In circles even smaller than those normally inhabited by the revolutionary left, the developing Men’s Movement is causing a bit of a stir. There are even signs — such as Jill Tweedie’s heart-fluttering story for the men’s magazine Achillea Helix — that the movement is coming out of its closet, and may have some important things to offer the socialist movement.

This article looks sympathetically at the men’s movement, and examines the possibilities of its development in the context of the orthodox left. It is written from the point of view of one who wants revolutionary organisations to adopt these new insights into the male psyche. While Achillea Helix would not feel too at home with this piece, it has its roots in all the obscure and bizarre designs of the magazine.

It has not escaped the notice of any man who knows what the men’s movement is about, and most of them are filled with enthusiasm for the way it is recruiting erstwhile uninterested members of men’s groups or are in varying degrees critical of the movement.

**WHY A MEN’S MOVEMENT?**

It is far too early to try and give a definitive analysis of what the men’s movement started, in 1973, and then again a year or two ago, to meet in groups all over the country. We would probably all agree that we felt various pressing needs: to learn how to express our emotions and make real relationships with men, to understand the questions of nation and race, and more generally, to express our sexist and exploitative attitudes towards women, boys and in the case of women, to learn to deal with our own sexism.

For a lot of us, a major stimulus to becoming involved with these problems was the finding out, or realising, that feminism is not a conspiracy of men against women, but a few. For a lot of us, a major stimulus to becoming involved with these problems was the women’s liberation movement, and this attention to personal and political relationships with women in particular.

But my impression from the paltry I meet at the Manchester Men’s Conference is that plenty of men have identified with the men’s movement without this political kick in the pants from feminists. Some for the very first time, and most of us, although sometimes there are exceptions. I’m aware of the limited nature of their emotional lives, and, in some cases, from an extension of the insights they’ve gained in therapy or from contact with other religions.

Some men have a history of work in the socialist movement, and have had a sense of alienation from the movement as irrevocably sexist and because they feel that they are often the only realists in the men’s small left, and they are changing themselves. Some still regard themselves as in some way more politically concerned, and are constantly critical of orthodox socialist activity.

Yet another set of men in the movement who I have been most impressed by, and have been present at the Manchester conference, are those who have come in contact with the socialist movement, are active in trade unions, political groups, and are involved with the socialist movement. Some – who believe that socialism is to be led by the practical and theoretical insights of socialists.

**SOME OF THE ISSUES**

Because there are so many strands of thought in the men’s movement, some of the criticisms of men’s liberation are relevant. For example, the growing concern that socialism is to be led by the practical and theoretical insights of socialists.