

Oracle: The History Journal of Boston College

Volume VII | Issue I

Article 3

“Tell the Truth”: The Ethics, Aftermath, and Efficacy of OutRage!’s 1994 ‘Outing’ of the Anglican Church

Matt Koff

Dartmouth College, matt.g.koff.25@dartmouth.edu

“TELL THE TRUTH”: THE ETHICS, AFTERMATH, AND EFFICACY OF OUTRAGE!’S 1994 ‘OUTING’ OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH

MATT KOFF*

Abstract: In 1994, at the General Synod of the Church of England, a group of protestors from OutRage! 'outed' ten Anglican bishops as secretly gay. OutRage! was a British, direct-action gay rights group started in the 1990s. Peter Tatchell, the leader of OutRage!, organized this protest to fight against the Church of England's homophobic and hypocritical rhetoric towards queer clergy. Tatchell claimed this moment as a pivotal one in the Anglican Church's attitude towards homosexual clergy and laity. This research examines Tatchell's claim as well as the 'outing' as a protest method. This research examines the history and ideology behind 'outing,' OutRage!'s activism, and the Church of England's public attitude towards homosexuality. Utilizing tabloid media coverage and other archival documents, this essay examines if the 'outing' of Anglican bishops between 1994 and 1995 was ethical and effective and if it catalyzed real change within the Church. Through this research, I argue that while the church's policy towards homosexuality was not affected by this protest, the consciousness-raising that occurred around the UK due to the media coverage of these 'outings' was hugely effective and had widespread consequences both inside and outside of the church.

Introduction

In November 1994, on the steps of the General Synod – the Church of England’s annual national assembly meeting held in London – a group of gay rights protesters took center stage and garnered national attention. These activists from OutRage! held ten placards, with each naming an Anglican bishop along with the slogan ‘Tell the Truth’.² They claimed that these bishops had practiced homosexual lives. Yet at the time, Anglican policy rejected clerical participation in homosexuality. OutRage!, a British gay rights organization founded in 1990, was led by famed activist Peter Tatchell. It was infamous in the British media for its controversial, direct-action approach to queer equality.

¹ Matt Koff is a rising senior at Dartmouth College studying History and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. He is interested in LGBTQ+ history, specifically looking at HIV/AIDS activism in the 1980s and 1990s. He hopes to pursue a career in law after college.

²“OutRage! Administrative/Biographical History,” Bishopsgate Institute, last modified 2023.

In March 1995, a senior member of the Church, the Bishop of London David Hope held a press conference in which he described his sexuality as ambiguous, lying in a “grey area” between homosexuality and heterosexuality.³ Prompted by a letter about his accused homosexuality from Peter Tatchell, some celebrated this moment as a pivotal step in the Anglican Church’s attitude towards homosexuality. Tatchell described Hope’s announcement as a “catalyst for reform within the Church of England.”⁴

‘Tell the Truth’ came after years of efforts by queer British people fighting for equality and an end to LGBTQ+ discrimination. Broadly, the English government banned ‘buggery,’ or gay sex in 1533, and executed violators until the 19th century.⁵ This ban remained active until 1967 when the Parliament passed the Sexual Offences Act. Prompted by findings on the normative nature of homosexuality published in the Wolfenden Report, this act legalized homosexual sex for citizens aging twenty-one and above.⁶ Between the 1960s and 1990s, homosexuality became more widely accepted by the British population. However, institutions like the Parliament still attempted to stifle the livelihood of queer British citizens by pushing for homophobic legislation that criminalized queer sexual expression. ‘Tell the Truth’ came to fruition out of this context.

Before ‘Tell the Truth,’ gay groups in the United States unsuccessfully attempted to employ ‘outing’ as a political tool in the early 1990s. ‘Outing’ referred to the non-consensual disclosure of an individual’s hidden sexual identity to the public. This later became a sophisticated method for gay rights organizations in England, and according to OutRage!, caused

³Clifford Longley and Ben Fenton, “Bishop tells of distress at OutRage intimidation,” *Telegraph*, March 13, 1995 (Folder 41 - General Synod/OutRage! Bishopsgate Institute).

⁴Ian Lucas, *OutRage! : an oral history* (London: Cassell, 1998), 195.

⁵Francois Lafitte, “HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE LAW: The Wolfenden Report in Historical Perspective,” *British Journal of Delinquency* 9, no.1 (July 1958), 14.

⁶Kate Gleeson, “Freudian Slips and Coteries of Vice: The Sexual Offences Act of 1967,” *Parliamentary History* 27, pt. 3 (2008), 405.

real change in systems of moral code and governance. Originally a radical, obscure, and theoretical form of protest, OutRage! made ‘outing’ a practical and effective tool that rose to prominence in England. ‘Outing’ caused controversy, enraged the mainstream media, and sparked widespread public debate. Many questions emerged from this ‘outing’ of the Church of England—where was the line between ‘public life’ and ‘private life’? Was ‘outing’ moral? Who could use this tool? Was it effective?

In this essay, I attempt to understand OutRage!’s utilization of ‘outing,’ tracking the tool from its unpopular beginnings in the United States, to a successful media hoax by radical OutRage! exiles, and to the ‘outing’ of Bishop Hope in 1995. Few if any historians have examined the story of OutRage!’s ‘Tell the Truth’ campaign in its entirety. As the first historian to examine this narrative in full, my research relied on tabloid media as well as internal OutRage! documents to recount the 1994-1995 series of actions sanctioned against the Anglican Church. By looking at the case of the Church of England, I hope to test Peter Tatchell’s claim that ‘outing’ caused actual change within the Church, and that it is an effective way to force pro-LGBTQ+ change in historically homophobic institutions. Through both archival research and secondary sources, this essay attempts to grapple with the question at the center of Bishop Hope’s 1995 press conference: *does ‘outing’ work?*

Background

Before continuing this paper, establishing the context and terminology of ‘outing’ is necessary. ‘Coming out’ is the process of disclosing one’s sexuality to others. ‘Outing,’ on the other hand, refers to the act of an individual revealing someone else’s sexuality to others. This is

often non-consensual, typically as a form of revenge, or as this paper wish to establish, as a form of protest.

While OutRage! and the Church of England are British institutions, English gay rights groups that employed ‘outing’ credit American gay rights organizations for inventing and using this political tool first. Thus, this background will focus on the origin of ‘outing’ as a political tool in the American context rather than British history.

Before the emergence of modern gay rights movement, ‘outing’ existed as a tool for heterosexuals to expose closeted queer folks. Senator Joseph McCarthy’s House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) led one infamous large-scale ‘outing.’ Established in 1938, HUAC attempted to expose and expel both secret communists and closeted homosexuals within the U.S. government. These efforts were respectively known as the ‘Red Scare’ and the ‘Lavender Scare.’ Senator McCarthy believed that “homosexuals might be easily recruited by foreign intelligence services and communists” as their experiences in the closet exemplified their susceptibility to deception.⁷ HUAC investigated agencies that employed suspected homosexuals, causing the resignation of about one hundred LGBTQ+ civil servants.⁸ In this instance, the U.S. Congress turned to ‘outing’ to oust homosexuals from the government. This was just one example of ‘outing’ by heterosexuals to discriminate against queer people. Later, as gay rights groups began to reappropriate ‘outing’ against public figures, tabloid media compared their actions to those of Senator McCarthy and HUAC.

As a political tool used by queer people, ‘the closet’ originated from the Stonewall Riots in 1969, the genesis of the modern gay rights movement.⁹ A year after the riot while at the first

⁷“The Lavender Scare - The origin of policy to exclude homosexuals from Federal service,” National Security Agency, *History Today*, last modified October 10, 2018.

⁸“The Lavender Scare,” National Archives Foundation, last modified June 20, 2023.

⁹Abigail Saguy, “The history of ‘coming out,’ from secret gay code to popular political protest,” *UCLA Newsroom*,

gay pride parade, activist Michael Brown claimed that “[homosexuals] have to come out into the open and stop being ashamed...this march is an affirmation and declaration of our new pride.”¹⁰ Unabashed pride and openness about one’s sexuality became the centerpiece of the gay rights struggle in the United States. While different from ‘outing,’ reclaiming ‘the closet’ remained a staple of queer liberation. Activists purposefully rejected powerful heterosexuals’ use of ‘the closet’ against homosexuals and reclaimed their ‘closet’ as a source of pride and power.

The first mention of ‘outing’ as a tool for queer activists emerged from Taylor Branch’s 1982 ‘Closets of Power’ profile on Dan Bradley.¹¹ When Bradley publicly ‘came out’ as gay months before, he became “the highest federal official in American history to declare...that he was a homosexual.”¹² In this piece, Bradley candidly revealed that many powerful men – including “lawyers, lobbyists, [and] bureaucrats” – engaged in secret homosexual lifestyles.¹³ Bradley cited two extremely conservative congressmen whom he saw at gay parties and cruising circuits before both men were arrested for illicit homosexual activity. Bradley expressed anger at the hypocritical politics of these men who pursued homophobic legislation while living secret homosexual lives.¹⁴

Branch proposed the idea of “outage,” or ‘outing,’ which he believed would become a major political tactic for gay activists to call out the hypocrisy of conservative, closeted politicians.¹⁵ While gay activists for the most part “respect almost anyone’s right” to express their sexuality on their own terms, Branch claimed that these homophobic, secretly homosexual

February 20, 2020.

¹⁰Lacey Fosburgh, “Thousands of Homosexuals Hold A Protest Rally in Central Park,” *New York Times*, June 29, 1970.

¹¹Taylor Branch, “Closets of Power,” *Harper’s*, October 1, 1982, 35.

¹²Phil Gailey, “Homosexual Takes Leave of a Job and of an Agony,” *New York Times*, March 31, 1982.

¹³Branch, “Closets of Power,” 44.

¹⁴Branch, “Closets of Power,” 45.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 47.

politicians posed an exception.¹⁶ While heterosexual institutions had used ‘outing’ to evoke fear and submission within LGBTQ+ people, Branch proposed that queer people could punish closeted leaders not for their sexuality, but for their hypocrisy. ‘Outing’ in this sense existed as a method of reappropriation, an effort by queer activists to reclaim a source of power that politicians and leaders employed against them in many instances. This form of protest is subversive, controversial, and deeply sensitive.

In less than a decade, Branch’s prediction came to fruition in the United States. In 1991, activists put up posters around Manhattan of different celebrities with the caption “Absolutely Queer,” thus ‘outing’ these individuals.¹⁷ These posters targeted Ronald Reagan, Paula Abdul, Jodie Foster, John Travolta and others. This public ‘outing’ “was largely ignored by the general public” and any media attention concerning these celebrities’ alleged sexuality remained in strictly queer magazines.¹⁸ Another group, the Bald Urban Liberation Brigade, attempted to ‘out’ bald celebrities such as William Shatner and John Wayne with little success and recognition.¹⁹ Other two well-known groups, ACT-UP and Queer Nation, which “publicly named officials known to be gay,” again received little reaction from the mainstream media.²⁰

Various articles about ‘outing’ in England in the 1990s argued that “the tactic of naming believed homosexuals called ‘outing’ was first used by gay activists in America.”²¹ When ‘outing’ reached Britain, groups hoped to employ the method and garner more impact than their American counterparts. While paying homage to the efforts of the American organizations,

¹⁶Ibid., 48.

¹⁷Bill Turque, “The Age of ‘Outing’,” *Newsweek*, August 11, 1991.

¹⁸“Evil witch-hunt that backfired all over America,” July 30, 1991 (La/Outing ‘FROCS’/LAGNA, Bishopsgate Institute).

¹⁹Tom Brown, “Stay in your closet!” *Daily Record*, August 5, 1991 (La/Outing ‘FROCS’/LAGNA, Bishopsgate Institute).

²⁰Lucas, *OutRage!*, 63.

²¹Robin Stacey, “Royal to be Named as a Gay,” *Sunday Mirror*, August 28, 1991 (La/Outing ‘FROCS’/LAGNA, Bishopsgate Institute).

‘outing’ took a more sophisticated and methodical turn in England. OutRage! recognized the faults and the seemingly unserious efforts of their American peers and vowed to turn ‘outing’ into a viable political tool.

The Origins of OutRage!

Peter Tatchell, the leader of OutRage! and public face of the 1994 ‘outing’ of the Anglican Church, was born in a working-class evangelical family in Australia. His deeply puritanical parents encouraged young Tatchell to resist sin, including homosexuality. At a young age, the American Civil Rights movement sparked his political awakening and piqued his interest in activism. He then got involved with anti-Vietnam War protests, and began to understand methods of political mobilization, garnering media attention, and swaying public opinion towards a cause.²² Tatchell moved to England in 1971 and immediately felt free to embrace his homosexuality. He saw London as “an amazing place for a young queer man to arrive.”²³ Tatchell joined the Gay Liberation Front (GLF), the first major gay rights organization in England. As an organizer for GLF, Tatchell participated in various street protests and pushed for a public embrace of queer love and acceptance throughout all of Britain.

In 1983, after establishing himself as a powerful activist, Tatchell was chosen by the Labour Party as the candidate for the Bermondsey by-election, running for a safe Labour Parliamentary seat in Southeast London. The Labour party encouraged Tatchell to keep quiet about his homosexuality, despite his history of working with the GLF. While he attempted to focus on local and national issues, Tatchell’s homosexuality and personal life became the focus of the election. Tatchell’s opponent, John O’Grady, publicly called him a “queen” and sang that

²²*Hating Peter Tatchell* directed by Christopher Amos (Wildbear Entertainment, 2021), Netflix.

²³Ibid.

he “[wore] his trousers back to front,” making fun of Tatchell’s sexuality.²⁴ The local media, fueled by O’Grady’s campaign, also attacked Tatchell for his effeminacy and sexuality, questioning his ability to hold such a position. Tatchell received verbal and physical threats and received a “live bullet” in the mail to his home address.²⁵

Tatchell lost this election by a large margin, and some historians cite the media’s coverage of Tatchell’s homosexuality as a major factor in this shocking loss of a safe Labour seat. Tatchell himself called this the “most homophobic UK election ever.”²⁶ While painful and embarrassing, this moment informed Tatchell of the power that tabloid media played in politics and power. His experience with the press during this election informed Tatchell the potent issue of homosexuality in the media. He recognized that British tabloid journalists bite at the chance to publicize the homosexuality of a public figure to sell as many papers as possible, which Tatchell could use to his advantage in his own activism.

After this loss, Tatchell turned his attention back to organizing the British LGBTQ+ cause. Tatchell’s early activism focused on liberation struggles, an end to the centuries of discrimination and violence homosexuals faced. The *Gay Liberation Front Manifesto* described the movement’s impetus as follows: “homosexuals, who have been oppressed by physical violence and by ideological and psychological attacks at every level of social interaction, are at last becoming angry.”²⁷ However, a new and terrifying crisis facing the LGBTQ+ community stifled this wave of gay activism in the 1980s: the emergence of the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, or AIDS.

²⁴Andrew Grice, “The ‘homophobic’ campaign that helped win Bermondsey,” *Independent*, January 27, 2006.

²⁵Lucy Robinson, “Confronting Thatcher: the Bermondsey by-election, Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners and AIDS activism,” in *Gay Men and the Left in Post-War Britain: How the Personal Got Political* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 155.

²⁶Peter Tatchell, “Bermondsey was the dirtiest, most violent British election of the 20th century – and we can learn from it today,” *Guardian*, February 24, 2023.

²⁷“Gay Liberation Front Manifesto,” London, 1970 (LGBTQ+ Collections. Bishopsgate Institute).

The British public responded to the first reports of AIDS in the U.S. with suspicion and doubt. Yet when the first four Londoners died of AIDS in 1982, the gay newspapers in England realized AIDS was not just a conspiracy theory attempting to stifle the sexual freedom of gay men; AIDS presented a real threat, and began ravaging through British gay communities.²⁸ By 1988, 1,500 Brits died of AIDS.²⁹ By 1995, 10,000 citizens had been diagnosed with AIDS and 25,000 people lived with HIV.³⁰ As AIDS became a major concern in England, Tatchell focused his efforts on AIDS awareness and prevention.

Between 1981 and 1988, the British government and independent organizations made active efforts to fight against HIV/AIDS through education and activism. The Terry Higgins Trust became the first AIDS organization created in England, founded in honor of the first Brit to die of AIDS.³¹ Through spreading information, the British government intervened and attempted to address HIV/AIDS for the protection of England citizens. The Department of Health and Social Security distributed a leaflet to every household in Britain which explained the virus and provided prevention methods for all.³² Tatchell's activism at this time also focused on education. In 1986, he published *AIDS: a guide to survival*, a book for queer men to prevent their likelihood of catching the virus.³³

However, in 1988, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government passed Local Government Act 1988, Section 28, which placed a "prohibition on promoting homosexuality by teaching or by publishing material" applied to all local authorities. This

²⁸Simon Garfield, "After the Dance," in *The End of Innocence: Britain in the Time of AIDS* (Bloomsbury, UK: Faber, 2021), 13.

²⁹Simon Watney, "Numbers and Nightmares: HIV/AIDS in Britain," in *Imagine Hope: AIDS and gay identity* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 136.

³⁰Terrence Higgins Trust, "1990s," *Our History*, Accessed August 2, 2023.

³¹Ibid.

³²Department of Health and Social Security, "AIDS : don't die of ignorance," 1987 (AIDS ephemera, Awareness & Education, Box 1. Wellcome Collection).

³³Peter Tatchell, *AIDS : a guide to survival* (London: Gay Men's Press, 1986).

limited AIDS education and awareness efforts.³⁴ Following Section 28, a new wave of activism emerged throughout England focused on aggressive action to force the British government to take a stronger role in fighting HIV/AIDS as well as supporting LGBTQ+ people and their rights. Activists like Tatchell expressed deep anger and frustration about Section 28 as well as the lack of support for LGBTQ+ people from the government. OutRage! formed in this new wave of radical, direct-action gay rights organizations.

Keith Alcorn, Chris Woods, Simon Watney, and Peter Tatchell formed OutRage! in May 1990 at the London Lesbian and Gay Center in Farringdon.³⁵ The name OutRage! represented the anger queer British people felt about the constant cycles of violence and criminalization against their community, a reality that the activism hoped to end. Two major events catalyzed the founding. First, the murder of actor Michael Boothe in 1990, who was publicly cruising in Hanwell when a group of young men kicked him to death. The police called the murder “an extraordinarily severe beating, of a merciless and savage nature.”³⁶ The second event was “the huge rise in the number of gay and bisexual men arrested and convicted for consenting, victimless [sexual] behavior.”³⁷ In its Statement of Aims, OutRage! described itself as a “group of queers committed to radical, non-violent direct action and civil disobedience to assert the dignity and human rights of queers”³⁸ Over the next twenty years, OutRage! became one of the most effective, controversial, and longest-lasting LGBTQ+ direct action organizations in the world. Receiving constant news coverage for its unorthodox protest methods and creative activism, Peter Tatchell and OutRage! quickly became the face of queer radicalism in England.

³⁴Local Government Act 1988, Section 28, Parliament of the United Kingdom (1988).

³⁵“OutRage!,” Bishopsgate Institute.

³⁶Stuart Hobday, “The murder of Michael Boothe changed gay rights forever but his killers still roam free,” *Independent*, April 30, 2020.

³⁷“OutRage! 1990-2011,” *OutRage!*, last modified 2023.

³⁸“OutRage!” Bishopsgate Institute.

FROCS and 'Outing' in England

As OutRage! grew in the 1990s, their early activism concerned the homophobic Parliament. OutRage! believed that proposed legislation such as Clause 25, which attempted to criminalize “solicitation by men (cruising); procurement of homosexual acts; and gross indecency” – which included almost all gay sex or attempts at gay sex – threatened the lives and liberties of homosexuals throughout the country.³⁹ This attempt to criminalize homosexual sex led to many protests by OutRage! and other organizations, enraged at this proposed homophobic legislation.

As OutRage! considered measures to respond to the legislation, a small sect of members considered the ‘outing’ method used by American organizations. Could ‘outing’ the closeted MPs who supported homophobic legislation like Clause 25 deter their efforts? Debates surrounding the ethics of ‘outing’ began within OutRage! in 1991. Those in favor viewed ‘outing’ through activist Gabriel Rosetti’s framework, published in the gay magazine *Outweek*. They only considered ‘outing’ well-known, powerful figures who “den[ied] their homosexuality while being known active homosexuals...using their position of power to oppress other homosexuals and...enjoying the privilege of homosexuality at the same time.”⁴⁰

OutRage! struggled to achieve consensus on this topic. One member, Lynne Sutcliffe, cited her own troubled experience ‘coming out’ and her hesitation to inflict that same pain on others: “I remember being really troubled by the idea of outing...the idea of somebody outing me was really scary.”⁴¹ Others within OutRage! believed ‘outing’ was “childish and puerile,” as

³⁹Jean Fraser, "Clause 25 'means prison for gay sex'," *Pink Paper*, December 22, 1990 (GALHA/4/4: Section 28. Bishopsgate Institute).

⁴⁰Lucas, *OutRage!*, 64.

⁴¹Lucas, *OutRage!*, 64.

well as legally murky.⁴² They felt OutRage!’s other direct-action strategies worked well to accomplish their mission, which included mass arrests and public disruptions. At this point, Peter Tatchell, the leader of OutRage! himself opposed ‘outing.’ In a 2017 interview, Tatchell remarked that “initially, I did not support...’outing.’ I was very much against it.”⁴³

However, some OutRage! members passionately supported ‘ethical outing’ – not outing indiscriminately, but the ‘outing’ of homophobic and hypocritical public figures. They truly believed, if used correctly, ‘outing’ constituted a politically effective way to pressure public officials to bolster support for pro-queer legislation and policy. Speaking in support of ‘outing,’ organizer Patrick McCann said that for “anybody who was in the public eye, there was a duty for them to be out and if they weren't going to be out, I...was going to out them.”⁴⁴ After many conversations, the organization could not unanimously agree to endorse ‘outing’ as a strategy.

Thus, members of OutRage! who supported ‘outing’ formed the Faggots Rooting Out Closeted Sexuality (FROCS) as a distinct organization from OutRage! in 1991.⁴⁵ Particularly focused on attempting to equalize the age of consent for homosexuals, FROCS hoped to utilize ‘outing’ as a form of “sexual politicking.” They hoped that by ‘outing’ well-known figures, they could “further the cause of gay pride and equality.”⁴⁶ On July 27th, 1991, FROCS announced that they would soon release a list of more than 200 secretly gay British leaders including Members of Parliament, judges, bishops, and even a member of the Royal Family.

The media response to FROCS’s claim was swift and aggressive: the mainstream media rallied together against FROCS and this ‘outing’ plan. The harshest critiques posed FROCS as a

⁴²Lucas, *OutRage!*, 65.

⁴³Another Way Now, “Peter Tatchell #BraveChoices - Outing CoE Bishops,” posted on June 12, 2017, YouTube video, 0:06:19.

⁴⁴Lucas, *OutRage!*, 65.

⁴⁵Andrew Brown, “How outing came in with a vengeance,” *Independent*, March 21, 1995.

⁴⁶Brown, “How outing came in”

“shrill band” of “militant gays” perpetuating a “squalid witchhunt” against innocent members of the British cultural and political scene.⁴⁷ The few openly gay MPs in 1991, all of whom came out after leaving Parliament, also rallied in support of their allegedly closeted peers. Matthew Paris, a former Tory MP, told *News of the World* that “if anyone would have [outed me], it would’ve wrecked my career...I’d never had never been selected and it would have made life as an MP very difficult.”⁴⁸ Most newspaper articles deemed the ‘outing’ method as an invasion of privacy, unnecessary, and unethical. The outrage against FROCS was widespread, with well-known gossip newspapers releasing scathing articles against this threatened ‘outing’ to their vast audiences around the UK and the world.

Many newspapers and magazines hypocritically attacked FROCS and this ‘outing’ by using violently homophobic and hateful rhetoric. Tom Brown published a piece in the *Daily Record* titled “Stay in your Closet!” in which he wrote that ‘outing’ was wrong because “there are already FAR TOO MANY glad-to-be-gay types flaunting themselves – and their unsavory practices – in public.” Touting commonly used conservative talking points, Brown warned that the British public must remain wary about homosexuality in general, as “we’re bound to worry about the effect of homosexual propaganda on our younger generation, especially in the AIDS age.”⁴⁹ Other papers described FROCS as “sadists,” “revolting,” and made constant comparisons between FROCS and the aforementioned ‘Lavender Scare’ in the United States.⁵⁰

FROCS held the ‘outing’ press conference on August 1st, 1991. The leaders of FROCS, Simon Loughery and Shane Broomhall, charged members of the media 20 pence per person to

⁴⁷“Witchhunt is a disgrace,” *DailyStar*, July 29, 1991 (La/Outing ‘FROCS’/LAGNA, Bishopsgate Institute).

⁴⁸“MPs face ‘You are gay’ smears in poster war,” *News of the World*, July 28, 1991 (La/Outing ‘FROCS’/LAGNA, Bishopsgate Institute).

⁴⁹Brown, “Stay in your Closet!” (Bishopsgate Institute).

⁵⁰“Queer case of McCarthyism,” *Daily Telegraph*, August 29, 1991 (La/Outing ‘FROCS’/LAGNA, Bishopsgate Institute); “Witchhunt...” (Bishopsgate Institute).

hear the names of the 200 secretly homosexual men and women.⁵¹ The men revealed to the packed room of media personnel that this ‘outing’ was a hoax, and that the list never existed.⁵² The goal, as stated by Broomhall, was to “expose the double standards, hypocrisy, and homophobia of the media.”⁵³ He went on to say that “the press has made a fortune from vilifying lesbians and gay people for years,” and that it was due time for FROCS to get the media back.⁵⁴

Despite their staunch resistance to the ‘outing,’ the news reports from the press conference exposed that many journalists (as FROCS expected) eagerly jumped on this chance to print the list and make money from the ‘outing’ of these well-known figures. A story in the *Independent* entitled “Press misses out” wrote that, unfortunately, “the closet will remain closed.”⁵⁵ In the same article, Peter Tatchell summarized the hoax perfectly: “the tabloid press has been very cleverly maneuvered into defending a person’s right to privacy – let’s hope those papers stick by that principle in the future.”⁵⁶

FROCS considered this ‘outing’ hoax a success. For years, the media made millions printing stories about the suspected sexuality of well-known figures. Now that a group of radical gays attempted to take that power back, the media vehemently opposed their efforts. FROCS recognized and called out this hypocrisy. The group manipulated the tabloid media to bring attention to the real issues at hand – the homophobic legislation threatening the nation, such as Clause 25. Many major outlets picked up this story and circulated FROCS’s political ethos around England. FROCS successfully brought themselves and OutRage! to the front pages of the

⁵¹Paul Johnson, “Out, Damned Spot, Out!” *Spectator*, August 10, 1991.

⁵²Wendy Holden, “Media taken on outing to nowhere,” *The Daily Telegraph*, August 1, 1991 (La/Outing ‘FROCS’/LAGNA, Bishopsgate Institute).

⁵³De Jongh, Nicholas, “Frocs says ‘outing’ hoax made tabloids look silly,” *Guardian*, August 1, 1991 (La/Outing ‘FROCS’/LAGNA, Bishopsgate Institute).

⁵⁴Holden, “Media taken on outing,” (Bishopsgate).

⁵⁵Alex Renton, “Press misses out as homosexuals remain in the closet,” *Independent*, August 1, 1991 (La/Outing ‘FROCS’/LAGNA, Bishopsgate Institute).

⁵⁶Ibid.

British media and forced the press to, for the first time, defend the livelihood of allegedly closeted gay figures. This effective media tactic by FROCS set the precedent for the practice of ‘outing’ as a successful way to bring attention to the fight for queer equality and liberation.

The Church of England and ‘Tell the Truth’

Along with Parliament, OutRage! targeted both the Catholic and Anglican Church for their homophobic history and lack of support for the British queer laity. In July 1990, the future Archbishop of Canterbury and head of the Church of England, Dr. George Carey, spoke out against ordaining homosexuals within the Church. He told the press that he considered practicing homosexuality a “scandal,” he wished to rid from the clergy.⁵⁷ At his enthronement, or ceremony of inauguration, OutRage! organized a protest where “50 gay men and women enacted scenes of flagellation and burning at the stake.”⁵⁸ OutRage! then penned an open letter to Dr. Carey, imploring him to “[condemn] all violence...against gays and lesbians,” and distributed pamphlets about Carey’s history of homophobia at his enthronement.⁵⁹

OutRage! condemned the Church’s lack of support in equalizing the age of consent. The Sexual Offences Act of 1967 decriminalized homosexual acts if “the parties consent thereto and have attained the age of 21 years,” yet the age of consent for heterosexuals was sixteen.⁶⁰ This led to what OutRage! deemed unnecessary persecution of homosexual individuals, as this age disparity showed blatant homophobia and unequal rights for queer citizens. In 1991 alone, 169

⁵⁷Andrew Brown, “Next Archbishop of Canterbury sets tough line on homosexuality,” *Independent*, July 28, 1990 (Folder 28 - Church of England/Archbishop Carey/Methodists: 1991/OutRage! Bishopsgate Institute).

⁵⁸Valentine Low, “Controversy as Carey becomes archbishop,” April 19, 1991 (Folder 28 - Church of England/Archbishop Carey/Methodists: 1991/OutRage! Bishopsgate Institute).

⁵⁹Ahmir Ahmad, Martin Harrington, and Dave Hurlbert to Rt. Hon. George L. Carey, 12 March 1991 (Folder 28 - Church of England/Archbishop Carey/Methodists: 1991/OutRage! Bishopsgate Institute); OutRage!, *It’s time for the Church of England to stop preaching hate*, pamphlet (London: 1994) (Folder 41 - General Synod/OutRage! Bishopsgate Institute).

⁶⁰Gleeson, “Freudian Slips and Coteries of Vice,” 405.

men in the United Kingdom were convicted for having gay sex with other consenting adults because one partner was below twenty one.⁶¹ Parliament lowered the age of consent for homosexuals to eighteen in 1994, yet OutRage! continued fighting for a fully equal age of consent.⁶² OutRage! focused on the Church of England as the Anglican House of Bishops issued a statement against the equalization of the age of consent, calling on Parliament to protect the youth from “harm and exploitation.”⁶³

The *1991 Issues in Human Sexuality* documented the Church of England’s official opinion on homosexuality at the time. Created by a subcommittee of the House of Bishops during the General Synod in 1991, this text examined sexuality through the lens of scripture, modern society, and Anglican teachings. The committee hoped to reach a clear consensus on homosexuality through research and debate, a feat that former efforts by the Church failed to accomplish.

The committee wrote that the Church supported pure, committed homosexual relationships rooted in faith and religious commitment. However, such homosexual relationships “do not constitute a parallel and alternative form of human sexuality,” clarifying that homosexual love is not comparable to heterosexual love in terms of Biblical support.⁶⁴ The committee nonetheless ordered the Church to accept homosexuals within the laity. The report then strongly stated that the clergy *cannot* practice homosexuality, due to the impact a practicing homosexual may have on his or her congregation. The Church agreed to accept clergy who identified as “homophile in orientation, but who are committed to a life of abstinence” as “their desire is to be

⁶¹“Love wins! Age of consent equalised for gay and bi men,” *Stonewall*, last modified 2023.

⁶²“Love wins! Age of consent equalised for gay and bi men,”

⁶³Will Stroude, “Equal age of consent: A comprehensive history of the battle for gay parity,” *Attitude*, January 5, 2021.

⁶⁴*Issues in human sexuality : a statement by the House of Bishops of the General Synod of the Church of England* (London: Church House Publishing, 1991), 40 (LAGNA Pamphlet Box 35/LGBTQ+ Library. Bishopsgate Institute).

free to live among their neighbours with dignity and without concealment, unembarrassed.” The report ended with a pledge to not actively seek out homosexuals within the clergy.⁶⁵ As the Church of England refused to support homosexual clergy and an equal age of consent, OutRage!’s main goal was to change how the Anglican Church treated homosexuals in England.

Despite this repudiation of homosexual clergymen, the Church remained much more lenient on this issue. Just before Bishop Michael Turnbull’s 1994 enthronement as Bishop of Durham, the fourth most senior position in the Church of England, news broke that decades earlier, Turnbull was convicted of gross indecency. In 1968, police arrested him for cruising a public restroom to seek out sexual intercourse with other men.⁶⁶ Despite this news, the Archbishop of Canterbury renewed his support for the bishop who assumed his new position four weeks after this story broke. Gay rights groups quickly criticized this hypocrisy and the Church’s willingness to “decide that it is in its own interests to accept homosexual behaviour as compatible with Christian ministry” in only some cases.⁶⁷ Hoping to take advantage of this support, OutRage! launched a campaign to forever change the Anglican Church. In the *Minutes of General Meeting, 24/11/94*, OutRage! laid out a clear plan of action; at the 1994 General Synod, OutRage! would ‘out’ ten closeted, hypocritical bishops.⁶⁸

OutRage! informed the press of their plan: “Ten Anglican Bishops who are alleged to be gay (either now or in the past) will be named by gay activists...as delegates arrive for the Church of England General Synod.”⁶⁹ Urging these bishops to ‘Tell the Truth’ (the name of this

⁶⁵*Issues in human sexuality : a statement by the House of Bishops of the General Synod of the Church of England*, 46.

⁶⁶“Churchmen deplore revelation on bishop,” *Herald*, September 26, 1994.

⁶⁷“Churchmen deplore revelation on bishop,”

⁶⁸OutRage! General Meeting Minutes. November 24, 1994 (Folder 88 - Minutes, 1992-1996/OutRage! Bishopsgate Institute).

⁶⁹Peter Tatchell, “10 Bishops to be Named at Synod.” press release, November 3, 1994 (Folder 41 - General Synod/OutRage! Bishopsgate Institute).

campaign), their reasoning was simple. If these ten bishops publicly confirmed their homosexuality, the Church would have no choice but to reverse its previous decision and affirm the right of practicing homosexual clergymen and clergywomen. Since these bishops lacked the courage to ‘come out’ themselves, OutRage! decided to do it for them.⁷⁰ On November 30th, 1994, at 9:15AM, OutRage! ‘outed’ ten respected Anglican Bishops.

The immediate media reaction to this campaign fell nothing short of polemic. The *Daily Telegraph* wrote that “the proper name for [‘Tell the Truth’] is homosexual terrorism.”⁷¹ Rt. Rev. Nigel McCulloch described the protest as “wicked” and attributed it to causing more hostility towards gay rights organizations.⁷² He continued, calling the ‘outing’ a “deplorable practice of causing hurt and embarrassment to individuals by spreading unsupported innuendos.”⁷³ The repudiation of OutRage! was widespread in the tabloid press. The papers, riddled with anti-‘outing’ coverage, painted OutRage! as the perpetrators of a criminal offense against the bishops. Only one paper even dared to print the names of the ten ‘outed’ Bishops. Rumors spread of legal retaliation for the protest, and the verdict was clear; the mainstream media believed OutRage! made a fatal mistake with the ‘Tell the Truth’ campaign.

Although the media response remained wholly negative, OutRage! felt ‘Tell the Truth’ merited an immediate success. Citing major attention on the radio and in newspapers, members of OutRage! discussed immediately after the protest that “print coverage of the action had been superb.”⁷⁴ As FROCS did only three years earlier, OutRage! used ‘outing,’ a method that they

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹“Homosexual terrorism,” *Daily Telegraph*, December 14, 1994 (Folder 41 - General Synod/OutRage! Bishopsgate Institute).

⁷²Damian Thompson and Wendy Holden, “Churchmen angered by naming of ‘gay’ bishops,” *Daily Telegraph*, December 1, 1994 (Folder 41 - General Synod/OutRage! Bishopsgate Institute).

⁷³“Gay activists “out” 10 bishops,” *Reuters America*, November 30, 1994 (Folder 41 - General Synod/OutRage! Bishopsgate Institute).

⁷⁴OutRage! General Meeting Minutes, December 1, 1994 (Folder 88 - Minutes, 1992-1996/OutRage! Bishopsgate Institute).

believed would garner massive public attention, to bring their issues with the Church to all of England. These conversations no longer existed solely within gay circles – debates about homosexuality and the Church spread throughout England and into many Anglican households.

In 1991, when FROCS launched their ‘outing’ campaign, OutRage! and Peter Tatchell did not support ‘outing’ as a method of protest. However, Tatchell said that regarding ‘Tell the Truth,’ “over a period of about six months debate within OutRage! [in 1994], I became convinced that what I would call ‘ethical outing’ of hypocrites and homophobes was justified.”⁷⁵ Aware of the backlash this campaign could cause, Tatchell made the political calculation that while “in the short term [OutRage!] would suffer great opprobrium,” this campaign could make real waves and change the attitudes of Anglican clergy and laity all over Britain.⁷⁶

Immediate Impact of ‘Tell the Truth’

In early 1995, the *Sunday Times* reported that conversations began between OutRage! activists and Church of England representatives. Organized by Archbishop Carey, the talks focused on the issue of homosexuality in the clergy. The four OutRage! campaigners “asked the church to end its policy of sacking gay clerics and to be more forthright in its condemnation of anti-gay prejudice.” The bishops listened “very carefully” to the organizers.⁷⁷ Additionally, the *Observer* reported that Archbishop Carey planned for representatives of the Church to “attend a European conference on homosexuality in the Church.”⁷⁸ Despite the widespread repudiation of the campaign, the Anglican leadership approached the concerns OutRage! expressed with open

⁷⁵Another Way Now, “Peter Tatchell,” YouTube.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Lesley Thomas, “Church in peace talks with gays,” *Sunday Times*, January 15, 1995 (La/Outing ‘FROCS’/LAGNA. Bishopsgate Institute.)

⁷⁸Martin Wroe, “Threat of Church rift over gays.” *Observer*, February 2, 1995 (Ma/CoE/1990s/LAGNA. Bishopsgate Institute).

ears, willing to discuss their differences with OutRage! to add more nuance to the internal conversations and considerations occurring in the Church.

One of the ten bishops ‘outed’ by OutRage! at the General Synod was Rt. Rev. Timothy Bavin, the Bishop of Portsmouth. Bavin expressed feeling “deeply distressed” by the allegation and refuted the claims outright.⁷⁹ A spokesman for the bishop told the press that the ‘outing’ unjustly “attempt[ed] to change the House of Bishops’ policy on homosexuals by causing hurt and embarrassment to individuals.” Bishop Bavin himself supported the Church’s decision to ban practicing homosexuals from the clergy.⁸⁰ The accusation by OutRage! hurt Bishop Bavin so deeply that he gave up his role as a bishop to pursue a life of monkhood.⁸¹ This was an unprecedented decision for someone of his rank. Bavin’s decision shows the negative impact ‘Tell the Truth’ had on unsuspecting members of the Church, as OutRage! produced little evidence to back their accusations.

In an interview with BBC2 TV’s newsmight in early March 1995, the former Bishop of Glasgow and Galloway became “the highest member of the Church of England to ‘come out’.”⁸² Rt. Rev. Derek Rawcliffe described the negative impact his repressed homosexuality had on his life, and urged the Church to reverse its policy on gay partnership for the clergy.⁸³ While not named by OutRage!, Rev. Rawcliffe decided to ‘come out’ after OutRage! “privately pressured” him to openly declare his homosexuality.⁸⁴

⁷⁹Chris Owen and Graham Keeley, “Bishop ‘distressed’ by gay group’s allegation,” *Portsmouth*, December 1, 1994 (Ma/CoE/1990s/LAGNA. Bishopsgate Institute).

⁸⁰Owen and Keeley, “Bishops ‘distressed’ by gay group’s allegation.”

⁸¹Anthony Doran, “Bishop in gay slur retreats to monastery,” *Daily Mail*, January 31, 1995 (Ma/CoE/1990s/LAGNA. Bishopsgate Institute).

⁸²Leonard, “Gay bishop.”

⁸³Valerie Grove, “I realised I loved him. I was in real turmoil,” *Times*, March 10, 1995 (Folder 14 - Christian Clergy/OutRage! Bishopsgate Institute).

⁸⁴Andrew Brown, “Activists vow to pursue their ‘outing’ mission,” *Independent*, March 10, 1995 (Ma/CoE/1990s/LAGNA. Bishopsgate Institute).

Anglican audiences met Rawcliffe's 'coming out' with mixed responses. One opinion in the *Church Times* lauded "his courage in speaking as he did," yet disagreed with his "condoning [of] sinful practice."⁸⁵ The tabloid media ridiculed him for his flamboyance, making fun of his appearance and style rather than commenting anything substantial on his announcement.⁸⁶ Importantly, this interview aired only hours after Cardinal Basil Hume, the Archbishop of Westminster and Head of the English Catholic Church, released a statement condoning homosexual affection while still "condemning its physical expression."⁸⁷ In the midst of 'Tell the Truth,' the Anglican world faced a crisis. OutRage!'s accusations caused ripples and divisions within the Church as the wider Christian world moved closer towards accepting homosexuality. How would the Church of England respond?

Bishop David Hope

David Hope was ordained by the Anglican Church in 1965. He soon became the principal of St. Stephen's House Oxford, a school often described as "Sodom and Gomorrah."⁸⁸ Dr. Hope cracked down on the rampant alcoholism and homosexuality in the school. He garnered the nickname 'Ena the Terrible' due to harsh treatment of disobedient students.⁸⁹ He then became a bishop in 1985 and was promoted to Bishop of London in 1991.⁹⁰ The Bishop of London is the

⁸⁵Ted Harrison, "A bishop comes out," *Church Times*, March 3, 1995 (Church Times Jul-Dec 1994/1994 Index. Lambeth Palace Library).

⁸⁶Andrew Brown, "What a week it was...for gas and the Church," *Independent*, March 10, 1995 (Folder 14 - Christian Clergy/OutRage! Bishopsgate Institute).

⁸⁷Grove, "I realised."

⁸⁸Greg Hadfield, "Bachelor who cleaned up Sodom and Gomorrah," *Daily Mail*, March 14, 1995 (Ma/CoE/1990s/LAGNA. Bishopsgate Institute).

⁸⁹Greg Hadfield, "Bachelor who cleaned up Sodom and Gomorrah."

⁹⁰Alex Hendry, "Prude nicknamed Ena the Terrible by his students," *Daily Express*. March 14, 1995 (Ma/CoE/1990s/LAGNA. Bishopsgate Institute).

third most senior position in the Church. The Church chose Hope for this role to clean up the London diocese, known for its homosexual clergy.⁹¹

On March 13th, 1995, Bishop Hope held a press conference at London House. He announced that he had received a “threatening” letter from Peter Tatchell and accused OutRage! of attempting to ‘out’ him as a homosexual if Bishop Hope did not ‘come out’ himself. Hope felt “deeply distressed” and held the press conference to clear the air on his sexuality.⁹² Bishop Hope explained that he practiced celibacy, choosing to live a single life. In regard to his sexuality, his identity was more complicated: “some may choose to describe themselves as being homosexual or as heterosexual — for some the area is slightly grayer. And all I’m saying is that that’s the sort of area I find myself in.”⁹³

He then turned his attention to OutRage! and the ‘Tell the Truth’ campaign. He called the group's efforts “profoundly disturbing” and “intimidatory,” and criticized the lack of substantial evidence proving the ‘outing’ claims.⁹⁴ He then questioned the ethics of ‘outing’ and the deep intrusion into the private lives of the bishops, asking “to what extent [should] any person...be subjected to such intrusion...to accomplish someone else’s agenda?”⁹⁵

Hope held this press conference months after receiving the letter. In January, Bishop Hope and Peter Tatchell met in-person for forty minutes about “wide-ranging” topics. Afterwards, Tatchell handed Hope the letter, sealed in an envelope “to save [him] any embarrassment.”⁹⁶ In the letter, Tatchell claimed to have secret information about Hope’s

⁹¹Hendry, “Prude nicknamed Ena the Terrible by his students.”

⁹²Longley and Fenton, “Bishop tells of distress,” (Bishopsgate Institute).

⁹³Bill Mouland and Anthony Doran, “Blackmailing of the bishop,” *Daily Mail*, March 14, 1995 (Ma/CoE/1990s/LAGNA. Bishopsgate Institute).

⁹⁴Mouland and Doran, “Blackmailing of the bishop.”

⁹⁵Mouland and Doran, “Blackmailing of the bishop.”

⁹⁶Betty Saunders, “‘Trying to be as open as I can,” *Church Times*, March 17, 1995 (Church Times Jan-Jun 1995/1995 Index. Lambeth Palace Library).

sexuality, but chose not to ‘out’ Hope with the ten other bishops, putting the onus on the bishop to ‘come out’ himself. He encouraged Hope to “find the inner strength and conviction to realize the importance of voluntarily coming out as gay.”⁹⁷ Tatchell cited homosexuality within the laity and clergy, anti-gay legislation, and the Church’s torrid history of homophobia as reasons for Hope to ‘come out’. Tatchell ended the letter by imploring Bishop Hope to recognize that his ‘coming out’ would change the course of Anglican history.⁹⁸

Quickly after Bishop Hope’s announcement, the Anglican community rallied around him. In a letter of solidarity, the World Conference of Anglican Primates wrote “we express to you our solidarity in deploring this reprehensible intrusion into your private life. We assure you as a body that we stand against this kind of provocation.”⁹⁹ Anglican journalist Terry Waite also verbalized his support for Hope, believing that the bishop responded to the accusation with honesty and coolness, bravely reclaiming his narrative. Hope “[transformed] a damaging episode into a helpful...one,” and opened the possibility for more discussion on the topic of homosexuality.¹⁰⁰ Many, including Waite, considered this moment “some indication that the Church can tackle the issue of sexuality calmly and openly...with dignity and love” as Hope did.¹⁰¹

The Bishop of Southwark, Rt. Rev. Roy Williamson, used this moment to speak out against the ban on homosexual clergy. He told the *Standard* that when considering to ordain a priest, he focused on morality rather than the “private affair” of one’s sexuality¹⁰² Archbishop

⁹⁷Peter Tatchell to Rt. Rev. David Hope, December 30, 1994 (Ma/CoE/1990s/LAGNA. Bishopsgate Institute).

⁹⁸Tatchell to Rt. Rev. David Hope.

⁹⁹Betty Saunders, “Primates rally around Hope,” *Church Times*, March 17, 1995 (Church Times Jan-Jun 1995/1995 Index. Lambeth Palace Library).

¹⁰⁰Terry Waite, “Confounding the bullies,” *Church Times*, March 17, 1995 (Church Times Jan-Jun 1995/1995 Index. Lambeth Palace Library).

¹⁰¹Waite, “Confounding the bullies.”

¹⁰²Geraint Smith, “I would ordain gay priests says bishop,” *Standard*, March 14, 1995. (Ma/CoE/1990s/LAGNA, Bishopsgate Institute).

Carey diametrically opposed Williamson's words, yet stated that if "people do not cause suspicion or scandal, we don't poke our noses into people's business."¹⁰³ Here, the Archbishop reaffirmed OutRage!'s claim that the Church hypocritically failed to actually enforce their strict anti-homosexual clergymen rule. Nonetheless, Williamson's words cut deep into the heart of the disagreement within the Church. His spokesman summed up the nature of the debate well, when he expressed "the fact is that the Church is divided. Everyone has an opinion on homosexuality, and the opinions differ in the Church as in the rest of society."¹⁰⁴

Conservatives within the Church feared that this moment moved the Church into the wrong direction. Reform, a conservative Evangelical group, threatened to leave the Church of England over the fear of homosexuals within the clergy.¹⁰⁵ They saw this potential change in Church ruling as antithetical to the Bible and the Church's values. The group warned that Anglicans "might soon be in a church where their minister has been in bed on Saturday night having anal intercourse and other genital activity with his boyfriend, and then on Sunday morning preaching and handing the holy communion to them."¹⁰⁶ While espousing deeply homophobic views, Reform garnered support from similarly concerned Anglicans.

Other debates occurred within the Church after Bishop Hope's announcement. While most disagreed with OutRage!'s methods, many believed the Church had a duty to clarify its stance on homosexuality, once and for all. Conservative church members called for the Evangelical Leader's Conference to "clarify 'beyond any doubt' their attitude towards

¹⁰³Smith, "I would ordain gay priests says bishop."

¹⁰⁴Smith, "I would ordain gay priests says bishop."

¹⁰⁵Cole Morton, "Reform keeps pressure on bishop," *Church Times*, March 31, 1995 (Church Times Jan-Jun 1995/1995 Index. Lambeth Palace Library).

¹⁰⁶Revd. Peter W. Youle, "Reform the concerns of 'ordinary Anglicans'," *Church Times*, April 7, 1995 (Church Times Jan-Jun 1995/1995 Index. Lambeth Palace Library).

homosexuality...that homosexual genital acts are wrong for both clergy and laity.”¹⁰⁷ On the other side, the Action for Gay and Lesbian Ordination launched, an organization that

“[demanded] that gays and lesbians be treated the same as heterosexuals by the Church.”¹⁰⁸

While the debate between OutRage! and the Church remained a fixture of the tabloid press, the important internal debates and conflicts provided a better vision of the Church’s diverse opinion on the issue. Following Bishop Hope’s press conference, there emerged a “concerted attempt to seize the agenda for the next decade in the Church of England.”¹⁰⁹

Interestingly, Tatchell and OutRage! appeared mostly absent from *Church Times* coverage of ‘Tell the Truth’ and Bishop Hope. Apart from the initial coverage of the press conference, focus remained solely on the Church. Hope attempted, as Waite argued, to deny OutRage! the power to “set the agenda in the Church’s debate on homosexuality.”¹¹⁰ In fact, the ‘outing’ caused primates to call for an open debate on homosexuality in a pastoral letter, recognizing that clear discrepancies existed between the rules and realities of homosexuals within the clergy.¹¹¹ The Church did not attempt to hide this event; instead, Anglicans came together to confront this issue as a community through open discussion and conversation.

The ‘outing’ of Dr. Hope had little impact on his career trajectory. Less than a month after his press conference, the *Church Times* announced that Bishop Hope of London had been promoted to Archbishop of York, the second highest ranking leader in the Church of England.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷“Reform wants gays to be opposed,” *Church of England Newspaper*, December 16, 1994 (Ma/CoE/1990s/LAGNA. Bishopsgate Institute).

¹⁰⁸Ruth Gledhill, “Church split by campaign to ordain homosexuals,” *Time*, March 10, 1995 (Ma/CoE/1990s/LAGNA. Bishopsgate Institute).

¹⁰⁹William Oddie, “Will the Church surrender to the gay lobby?” *Daily Mail*, December 17, 1995 (Ma/CoE/1990s/LAGNA. Bishopsgate Institute).

¹¹⁰ Oddie, “Will the Church surrender to the gay lobby?”

¹¹¹Cole Morton, “Primates agonise over sexual expression,” *Church Times*, March 24, 1995 (Church Times Jan-Jun 1995/1995 Index. Lambeth Palace Library).

¹¹²Betty Saunders, “London to lose Hope to York,” *Church Times*, April 13, 1995 (Church Times Jan-Jun 1995/1995 Index. Lambeth Palace Library).

Citing his ‘outing’ as only “another obstacle from his path,” church members praised Dr. Hope for his “deep spiritually, firmness of purpose,” and “clear mind.”¹¹³ If anything, Dr. Hope’s response to his ‘outing’ brought him more success. The laity and clergy alike revered Hope as a true, calm leader within the Church who was able to handle difficulty with faith and poise.

The Debate Surrounding ‘Outing’

While this essay focused mostly on the media coverage of ‘Tell the Truth’ and other ‘outing’ campaigns, debates on the ethics of this political tactic began in the 1990s between scholars and activists. How do those who pursue careers in queer history, theory, and activism understand and explain ‘outing’?

Peter Tatchell succinctly describes ‘outing’ as “legitimate self-defense against a hypocritical and homophobic society.”¹¹⁴ When lobbying and politeness cannot change the minds of politicians, brute force and direct action are the only ways to create change. He believes that ‘outing’ is morally justified when it “can help destroy the power and credibility of gay public figures who harm other lesbians and gay men.”¹¹⁵ By making LGBTQ+ people unsafe and unable to freely ‘come out,’ politicians and public figures lose their own right to privacy. Malcolm Sutherland, OutRage! member, expresses a similar ideology to Tatchell regarding ‘outing.’ Sutherland believes that ‘outing’ exposes a “form of hypocrisy which is dangerous for gay men and women.”¹¹⁶ In short, ‘outing’ is morally permissible when public figures appear

¹¹³Betty Saunders, “Praise for clear mind.,” *Church Times*, April 13, 1995 (Church Times Jan-Jun 1995/1995 Index. Lambeth Palace Library).

¹¹⁴ Peter Tatchell, “In Defence Of Outing – The Ethics Of Naming Names,” *Peter Tatchell*, February 21, 1995.

¹¹⁵ Tatchell, “In Defence Of Outing – The Ethics Of Naming Names.”

¹¹⁶Derek Jarman and Malcolm Sutherland, “A helpful shove off the straight and narrow,” *Guardian*, July 31, 1991 (Folder 8 - Outing/OutRage! Bishopsgate Institute).

dangerous for queer communities and when ‘outing’ can stifle their ability to pursue such attacks.

Anya Palmer argues that ‘outing’ is “the perfect way to force lesbian and gay issues on the agenda.” As long as hypocritical, closeted homosexuals hold office, ‘outing’ will exist. She sees the ‘outing’ perpetuated by OutRage! as a manifestation of the anger queer people feel towards a government and church who refuse to accept their equality and right to love as equal to their fellow citizens. While Palmer sees ‘outing’ as unsustainable and somewhat ineffective, she defends the right of queer folks to turn to ‘outing’ if homophobes attempt to stifle queer life and liberty.¹¹⁷

One major debate that emerges concerning ‘Tell the Truth’ pinned the tabloid press against OutRage!. If the tabloid press made millions from ‘outing’ celebrities, why did they attack OutRage! for doing the same in a fight for liberation and equality? At the time, Suzanne Moore argued against this double-standard between homophobia disguised as “investigative journalism” and queer activism painted as an immoral invasion of privacy. While criticizing ‘outing’ for lying out-of-touch with progressive queer politics, she defended OutRage!’s right to use “homophobia as a weapon.”¹¹⁸ Generally, those in favor of ‘outing’ do not see the practice as particularly effective or practical, yet defend the right of queer groups to ‘out’ as a protest method.

On the other hand, many queer radicals find fault with ‘outing.’ Simon Watney, one of the founders of OutRage!, does not deny how “ideologically brilliant...[‘Tell the Truth’] revealed the depths of anti-gay prejudice amongst journalists” yet believes that the act of ‘outing’

¹¹⁷Anya Palmer, “Outing is the issue which splits the gay community,” *Guardian*, March 15, 1995 (Ma/CoE/1990s/LAGNA. Bishopsgate Institute).

¹¹⁸Suzanne Moore, “Straight talking,” *Guardian*, March 16, 1995 (Ma/CoE/1990s/LAGNA. Bishopsgate Institute).

leans into “the normative values of the dominant sexual epistemology.” Watney argues that radical queerness becomes less about a shared “homosexual desire” among queer people, but about “the social experience of discrimination and prejudice.” Queerness is more than just a sexual identity, and thus, these closeted homophobic figures do not fall into the category of queer. ‘Outing’ leans into a heteronormative understanding of sexuality and society and takes attention away from true queer radicals making positive change in communities.¹¹⁹

In Ronald Broach’s “Does human dignity require outing homosexuals?” the author responds to previous arguments from queer activists who write that a rejection of ‘outing’ accepts queer worthlessness and “[endorses] the view that being gay is loathsome and disgusting.”¹²⁰ Broach disagrees with this claim. ‘Outing’ does not protect queer identity. Instead, ‘outing’ makes some queer people more susceptible to harm from others. The issue of homophobia does not lie within individual homosexuals or homophobes, but with society as a whole. Society must change before gay groups reveal an individual’s private lives to the public. Broach argues that ‘outing’ is an overly broad and overly corrective method to solving a deeper issue. To him, ‘outing’ is an ineffective method to solve this issue.¹²¹ Clearly, there is little consensus on ‘outing’ as a practice. Gay communities remain conflicted about the practice, unsure if the ends justify the means.

¹¹⁹Simon Watney, “Queer epistemology: activism, ‘outing’, and the politics of sexual identities,” *Critical Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (March 1994).

¹²⁰Ronald J. Broach, “Does Human Dignity Require Outing Homosexuals?” *Journal of Social Philosophy* 29, no. 2 (June 2008).

¹²¹Broach, “Does Human Dignity Require Outing Homosexuals?”

Conclusion

In 1994, OutRage! ‘outed’ important figures in the Church of England to push for Anglican support for homosexuality, especially within the clergy. In the end, OutRage! publicly ‘outed’ fourteen bishops, and two additional bishops claimed that OutRage! privately pressured them to ‘come out,’ as well. None of these bishops faced repercussions from the Church and many of them continued to serve for the rest of their lives. In 1995, Dr. Hope revealed that despite his accusation that Tatchell’s letter caused his announcement, he in fact called the press conference after a writer for the *Daily Telegraph* “gave him the impression that he was going to be exposed by OutRage!” which OutRage! refuted.¹²²

Peter Tatchell’s claim that Bishop David Hope’s ‘outing’ and press conference led to substantial and tangible change within the Church of England remains unfounded. In the press conference, Bishop Hope explained his celibacy and admitted that he never acted upon his sexual ambiguity. Church doctrine accepts and welcomes this form of sexual expression. The *1991 Issue on Sexuality* states that a member of the clergy who is homosexual but celibate should share this with their congregation if they “desire...to be free to live among their neighbours with dignity and without concealment, unembarrassed.”¹²³ Church doctrine encouraged Bishop Hope’s ‘coming out.’ While Bishop Hope did not necessarily make this announcement on his own terms, the Church of England rallied so quickly around him because he did not break any barriers as a bishop – his identity fell perfectly into Anglican doctrine.

It remains difficult to find a clear link between ‘Tell the Truth’ and genuine change in the Church of England. Even some of Tatchell’s claims about progress are misleading or somewhat exaggerated. He claimed that the “world conference of Anglican primates...issued a statement of

¹²²“Dr. Hope: Was he pushed or did he jump?,” *OutRage!: Queer Intelligence Service*, last modified July 29, 1999.

¹²³*Issues*, 46.

solidarity and called on the Church to rethink their attitude on homosexuality.”¹²⁴ While they did issue a statement in support of Bishop Hope, they only referred to a future debate on the issue of homosexuality – in my research, the Church used this same sentiment constantly wherever they faced a controversial issue – and no substantial debate was ever reported. Tatchell also claimed that the campaign “opened up greater acceptance of gay priests, resulting in a number of individuals feeling able to come out for the first time.”¹²⁵ Only in 2016 did the first Anglican bishop ‘come out’ as a practicing homosexual, over twenty years after ‘Tell the Truth.’¹²⁶ Clearly, the rare instances of open homosexuality within the clergy lie inconsistent with Tatchell’s claims.

However, ‘Tell the Truth’ succeeded in two vital aspects. First, throughout my research, I encountered hundreds of newspaper articles on FROCS, ‘Tell the Truth,’ and Bishop Hope. OutRage! had the connection to get their message across to all of Britain. Even if the British tabloids were disapproval of these methods and repudiated gay rights organizations with blatantly homophobic rhetoric, millions of people read about OutRage!’s ‘outing’ efforts every day, bringing this political tool to the forefront of British society.

Second, OutRage!’s efforts sparked public conversation within the Anglican Church. On Hope’s ‘outing,’ Terry Waite wrote that “[Bishop Hope] has no wish to let [OutRage!] set the agenda in the Church’s debate on homosexuality, but he has provided them with yet more column-inches of attention, albeit mostly hostile ones.”¹²⁷ Even if the Anglican Church and Bishop Hope rejected the methods of OutRage!, they had no choice but to respond to the claims

¹²⁴Lucas, *Outrage!*, 195.

¹²⁵Lucas, *Outrage!*, 195.

¹²⁶Harriet Sherwood, “Bishop of Grantham first C of E bishop to declare he is in gay relationship,” *Guardian*, September 2, 2016.

¹²⁷Waite, “Confounding,” (Lambeth Palace Library).

and thus give validity to the ‘Tell the Truth’ movement. The public ‘outings’ brought the quiet conversations within the Church to the forefront of the Anglican community, as seen through the constant coverage from the *Church Times*. Without ‘Tell the Truth,’ these internal debates may have remained hidden for longer.

Today, ‘Tell the Truth,’ is a forgotten moment in Anglican history. Few if any scholars have discussed this campaign and the effects of OutRage! on the Church of England. While ‘outing’ remains a controversial and unpopular method, OutRage!’s impactful employment of this political tool to bring their issues to the forefront of British society and the Anglican community must be remembered for its courage and savvy. As the debate about ‘outing’ continues, ‘Tell the Truth’ is a vital testcase to understand how ‘outing’ can be employed, as well as the method’s impact.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Bishopsgate Institute. "Lesbian and Gay Newsmedia Archive."
<https://www.bishopsgate.org.uk/collections/lesbian-and-gay-newsmedia-archive>.

Bishopsgate Institute. "OutRage!" <https://www.bishopsgate.org.uk/collections/outrage>.

Bishopsgate Institute. "LGBTQIA+ Archives."
<https://www.bishopsgate.org.uk/collections/lgbtqia-archives>.

Bishopsgate Institute. "Gay and Lesbian Humanist Association (GALHA)."
<https://www.bishopsgate.org.uk/collections/gay-and-lesbian-humanist-association>.

Lambeth Palace Library, Church Times.

Wellcome Collection. "HIV/ AIDS Ephemera." <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/ssp2yfdj>.

Secondary Sources

Abigail Saguy. "The history of 'coming out,' from secret gay code to popular political protest." *UCLA Newsroom*. February 20, 2020. <https://newsroom.ucla.edu/stories/the-history-of-coming-out-from-secret-gay-code-to-popular-political-protest>.

Another Way Now. "Peter Tatchell #BraveChoices - Outing CofE Bishops." Posted on June 12, 2017. YouTube video, 0:06:19. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=viBWCJ1fXss>.

Branch, Taylor. "Closets of Power." *Harper's*. October 1, 1982.

Broach, Ronald J. "Does Human Dignity Require Outing Homosexuals?" *Journal of Social Philosophy* 29, no. 2 (June 2008): 32-45.
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1467-9833.1998.tb00106.x>

Brown, Andrew. "How outing came in with a vengeance." *Independent*. March 21, 1995.
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/how-outing-came-in-with-a-vengeance-1612094.html>.

Chauncey, George. *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Makings of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*. New York: Basic Books, 1994.

- “Churchmen deplore revelation on bishop.” *Herald*. September 26, 1994.
<https://www.heraldsotland.com/news/12740447.churchmen-deplore-revelation-on-bishop/>.
- Davies, Madeleine. “Lord Hope ends formal ministry after Cahill Inquiry findings.” *Church Times*. October 31, 2014. <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2014/31-october/news/uk/lord-hope-ends-formal-ministry-after-cahill-inquiry-findings>.
- Davies, Madeleine. “York Inquiry finds 'systemic failure' over abuse.” *Church Times*. October 23, 2014. <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2014/24-october/news/uk/york-inquiry-finds-systemic-failure-over-abuse>.
- Department of Health and Social Security. “AIDS : don’t die of ignorance.” 1987. AIDS ephemera, Awareness & Education, Box 1. Wellcome Collection.
- “Dr. Hope: Was he pushed or did he jump?” *OutRage!: Queer Intelligence Service*. Last modified July 29, 1999. https://www.petertatchell.net/lgbt_rights/rosecottage/OutRage-archives/qinteldh.htm.
- Duberman, Martin, and Andrew Kopkind. “The Night They Raided Stonewall.” *Grand Street*, no. 44 (1993): 120–47. <https://doi.org/10.2307/25007620>.
- Fosburgh, Lacey. “Thousands of Homosexuals Hold A Protest Rally in Central Park.” *New York Times*. June 29, 1970. <https://www.nytimes.com/1970/06/29/archives/thousands-of-homosexuals-hold-a-protest-rally-in-central-park.html>.
- Gailey, Phil. “Homosexual Takes Leave of a Job and of an Agony.” *New York Times*. March 31, 1982. <https://www.nytimes.com/1982/03/31/us/homosexual-takes-leave-of-a-job-and-of-an-agony.html>.
- Gleeson, Kate. “Freudian Slips and Coteries of Vice: The Sexual Offences Act of 1967.” *Parliamentary History* 27, pt. 3 (2008): 393-409.
- Grice, Andrew. “The 'homophobic' campaign that helped win Bermondsey.” *Independent*. January 27, 2006. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/the-homophobic-campaign-that-helped-win-bermondsey-524703.html>.
- Hating Peter Tatchell*. Directed by Christopher Amos. Wildbear Entertainment, 2021. Netflix.
- Hobday, Stuart. “The murder of Michael Boothe changed gay rights forever but his killers still roam free.” *Independent*. April 30, 2020. <https://www.independent.co.uk/independentpremium/long-reads/michael-boothe-murder-lbgt-outrage-london-a9479711.html>.
- Johnson, Paul. “Out, Damned Spot, Out!” *Spectator*. August 10, 1991. <http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/10th-august-1991/20/out-damned-spot-out>.

Lafitte, Francois. "HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE LAW: The Wolfenden Report in Historical Perspective." *British Journal of Delinquency* 9, no.1 (July 1958): 8-19.

"The Lavender Scare." National Archives Foundation. Last Modified June 20, 2023. <https://www.archivesfoundation.org/newsletter/the-lavender-scare/>.

"The Lavender Scare - The origin of policy to exclude homosexuals from Federal service." National Security Agency. *History Today*. Last modified October 10, 2018. <https://www.nsa.gov/portals/75/documents/news-features/declassified-documents/history-today-articles>.

Local Government Act 1988, Section 28. Parliament of the United Kingdom. 1988. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/9/contents>.

"Love wins! Age of consent equalised for gay and bi men." *Stonewall*. Last modified 2023. <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/our-work/campaigns/love-wins-age-consent-equalised-gay-and-bi-men>.

Lucas, Ian. *OutRage! : an oral history*. London: Cassell, 1998.

"OutRage! 1990-2011." *OutRage!* Last modified 2023. <https://outrage.org.uk/>.

"OutRage! Administrative/Biographical History." Bishopsgate Institute. Last modified 2023. <https://www.bishopsgate.org.uk/collections/outrage>.

Robinson, Lucy. "Confronting Thatcher: the Bermondsey by-election, Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners and AIDS activism." In *Gay Men and the Left in Post-War Britain: How the Personal Got Political*, 154-184. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007.

Stroude, Will. "Equal age of consent: A comprehensive history of the battle for gay parity." *Attitude*. January 5, 2021. <https://www.attitude.co.uk/culture/sexuality/equal-age-of-consent-a-comprehensive-history-of-the-battle-for-gay-parity-302213/>.

Sherwood, Harriet. "Bishop of Grantham first C of E bishop to declare he is in gay relationship." *Guardian*. September 2, 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/02/nicholas-chamberlain-bishop-of-grantham-c-of-e-gay-relationship>.

Tatchell, Peter. *AIDS : a guide to survival*. London: Gay Men's Press, 1986.

Tatchell, Peter. "Bermondsey was the dirtiest, most violent British election of the 20th century – and we can learn from it today." *Guardian*. February 24, 2023. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/feb/24/bermondsey-was-the-dirtiest-most-violent-british-election-of-the-20th-century-and-we-can-learn-from-it-today>.

- Tatchell, Peter. "In Defence Of Outing – The Ethics Of Naming Names." *Peter Tatchell*. February 21, 1995. https://www.petertatchell.net/lgbt_rights/outing/defence/.
- Turque, Bill. "The Age of 'Outing'." *Newsweek*. August 11, 1991. <https://www.newsweek.com/age-outing-202878>.
- Watney, Simon. "Numbers and Nightmares: HIV/AIDS in Britain." In *Imagine Hope: AIDS and gay identity*, 136-147. New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Watney, Simon. "Queer epistemology: activism, 'outing', and the politics of sexual identities." *Critical Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (March 1994): 13-27. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1467-8705.1994.tb01006.x>.