

Holland Helps Its Homosexuals

By Colin Smith
London Observer

AMSTERDAM—A state-subsidized psychiatric consultative center for Holland's estimated 30,000 homosexuals has just been officially opened in the center of Amsterdam.

It is housed in a newly decorated 18th Century house on a quiet side street. Inside, the atmosphere is restful, with abstract paintings hanging on the white walls and the inevitable greenery of Dutch plants flourishing in the central heating.

The staff of ten is about equally divided between sociologists and psychiatrists. There are also advisers from the Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches.

The staff includes a legal expert. Though Amsterdam's

homosexuals live a relatively emancipated existence, in the provinces blackmail is still their greatest fear.

A \$29,000 state grant covers 80 per cent of the operating costs and the rest is found through private donations or from voluntary organizations. In addition to its consultative role, the center also undertakes government-financed research work.

So far, the commonest problem has been the torment young homosexuals face in accepting themselves for what they are and telling others.

The head consultant psychiatrist explained: "First of all they cope with their social problems. They can't get apartments, they can't find work—that sort of thing. But

I always call this the 'mask' problem.

"On the second visit they usually come out with the real problem—acceptance. Not being able to explain to close friends or parents, they are in a depressive, sometimes suicidal, state. We try to talk them around until they feel they are in a position where they can tell their parents. Sometimes we invite the parents to come along with them and talk things over with us.

"There is another group of boys who suffer an excessive fear of the emancipated woman. The pushing woman of today who can often take the initiative in sex frightens them. Because of this they do not have a sexual relationship

with a girl and conclude they must be homosexuals.

"Usually they are not homosexual at all. They have merely failed to mature from the early-teen stage of homosexuality most boys go through. Our job is to help them mature."

On job discrimination, he was convinced that homosexuals were little better off in Holland than in other European countries. A homosexual psychiatrist had applied for his job and was turned down, he said.

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