

Cabin Fever

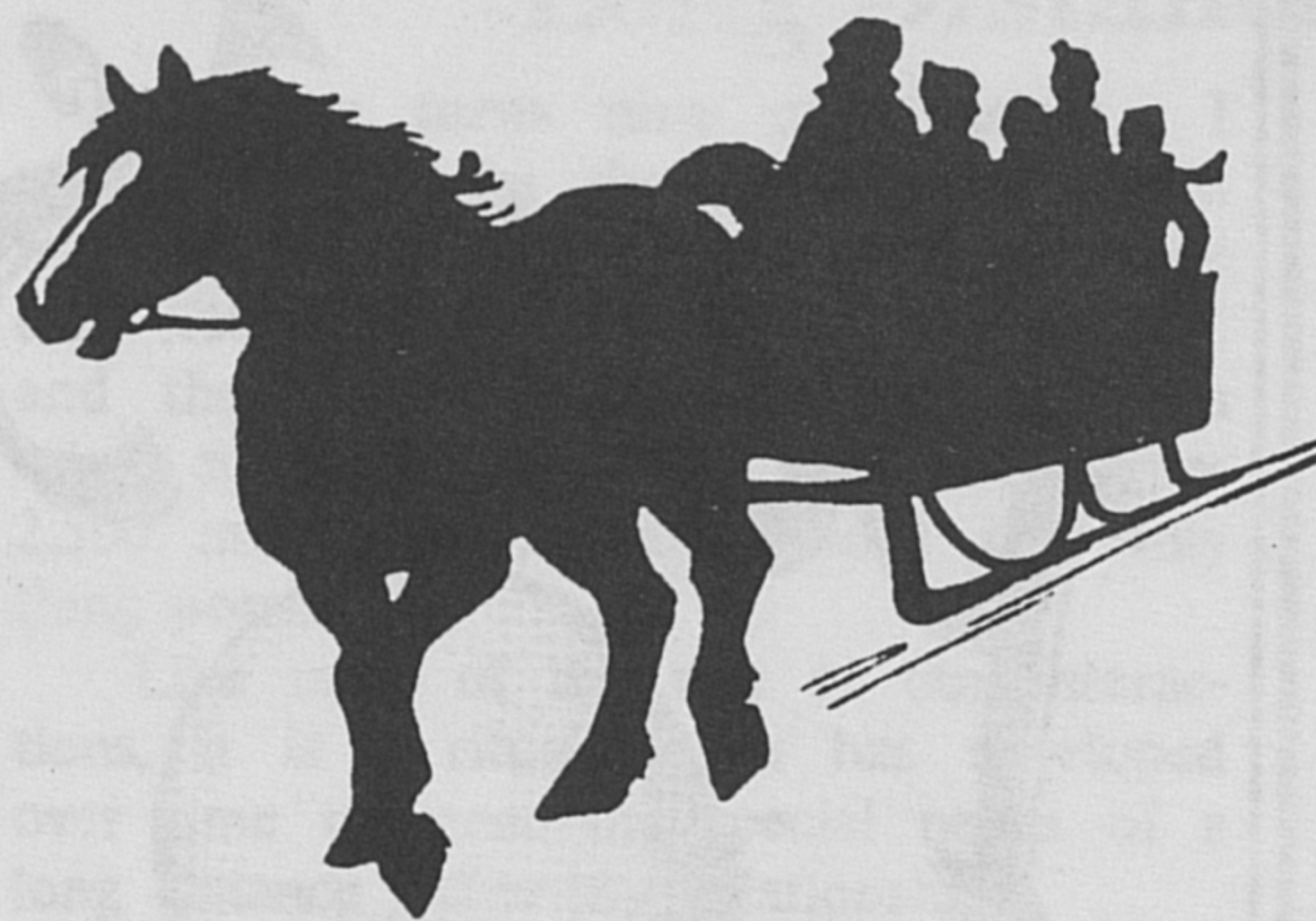
Cabin Fever?--Try Vermont Gay Volleyball

This year marks the fifth year that Vermont Gay Volleyball (VGV) has been in existence. On Sunday evenings from 5:30 - 8:00 pm come and play volleyball with us. The cost is approximately \$3.00 per person. This money is used to pay for the gymnasium rental fee.

If you are wondering whether you are good enough to play, don't worry. We encourage all levels of players and no one is excluded. VGV is a fun and non-threatening way to get some exercise, meet some new people and have a great time. We have all heard from time to time that there are not many opportunities to meet other gay people. VGV can be an answer to that. For many of us, it has been a nice alternative to the bar.

If you would like to play and need more information, call 864-3617 or write VGV, PO Box 248, Hinesburg, Vt. 05401.

Come fight those cabin fever blues. We look forward to seeing you soon.



Sleigh Rides

by appointment

Hinesburg Village

20 minutes southeast of Burlington

482-2434

Commentary: Reflections on a Meeting

By Susan Lea Aranoff

On Sunday February 1st, over sixty lesbians and gay men gathered in South Royalton to attend a Vermont Coalition of Lesbians and Gay Men meeting. No, this is not an official report of all that transpired, though I hope that such a report appears elsewhere in this issue. Rather this is a personal account of some of what I experienced at the meeting. I sent it to Out In The Mountains with the hope that it might inspire some more people to attend LOV (Lesbians of Vermont) or Coalition meetings. They can be really wonderful and powerful events.

10:00 A.M.: No time for a second cup of coffee. No time for a leisurely Sunday morning. Barely enough time to call the local general store and ask them to hold my Sunday New York Times.

10:25: I arrived in South Royalton with five minutes to spare. The town Green I see everyday was magically transformed by lots of cars with wonderful bumperstickers. "WE are Everywhere", "Arms are for hugging", "I love dancing", "When the people lead, the leaders will follow", "Women make great leaders, you're following one". I wish my Green could be that inspiring and exciting everyday.

10:30: There were already three times as many people as I expected and more were arriving. We kept having to add chairs to our already large circle. There was a lot of energy and excitement buzzing through the room. A lot of tentativeness too. No one was quite sure what was going to take place, what decisions were going to be made, but there was a sense

that something was going to happen. Something big. There seemed to be a collective marvel at how large and powerful we had become.

10:40: The meeting started. As a cofacilitator, I had difficulty speaking at first. The group was perhaps too large and unfocused. My words seemed to leave my mouth and enter a large void. We discussed the task at hand. We were to divide up into a women's group and a men's group. Within these smaller groups we were to discuss whether or not we wanted a lesbian and gay civil rights bill to be introduced.

10:50: I was glad when the men left and the space became women space. It was an easier space to be in. Easier to grasp and access the ideas and discussions. We started our meeting by going around our circle of thirty-five and introducing ourselves. We each said something about who we are, what we do in our lives, how and where we live. This took some time but for me it was time well spent. It was great to hear so many women say "I am a lesbian" and it was neat to hear about the interesting and diverse lives we lead. When we began discussing whether or not to support the introduction of a civil rights bill we went around our circle again. We each spoke to what we felt we would be able to do to support the passage of a civil rights bill. Many women disclosed fears of losing their jobs, custody of their children, citizenship, financial aid. And still these women were willing to do what they could. Some spoke of testifying at a hearing with paper bags over their heads to conceal their identities. Some spoke of writing letters to their elected officials or

Even Monkeys!

"My recommendation to you is that you forget all about this stuff (being gay) and turn straight."

This was the reaction of Rep. Kittredge Haven (R-Panton) when approached by a member of the gay community lobbying for H.247, the lesbian/gay anti-discrimination bill.

Mr. Haven went on to say that he opposed any kind of limitations on landlords or employers as to who they could or could not discriminate against. He specifically said he believed landlords and employers should be allowed to discriminate based on race, age or "any other reason they want to."

In the ensuing discussion, Mr. Haven indicated that he felt homosexuality was unnatural and that "even animals don't do it." When he was informed that, in fact, homosexuality is found in most species of animals he queried, "Even monkeys?" Yes, Mr. Haven...even monkeys.

newspaper editors without signing them, but explaining the risks they would incur if they did sign their names, thereby illustrating the need for civil rights legislation. We spoke of the unpleasant realities of possible abuse from our opposition. And yet we spoke of our strength. We spoke of our commitment to ourselves, each other. We spoke of needing to begin the struggle for our rights here in Vermont.

When we began our discussion it was difficult to sense the direction in which we were moving. But a momentum began to build. Our pace was slow and methodical. We stayed pretty clear and mostly focused. We spoke in concrete terms about the necessary tasks at hand, the burdens or organizing, our energy or lack thereof, our time or lack there of. We resolved to support the introduction of and work towards the passage of the civil rights bill. It was a very deliberate decision, arrived at through a very deliberate process. At times I was frustrated with the slow pace. I wondered if we really had enough time in the day for such a time consumptive process. But after the decision was reached, I felt as though it was a very well grounded and supported decision, much more so than if we had just voted earlier on. True, the end result may have been the same, but the process we went through made the decision real for every one of us.

Like many of us, I have been involved with many organizations for many years. Some practice consensus decision making and some use Robert's Rules of Order. Rarely have I felt as empowered by a meeting or a group as I felt that Sunday in South Royalton.

After lunch: The men and women met together in our large group. Here too, there was a lot of careful talking and careful listening. It has been a long time