

# Out in the Mountains

VERMONT'S NEWSPAPER FOR LESBIANS, GAY MEN, AND BISEXUALS

Volume X, Number 5

July/August 1995

FREE

## Dean Speaks Out: The OITM Interview



Paul Olsen

**MONTPELIER** -- The national visibility of Governor Howard Dean is soon to increase when Dean and the State of Vermont host the National Governor's Association (NGA) conference July 30 through August 2. As the theme of this year's NGA conference is "Campaign for Children," policy issues expected to be discussed include budget cuts, block granting, welfare reform, health care, and school lunch programs. In addition to President Clinton, expected to be among the more than two thousand conference participants are many of the nation's governors, more than 500 journalists, and a number of 1996 presidential candidates.

Dr. Howard Dean's political career includes service in the Vermont House of Representatives from 1983 to 1986, five years as Lieutenant Governor, and service as the Governor of Vermont since 1991. Shortly before the annual milking contest pitting Dean against Vermont Agricultural Commissioner Leon Graves, Dean was interviewed by *Out in the Mountains* in his Montpelier office. What follows are excerpts of the interview in which Dean discusses same-sex adoption, Vermont's Human Rights Commission, outing, and his future political plans.

**OITM:** You were an early supporter of and ultimately signed legislation making Vermont one of nine states to ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. From your perspective, has the Gay Rights Bill been effective?

**Dean:** I think it has. In general, there is more of an atmosphere of tolerance in Vermont than there is in a lot of other states, which doesn't mean that we don't have a long way to go. There have been court cases and that's what it is for... to make sure that people have proper legal remedies.

**OITM:** What is your position on Senator Leon Graves' (now Vermont's Agriculture Commissioner) amendment to the adoption reform bill that would prohibit adoptions by same-sex couples?

**Dean:** I oppose it and I won't sign the bill if it is in there. That bill has to come out with only one criterion for adoption and that is what's in the best interest of the child.

**OITM:** The Supreme Court in Hawaii is currently reviewing a case around the issue of gay marriages. If the court rules that Hawaii cannot bar gay marriages, how do you think Vermont will respond?

**Dean:** I appreciate the way you asked me that question so as not to put me on the spot in making difficult political declarations ahead of time. I would expect that Vermont would comply with the law. I expect a rhubarb in the legislature but not anything that would alter that decision.

**OITM:** You supported the extension of domestic partner benefits to State employees. Was there any political backlash from that decision?

**Dean:** We're the first State in the country to do that. We got four letters... my attitude is just do it and don't make a cause celebre about it. I'm a big believer in just quietly getting the job done and not making a big flap about it.

**OITM:** In the Legislature a number of changes have been proposed to Vermont's Human Rights Commission. What changes, if any, would you like to see made at the Human Rights Commission?

**Dean:** I would like to make it less formal and intimidating. We're trying to work with the Commissioners and with the Executive Director to make the process appear to be more fair. It's hard to sort out, some of the most vocal complainants are people who have appropriately been found guilty of discrimination but there are people who have had problems. I've never talked to anybody who had a problem about a case involving the gay community.

**OITM:** Currently the State of Vermont spends approximately \$150,000 on AIDS services and nothing on HIV prevention. Will you propose increased appropriations for these areas in the future?

**Dean:** The federal government spends money on AIDS prevention. That number has been going up every year because of federal spending. We're just about to cut the daylights out of the budget so I don't want to give any promises that I'm going to propose new spending anywhere. There will be holes that we will fill. They will all be in the area of prevention and children's issues. I can't rule that in or out.

Continued on page 3

## Dean Speaks Out:

### Continued from page 1

**OITM:** State Senator (and probable candidate for Lieutenant Governor) Jeb Spaulding has proposed legislation that would create ballot initiatives in Vermont. What is your position on this proposal?

**Dean:** I don't like those and I would vigorously oppose those because they have been nothing but trouble for most other states. They have led to expensive and distorted campaigns of various kinds, some against minority groups, some against spending of various kinds, so I am a very strong opponent of government by referendum. I believe we have a representative form of government and that is the appropriate way we should continue.

**OITM:** How do you feel about outing? Specifically, should closeted gay members of the Legislature who voted against the Gay Rights Bill be outed?

**Dean:** I don't like outing because I think people need to make their own decisions about when or if they want to disclose if they are gay. Outing is now being used by some members of the gay community as a technique for advancing causes and also showing hypocrisy in politicians. It's always fair to show hypocrisy in politicians. The temptation is gigantic when you have hypocrisy in politicians but usually on issues of policy not issues of personal and private matters.

**OITM:** Will the NGA address any issues that specifically concern lesbians and gay men?

**Dean:** I doubt it. The NGA has a majority of 30 Republicans who are not inclined to address this cause in any kind of constructive way. Which doesn't mean that there are not some very good Republicans who are supportive of gay rights. (Massachusetts Governor) Bill Weld comes to mind immediately and there are others who would be sympathetic as well but the vast majority are unsympathetic. I can't think of anything constructive that would come out of the NGA meeting in this area. I can't even get universal health care on the agenda!

**OITM:** In the past you've supported legislation that would mandate HIV testing of convicted sex offenders. Do you still support it?

**Dean:** That's probably my one difference with the gay community. It's not going to happen but I still support it. It has to do with my views of victims... I feel so very strongly about victims rights, which in fact is the same sense of justice that makes me very supportive of the gay and lesbian community.

**OITM:** Do you plan to run for Governor in 1996?

**Dean:** Yes, and you're the first newspaper in the State to know.

**OITM:** Who will win the milking contest?

**Dean:** I'm going to get my butt cleaned! ▼

Join us in celebrating our 15<sup>th</sup>  
anniversary as we revisit past issues  
of the paper throughout 2001.