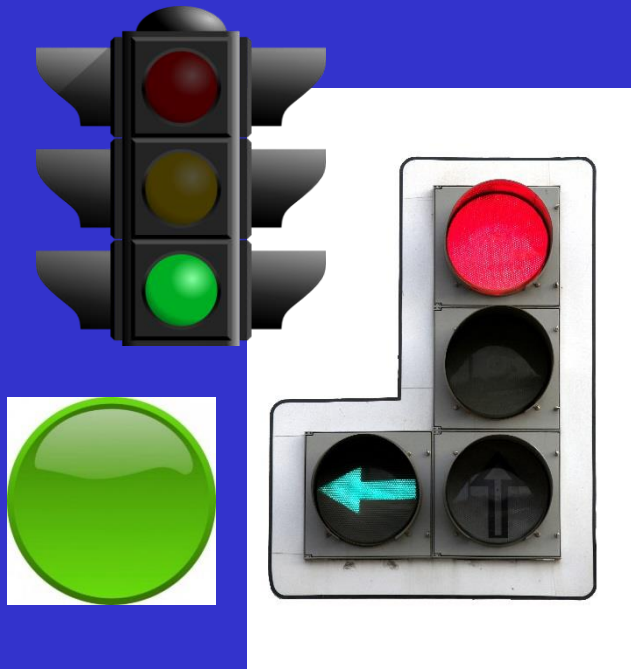
Consequences of s. 28 for other people

- Confusion.
- Some thought schools could not discuss homosexuality in any way.
- The NUT and the Dept for Education & Science gave advice to the contrary.
- A generation of children of all sexual orientations learned that LGBT people were second class citizens.

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The signal to homophobic people?



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Section 28 repealed (1)

7 February 2000: the first attempt at repeal was introduced by the Labour Government as part of the *Local Government Act 2000*, but was defeated by a House of Lords campaign led by Baroness Young.



21 June 2000: repealed in Scotland as part of the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000 with a 99 to 17 majority vote with only two abstentions.

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In 2000, the London Lesbian Avengers non-violently stopped a no 15 bus in Piccadilly Circus & painted it pink.

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Section 28 repealed (2)

- Despite successive defeats in the House of Lords, the Labour government passed legislation to repeal s. 28 as part of the *Local Government Act 2003* by a vote of MPs.
- **18 September 2003:** It passed the Lords and received Royal Assent.
- **18 November 2003:** The repeal became effective.
- Conservative-run Kent County Council decided to create their own version of Section 28 to keep the effect of the now repealed law in their schools.

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The Legacy of Section 28 in the UK (1)

- Many schools do not discuss sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Children had to rely on playground rumour for their information.
- Teachers felt unable to challenge bullying on grounds of sexual orientation or gender expression. (And many still do.)
- Homophobic abuse went unchecked.

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The Legacy of Section 28 in the UK (2)

- 96% of gay pupils hear derogatory phrases such as “dyke” or “poof” used in school.
- Of those who have been bullied:
 - 53% experienced verbal homophobic bullying,
 - 23% cyberbullying,
 - 16% physical bullying and
 - 6% death threats.

Source – Stonewall’s The School Report 2012

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And in 2013...

- The anti-gay 'propaganda' legislation of St Petersburg, and later Russia nationally, makes it illegal to promote 'non-traditional sexual relationships' to children.
- The British Humanist Association (which campaigns against faith education) announced that it had found 44 schools whose policies either replicated Section 28 or were "overly vague" on the issue of homosexuality.



The Independent & i front pages
20 August 2013

25 October 2013

Resources

A number of documents are available for download from the LGBT History Project blog: <http://lgbthistoryproject.blogspot.co.uk/>. (Look for the post dated 25 October 2013.)

They include:

- These slides
- A Word document of background material
- Three of the school policies using Section 28-like language
- Stonewall's The School Report 2012 (link)

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