

# Civil Disobedience at Supreme Court

At least ten Vermonters were arrested on October 13th during the civil disobedience protest at the Supreme Court, according to information released by the March on Washington organization.

A dozen or so of the protesters who pleaded "not guilty" after being arrested during the civil disobedience action at the Supreme Court on October 13th are likely to go on trial this month in Washington, D.C.

The event with possibly the most far-reaching consequences of the entire March weekend happened after most Vermonters had already gone home. As was widely reported in the mainstream press, between 650 and 850 lesbians, gay men and

their supporters were arrested on October 13th. The action was intended to protest the Court's decision upholding state sodomy laws and to demand justice for gays and lesbians everywhere.

Five thousand people took part in the disobedience action. Approximately half of those arrested were released on the day of the action after posting \$100 bail. Most of the remaining protestors refused to pay the collateral and pleaded guilty to "failure to quit" protesting after the police ordered them to leave. The sentence handed down to those who pleaded guilty was a fine of \$50 or three days in jail. Approximately 50 protestors opted for the three-days in jail sentence and were released at 3 a.m. on October 15.

Two of the arrested were David Hylander and Ahdih Fostre, both of Hyde Park, Vermont. They were released at midnight on October 13th after paying fines of \$60 and \$50. Hylander, who has participated in various Central America and anti-nuclear protests, said he hoped the action would spur activists from other movements to become more involved.

Charges of abuse by police abound. According to demonstration organizer Jessica Shubow, one person with AIDS was forced to lick his medication off the floor, three people suffered nerve damage to their hands because of excessively tight handcuffs and one man with AIDS was dragged to a bus and dropped three times. In addition, people arrested were not given food by authorities for at least 18 hours, said Shubow.

Terry Sutton, a man with AIDS from San Francisco, is attempting to document

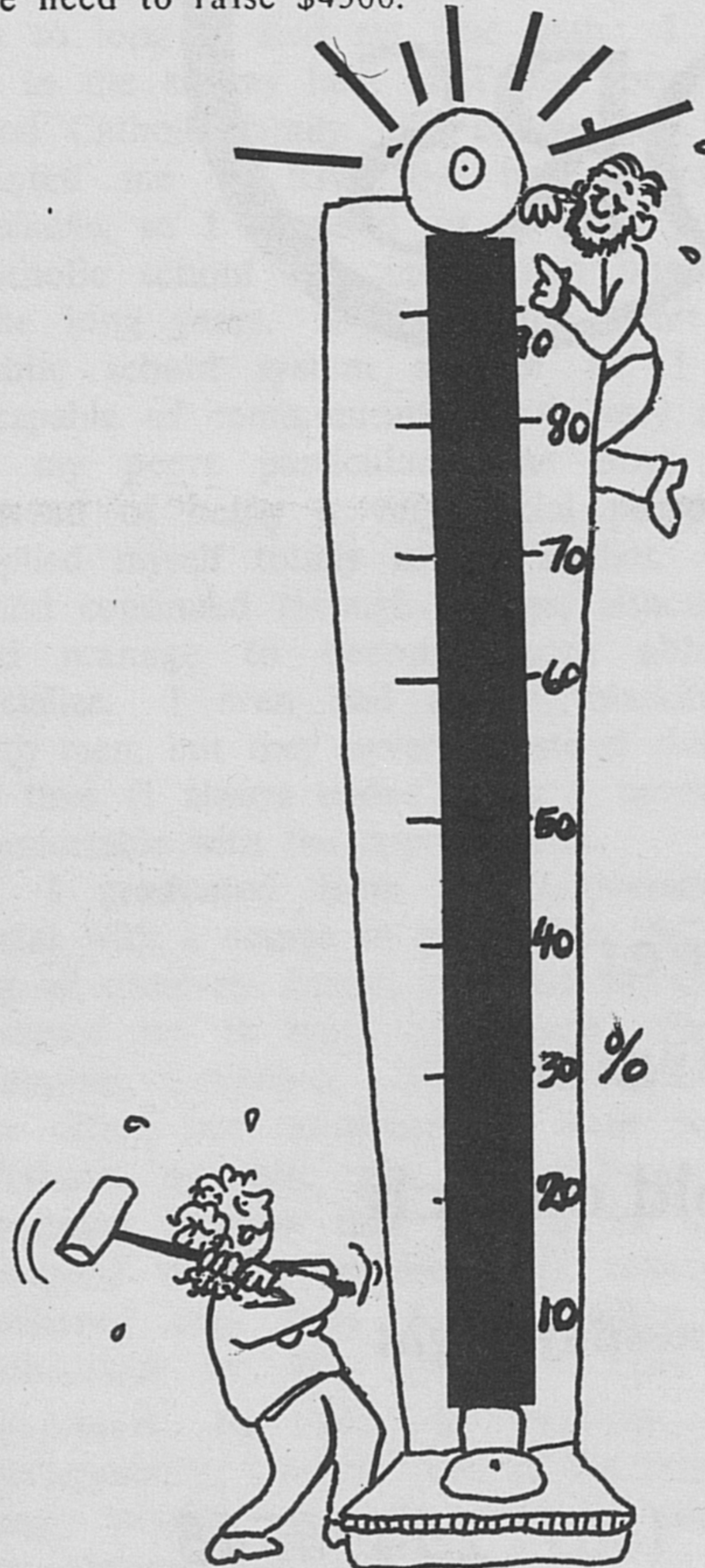
abuse, possibly for a class action suit. Sutton has collected stories about a deaf woman who was tightly handcuffed for nearly four hours, making it impossible for her to communicate with anyone -- she fears nerve damage to her hands; 42 women who were held overnight in a large room with only one bench, toilets and showers in it -- many slept in the showers; lesbians and gay men who were threatened by police with rape and violence; and a woman who was having difficulty breathing who was denied a respirator.

The arraignment process was not completed until 10 p.m. on October 14. Many observers were brought to tears as protestors told judges the reasons for their actions at the Supreme Court. "I lost custody of my children ten years ago because it is a crime to be a lesbian," said lesbian activist Minnie Bruce Pratt. "Women are losing custody rights because of the Hardwick decision [which upheld Georgia's anti-sodomy law], I want the Supreme Court decision reversed and [for all of us to be] considered full human beings without regard to who we love."

While many demonstrators hoped to serve time doing community service instead of paying a fine, only one person was successful in receiving an alternative sentence. Instead of giving money to the court system, Terry Sutton will make a \$50 check out to Open Hand, a San Francisco organization that provides meals for persons with AIDS. According to Sutton, he told a judge how poorly people had been treated by the police, he implored her to allow him to give the money to Open Hand as a symbol of her belief that lesbian and gay men have the right to love as they choose.

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