

Statewide Meeting Report

Discussion of House Bill 247, the sexual orientation anti-discrimination legislation, dominated the May 2 statewide meeting of the Vermont Coalition of Lesbians and Gay Men in South Royalton.

The legislation, which was sent to the House General and Military Affairs Committee in April to avoid a losing vote on the floor of the House, will remain alive for the next half of the biennium, beginning in January of 1988.

Meeting participants, many of whom were heavily involved in lobbying efforts, assessed the results of the last few months of activity.

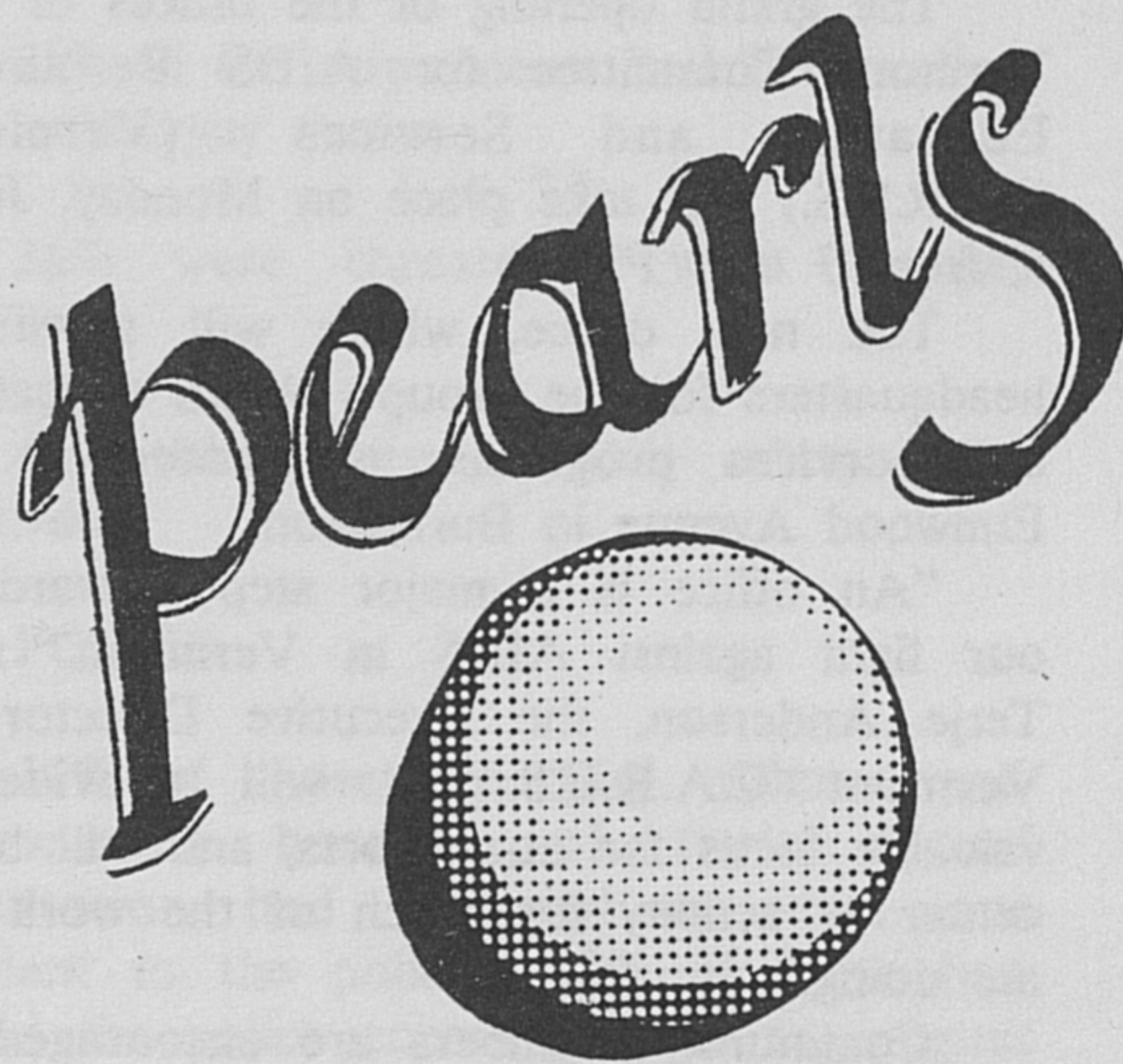
It was noted by many participants that few people expected the bill to pass the first time it was introduced. Instead, the goals which many expressed for the legislation at the beginning, a public hearing and consideration by the Judiciary Committee, were surpassed. The 7 to 4 favorable vote from the Judiciary Committee, coupled with the growing awareness of lesbian/gay issues by members of the legislature, made the outcome "a victory." "Because of this year's efforts," said one participant "we are now being looked at differently than ever before by the legislature. They know we are out there, and that we will be lobbying actively for our own civil rights. That's an incredible step forward."

Despite that realization, the meeting expressed the strong feeling that "next year, or five years from now isn't soon enough. We deserve our full civil rights now, and a victory short of that is a rather hollow victory."

Some voiced frustration at being rather powerless to influence the direction of the bill in the legislature; lesbians and gay men were neither consulted nor involved in the decision to send the bill to another committee.

The virulence of the anti-247 lobbying was discussed. The fact that legislators were deluged with calls from people in opposition to the bill, mobilized by fundamentalist churches and right wing groups, seemed to observers to have been what buried the bill. Many of the calls were threatening, even violent, in nature. They were sufficient in volume and intensity to sway many legislators who previously seemed certain to support the legislation.

Despite the many negatives which surfaced during the legislative efforts, the group found much positive in the activities. One portion of the meeting was devoted to a group discussion of the good things from the campaign. The list of more than 50 positive things was evidence of the empowerment which came about through the lobbying. Many people told moving stories of personal support or of the bonds of trust and friendship which grew out of the campaign.



Tues. Ed's \$1 Bud Night
Wed. Ladies Night
Thurs. Boys Night Out

June 5th, Womyn's Dance

June 11th, Fund Raiser for L/G Pride. 8 PM

July 4th, Celebration "Puttin' on the Dog"

July 10th, Womyn's Dance

August 7th, Womyn's Dance

Summer Disco Madness

Tuesday & Thursday Nights

Live D.J. NO COVER

All Summer Long

HAVE A GOOD SUMMER

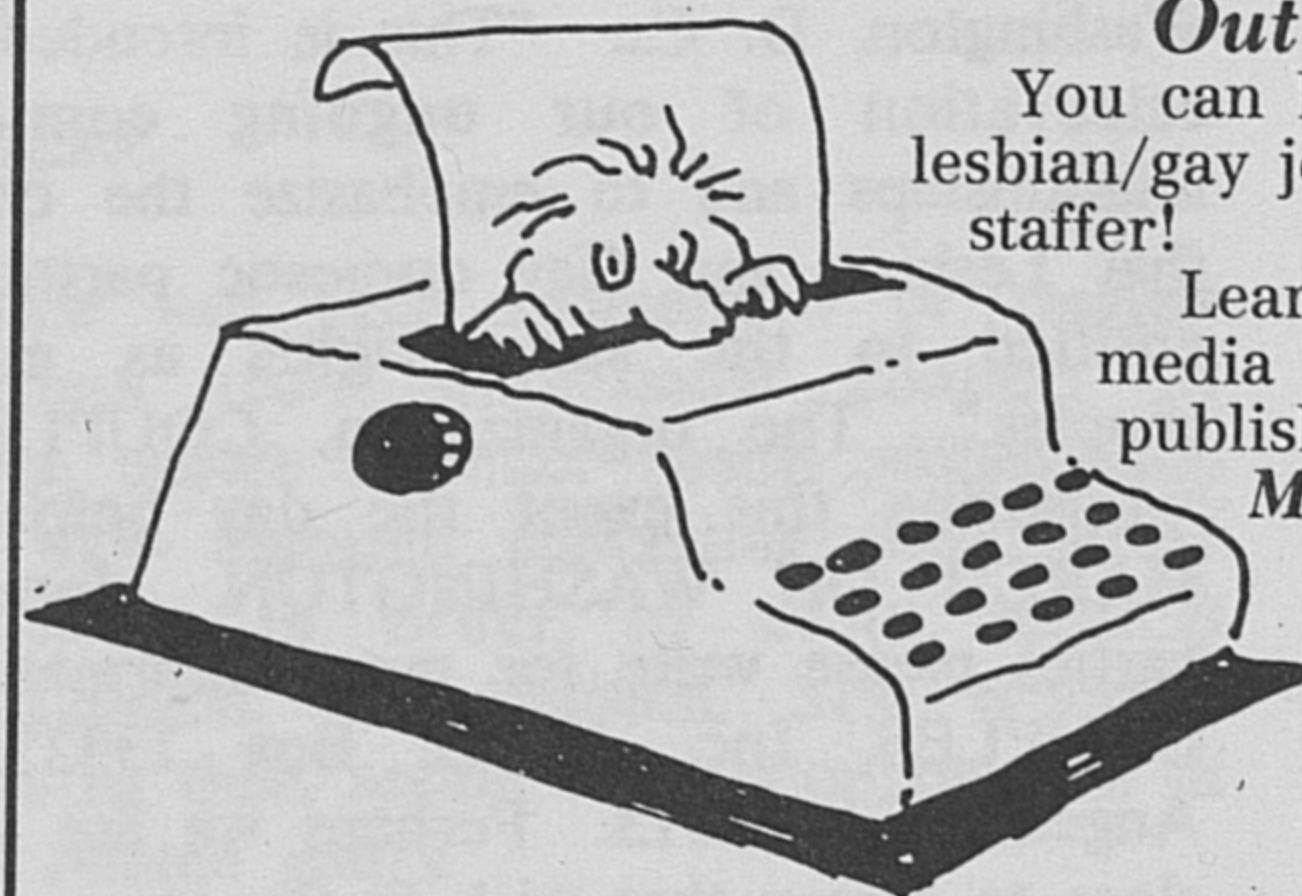
Monday - Friday 5 - 2 AM

Saturday 8 - 1 AM

Sunday 8 - 2 AM

Downstairs Is Open Tues., Thurs., Fri., and Sat.

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