

Letters to/from Our Readers

Dear OITM:

As a resident of Addison County, I can't vote for Howard Russell but I encourage every voter in Chittenden County to do so.

I am constantly impressed with Howdy's honesty and directness and the wonderful way he words the issues so people aren't put off by them but are encouraged toward understanding. He is willing to accept the responsibility of being our voice in Montpelier, to use the power of the position to defend the rights and well-being of ALL Vermonters.

I would love to see Howdy have the opportunity to work for all of us and to bring his striving toward understanding and cooperation to the Vermont Senate.

Please go to the polls on Tuesday, November 6, and vote for Howard Russell!

Kay Lauster
Bridport, VT.

Ed. Note: Though the following letter arrived past our deadline for last month's issue, we decided to print it this month because the protest against Philip Morris continues to be a major issue within the gay and lesbian community.

Dear OITM:

Have you seen the full page ads proclaiming "You can stand closer to freedom than ever before?"

In what might be the ultimate act of corporate hucksterism, Philip Morris Companies brought "our" Bill of Rights to Barre on October 10. That's right - we, the people's Bill of Rights was brought to you by a corporation whose most well-known products are tobacco (Marlboro cigarettes and others) and alcohol (Miller beer and others.)

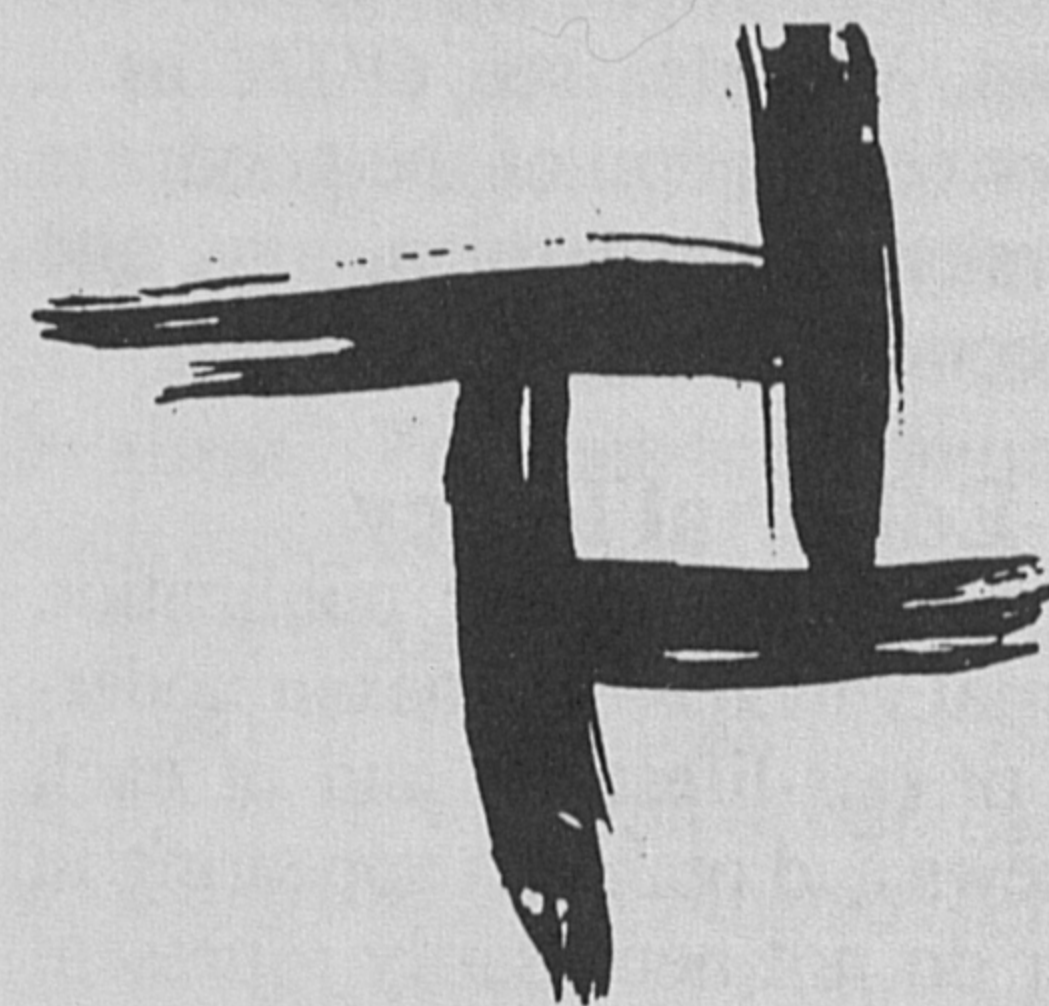
Could this be a public relations ploy by a corporation that needs an improved public image? After all, 390,000 people die every year from their "freedom to smoke" and another 45,000 die or are injured on the nation's highways while celebrating their "freedom to be drunk." Somehow, I think most Vermonters are going to be able to see through this kind of cynical effort by the likes of Philip Morris.

But wait...because it gets worse. For it happens that Philip Morris is Senator Jesse Helms's (R-NC) single largest campaign contributor (\$20,000) and a corporate contributor to the Jesse Helms Museum (\$175,000) planned for North Carolina. Senator Helms is the most influential anti-Bill of Rights politician in this country. From censorship of the arts to anti-rights actions against gays and lesbians and people of color, Helms is the number one political enemy of our Bill of Rights...a mean-spirited, bigoted and, some would say, racist man.

The ideas embodied in our Bill of Rights are to be actively protected and, yes, even honored on occasion as a symbol of the important freedoms we have struggled to gain as a nation.

On October 10 in Barre, you might have been able to stand closer to the documents that represent many of our freedoms, but Vermonters should remain aware that there was a crass commercial element to this event which, at best, made it a questionable activity and, given Philip Morris's large financial contributions to Jesse Helms, made it a calculated promotional event worth staying away from.

Chris Wood
Montpelier, VT



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