

A response to no response

# Gays face difficulties reaching those in power

by Jim Morgan

Historically lesbians and gay men have had difficulty accessing avenues which might bring about change. We in Vermont have seen no different when we've attempted to contact those in power. What follows are some examples, and a few exceptions.

In June, 1985, the Burlington Board of Alderpeople voted on a statement to proclaim Saturday, June 22, 1985, Lesbian and Gay Pride Day in Burlington. Among those voting against the proposal was Alderperson Ted Riehle. During the debate, Riehle suggested that if he believed discrimination toward lesbians and gays existed, he might support a Pride proclamation.

A member of Vermonters for Lesbian and Gay Rights (VLGR) reports that Riehle accepted VLGR's invitation to meet the next morning for breakfast to discuss discrimination/violence directed toward the lesbian and gay community. Riehle did not show up at that meeting -- nor has he responded to 12 attempts to schedule another appointment.

Anyone wishing to contact Riehle can write him at City Hall, Burlington.

Lack of response has also come from several people involved in the state's landlord-tenant fair housing bill, according to members of the National Association of Social Workers, Lesbian and Gay Issues Committee (NASW, LGIC-Vt.). Neither Cheryl Rivers (Low Income Advocacy Council, Montpelier) nor James Libby (Vermont Legal Aid, Montpelier) have responded to requests to meet regarding the addition of "same-sex" protections to the bill.

In another example several weeks ago, State Representative Peter Youngbear offered an amendment to the above bill, to include the phrase "sexual orientation." But no connection was made with the lesbian and gay community, and an opportunity to coordinate lobbying efforts was missed. As yet, Youngbear has not responded to a request to meet with NASW, LGIC-VT, to discuss where communication broke down.

Another non-response came from State Representative Amy Davenport, who has not yet replied to a request for information on what research data would be needed to change existing domestic violence statutes to include same-sex protections.

Yet another example: in recent communication with Senator Robert Stafford concerning the proposed \$15 million cut in AIDS funding, Stafford stated, "I am not planning to support the President's requests for reductions in the fiscal year '86 funding." But he continues to refuse to assign a staff liaison to the lesbian and gay community. Lobbying continues with Stafford to encourage him to review

and co-sponsor federal non-discrimination legislation. He may be reached at 133 Hart Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510.

On the other hand, there is some good news. Representative James Jeffords has appointed a staff liaison to the lesbian and gay community -- Stacy Littlefield, 2431 Rayburn Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515.

Also, Lynn Heglund, of the Governor's Commission on the Status of Women, submitted supportive testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee, which is now reviewing the above-mentioned landlord-tenant bill. "It is the commission's policy to support the inclusion of the category of 'sexual preference' under the list of protected classes in the bill," she said. She has also agreed to add a question about



## Letters Home

In the process of affirming our gayness, there is no area which brings so much pain and joy as that of families. Many of us are caught in a struggle to be ourselves and at the same time, to maintain our family ties. It is often helpful to share our family ups and downs with others who have faced similar situations.

With the above in mind, a reader has offered to share a recent communication he received from his mother and his response to that letter. Out In The Mountains would like to hear from other readers who might be willing to share "Letters Home".

Dear Burton,

When you wanted all of us to know your sexual orientation, I believe that gave us a right to tell you how we feel about it. We've had discussions and I think the whole family has accepted this situation without too much "to do".

When I read your letter about your outside activities I felt a great concern about your being involved so completely in all this activism. I'm all for the public being educated about AIDS, but can see that you must really be in the public eye to be invited to do the seminar and to speak at a human sexuality class. I'm glad that you gain personal satisfaction from this. If you were heterosexual what windmills would you be tilting? What really upset me, though, was the idea of your being involved with a gay/lesbian newspaper. What good will that do? No one would read it except those of that inclination and you are really putting yourself in a position that could be harmful. Who gave the grant? Please turn this over to other people who can think of nothing but GAY, GAY, GAY! I read the letter first and said nothing to Dad

same-sex domestic violence in a pre-test questionnaire prior to the upcoming statewide domestic violence study.

And, Scott Skinner (ACLU-Vt., Montpelier) recently gave two strong positive statements to Vermont House and Senate committees regarding the HTLV III anti-discrimination bill (H622) and "sexual orientation" inclusion in the landlord-tenant bill. Both Scott Skinner and Brian Burgess (deputy attorney general) agree to review a log form developed by Liz Hurwitz for possible use in documenting discrimination and violence against lesbians and gay men.

Anyone interested in further lobbying efforts should contact NASW (Lesbian and Gay Issues Committee) c/o Box 147, Woodstock, VT 05091.

when I gave it to him so I could get his reaction. He said, "This newspaper business - he doesn't need to be in that. I don't like it. I don't like it at all!" And as I said, this came from someone who has not criticized in any way before.

Don't think that we express disapproval just to you. If it were your brothers involved in something we thought wrong, we'd do the same thing. But who could disapprove of Scouts, Chamber of Commerce, Heart Fund official, Photography Club, Rotary Club, Lay Reader and Deacon of churches? Isn't there some aspect of civic or cultural life in Burlington that you could devote some of your time and energies toward? I said once that you'd developed a lop-sided view of life and I think so now even more. And, as I've said, the homosexuals I know here who are leading really productive lives are not going around all the time saying "Let's Go Gay."

If you and your friends know someone who could contribute a feature article (weekly) on educating the public about gays, but in conventional newspapers, then that might do some good if it were someone really gifted in writing and who could do this in a non-biased way.

Well, I have this off my chest, and am sure I have wasted much time in writing, because I don't think that any of my "Words of Wisdom" have ever had any effect whatsoever on you, but I'm compelled to let you know how I feel.

Love, MOM

Dear Mom,

You are wrong about your "Words of Wisdom" not affecting me. As my mother and as someone I love very

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