

# Legislation

## Back to the Legislature (Again)!

by Keith Goslant

January 1991 will be the beginning of the new legislative session in Vermont, and for the third consecutive session (each session lasts two years), a sexual orientation anti-discrimination bill will be introduced.

Space has already been reserved on the legislative calendars in both the House of Representatives and the Senate for draft proposals, and discussions are underway with a northern Vermont Representative and a southern Vermont Senator to be lead sponsors in their respective chambers. Both have been strong and vocal supporters of gay rights in the previous session.

A 1987 survey conducted by the Vermonters for Gay and Lesbian Rights in association with *Out in the Mountains* showed that 44% of the respondents had experienced some type of employment discrimination. Eighty-two percent re-

ported that they had hidden their sexual orientation in order to avoid employment discrimination. Twenty-five percent indicated that they had either experienced discrimination in medical care due to their sexual orientation, experienced discrimination in housing due to their sexual orientation, or had concealed their sexual orientation to avoid discrimination in custody or visitation rights with their children.

As previously drafted, the bill would extend the protections in the non-discrimination clauses of twelve existing Vermont statutes to include "sexual orientation" in their coverage. Vermont law currently protects against discrimination based on gender, religion, national origin, marital status, or handicap.

The statutes that would be amended include housing, public and private employment, custody, insurance, credit, real

estate sales, and public accommodations. Previous drafts have also included allowing a temporary restraining order in instances of same-sex domestic violence.

The sexual orientation anti-discrimination bill does not attempt to revise any existing criminal statutes, nor would it alter any existing statutes regarding child molestation or the age of consent. No new statutes are created by the bill as drafted, either. No special rights are granted – just the guarantee of equal protection and equal access.

It is anticipated that the bill will be assigned to either the House or Senate judiciary committee for consideration. The members of the committees will not be known until after a speaker has been elected in the House and a President Pro *(continued on next page)*

### Oral Sex *(from preceding page)*

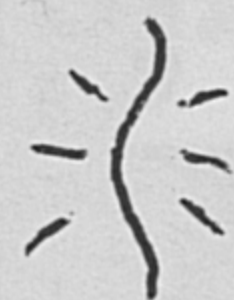
stimulate the shaft and glans. (This opens up an entire world of possibility for the creative use of toppings such as chocolate syrup, jams and jellies, and similar taste treats...)

Risk of transmission is probably reduced as well by avoiding ejaculation in the mouth. There is still risk from pre-cum, and, as many a teenage parent can attest, withdrawal before ejaculation doesn't always work.

Examining the mouth or the penis for recent wounds, bleeding, abrasions, and other openings may also help avoid risk; one should avoid oral sex when such a visible opening is present. Tooth brushing and flossing should probably be avoided for several hours before engaging in oral sex, as they may increase the possibilities of transmission.

Safer sex has never been simply a question of following a list of "do's" and "don'ts," but rather of making informed personal decisions about your own activities. While some activities clearly involve significant risk and others are clearly safe, many, including oral sex, fall somewhere between the two. For all of us, the best hope is to gather as much reliable information as possible and weigh the facts ourselves. The decisions are among the most important we will ever have to make about our sex lives – and about our health.

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