

Editorial

The Vermont Teddy Bear Company is following in the steps of the Florida Citrus Commission. You remember them - they sponsored Anita Bryant when she was running her Save Our Schools campaign which was supposed to keep homosexuals out of the schools and away from kids. Most recently the Florida Citrus Commission signed on as sponsors of Rush Limbaugh's radio program, resulting in calls by NOW and others for a boycott of citrus products from Florida. Even President Clinton supported that one - reportedly stopping in mid-sip one morning when told of the sponsorship.

Now it's Vermont Teddy Bear's turn to join those who help keep the racist, sexist, and homophobic comments of Limbaugh on the air. A report in the May 6th Burlington Free Press describes the decision to advertise on Limbaugh's program just in time for Mother's Day. In a press release about the sponsorship the company responded, "The Vermont Teddy Bear Company bears transcend all politics, age, and gender boundaries." Board Chair Fred Marks said "company founder John Sortino's perspective is that teddy bears are apolitical and conservatives and liberals are all entitled to the comforting warmth of a teddy bear." The statement went on, "We're in a business and we need to reach our audience, but we are also strong proponents of free speech and free press."

Well, I certainly agree about the need for free speech and free press - some of the most important gay civil rights battles have been won on the basis of the first amendment guarantees. However, there is a clear line between allowing people like Limbaugh the freedom to purchase time to spout their vitriolic rhetoric and paying him to do so. The Vermont Teddy Bear Company has crossed that line. Trying to hide behind quotes about the freedom of the press does not hide the issue.

The Vermont Teddy Bear Company helps Rush Limbaugh attack us, our lives and our families (as well as the lives and families of millions of other Americans gay and straight). Show Vermont Teddy Bear you know what they are doing. Boycott their products. Write John Sortino and Fred Marks. Let others know. Do not let them get away with this.

Deborah Lashman ▼

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To Submit Articles and Letters

We encourage and implore our readers to do what they can to make *OITM* a paper both for and by gay, lesbian, and bisexual Vermonters. Please assist us by typing your articles and letters double-spaced and including your name and phone number in case we have any questions. Your submission should be received by *OITM* no later than the 1st of the previous month. *Thank you for helping out!*

How to Advertise

If you would like to run an ad in *OITM*, please contact us for rates, sizes, and information. Ad copy must be received by the 1st of the month to be included in the next month's issue. Copy can be mailed to: *OITM*, P.O. Box 177, Burlington, VT 05402, or call Ellen at (802) 860-1922 Steven West at (802) 864-6399 or Bruce at BMH graphic design at (802) 8647198.