out in the mountains

VERMONT'S NEWSPAPER for LESBIANS and GAY MEN

Vol. 1 No. 8 *October 1986*

VLGR sponsors Discrimination/Harrassment Survey

Being an "invisible minority" at one time protected the lesbian and gay community from oppression. Today, many would argue, it contributes to our oppression. With only estimates to go on, government and private agencies frequently are unaware of the size, diversity, and needs of the lesbian/gay community.

The following questionnaire, sponsored by VERMONTERS FOR LESBIAN AND GAY RIGHTS (VLGR), and with input from the NATIONAL LESBIAN/GAY TASK FORCE, begins the process of sketching in the features of the lesbian/gay community in Vermont. The information provided will enable the community to make a better case in the struggle for protective legislation, private funding and support.

Is discrimination against lesbians and gay men in Vermont a myth? We don't think so!! But unless we can tackle the enormous task of documenting discrimination in Vermont, we will not be able to show our elected officials the need for laws in Vermont which would prohibit such discrimination.

As lesbians and gay men, we are the only ones who can demonstrate the need for legislation that will protect our rights. This is the purpose of VLGR's *Discrimination/Harassment Documentation Project.* Just as every lesbian and gay man has a state in a statewide lesbian/gay civil rights bill, every lesbian and gay man has a stake in this survey.

This survey is being conducted in a manner that respects and ensures the STRICTEST CONFIDENTIALITY of the individual respondents. Naturally, its success depends upon its widespread distribution to the lesbian/gay citizens throughout Vermont. If you have already completed and returned a survey, pass one on to a friend. The more respondents we have, the stronger our case before the Vermont state legislature will be. We seek full representation of the community. THANK YOU!

Should you wish additional copies of this survey or wish further information, please contact VLGR; Discrimination/Harassment Documentation Project; Box 281; Hinesburg, VT 05461.

Civil Rights Commission withdraws invitation

In an unprecedented move, the Vermont Advisory Committee to the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights withdrew an invitation to attorney Heather Wishik to provide the keynote speech at a factfinding conference in early September.

According to a letter received by Wishik from the New England regional office of the Civil Rights Commission, seven of the eight members of the Vermont advisory panel asked that her invitation be rescinded.

"Reason given was a shared perception that your alleged 'radical feminism' might render scholarly detachment sufficiently difficult as to elicit distracting and inappropriate responses from participants and members of the audience."

Wishik did take part in a panel discussion on sex discrimination and at the end of her discussion read aloud the letter she had received withdrawing the invitation. "I fear that the message carried to Vermonters by your actions regarding me is that women who speak publicly about women's rights are not worthy of professional respect, are 'uppity,' are too 'radical.'"

Kenneth Holland, chairperson of the Vermont panel, said the invitation was withdrawn not because of Wishik's political views but because she wasn't felt to be the best choice for a keynote speaker. However, he went on to say that an article she wrote for Out in the Mountains asserting that the ERA could be used in securing certain rights for gay people was part of the discussion in deciding to withdraw the invitation.

"It was certainly brought up, but it didn't sway the majority of the commission," he said.

However, he offered no other explanation as to why the invitation was rescinded.

Republicans drop ERA from platform

After a stormy debate at the statewide conference, Vermont State Republican leaders decided to drop support for the proposed state Equal Rights Amendment from their party's platform. Instead they approved an alternate statement which has two major differences from the ERA. The first was the use of the words "equal protection" instead of "equal rights." Proponents of the revised statement argued that "equal rights" was a nebulous concept whereas "equal protection" was somehow more clear.

The second major change was replacing the word "sex" with "gender." The reason for making that switch, according to supporters, was to make it clear that the party platform does not include support of gay rights.

According to Frank Cutler of Bridgeport a Republican who attended the conference. "The only people who will profit from (the ERA's) passage are the homosexuals and lesbians." We can only assume that this was not a statement in support of the ERA.

It should be noted that the four main candidates of the Republican Party in this election (Snelling, Jeffords, Smith and Auld) all are supporters of the State ERA. It is the party that they represent which has gone on record as refusing to support it.

●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●

The staff of Out in the Mountains wishes its Jewish readers, and the lovers and friends who celebrate with them, a sweet and good new year. L'shana tova!

●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●