

Massachusetts Civil Disobedience *from page 10*

Civil disobedience participant McCray said, "Fifteen years has shown that a few controlled people doing back room lobbying is not going to do it. We need to be out on the street. People don't just hand over civil rights and liberation...the senators may say that protests have no impact, but they can't help but respect people who have the nerve to put their bodies on the line to stand up for their rights."

Lesbians and gay men involved in the Jan. 4 action offered detailed accounts that excessive violence had been used by some law enforcement officers. Newscameras

were present and State House court officers were "throwing people around" very carelessly; it may have been worse without media witnesses.

Officials had closed one of the Senate viewing galleries, possibly in anticipation of the protest. The one remaining gallery was full, protesters waiting in line outside, delaying the start of the civil disobedience.

Bob Wheatly, gay activist and Unitarian minister, initiated the action by interrupting Sen. David Locke shouting, "I object to what you're doing! Where's the gay rights bill?" Court officers rushed to

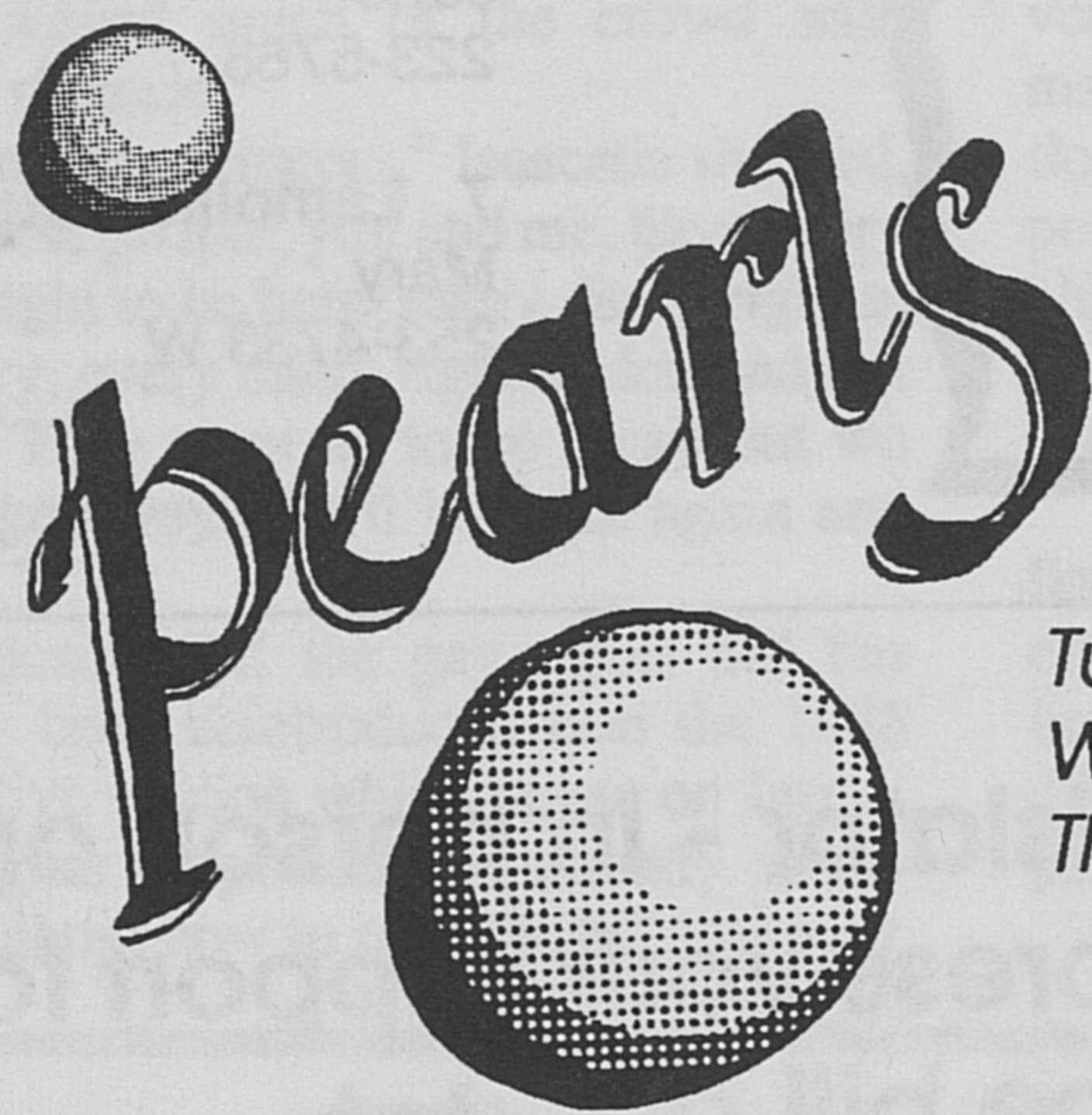
forcefully remove him while other protesters shouted loud, angry statements. Wheatley was dragged with alleged roughness from the gallery.

Senate business was halted. Specific violent acts against protesters that were seen by many witnesses include the stomping on Ray Drew as he was lying on the floor, and the pushing of David Brillhart down several steps that resulted in a bruised ankle. At least seven protesters sought medical assistance for their injuries. Other protesters reported verbal harassment. Activist Joseph Perrson said he was called "fucking scum fag" by a court officer.

Capitol Police and State House officers refused to respond to questions from GLOBE either during or after the protest. The Boston Globe reported that Senate Chief Court Officer George Danielson said he did not think excessive force had been used by his staff. Danielson himself was repeatedly verbally abusive to protesters. On the day after the demonstration, Danielson arbitrarily refused to let gay men and lesbians into the Senate viewing gallery, which is supposed to be public space open to all people.

After the protest, lesbian/gay rights activists and supporters expressed their determination to pursue legal action against law enforcement officers. Explained Wall, "We exposed specific injustices against gay men and lesbians. We want to make it politically damaging for senators, who watched all the violence, and do nothing about it. Our purpose was to draw attention to the fact that gay and lesbian rights aren't happening."

Wall, who claimed he was banged around roughly and called "faggot this and faggot that" during his arrest, said, "It was very gratifying to be inside the gallery and hear the crowd demonstrating outside. I felt like the State House was under siege."



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

Womyn's Dance - Fri. Feb. 5 • 5pm - 9pm \$3.00

Stolen Heart Dance - Sat. Feb. 13 • 9 - closing

All You Can Eat Pasta Night - Wed. Feb. 17 • \$3.75

UVM-GLBA Leap Year Dance - Tues. Feb. 23
suggested donation \$2.00

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