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Dean Speaks Out: The OITM Interview



Paul Olsen

MONTPELIER -- The national visibility of Governor Howard Dean is soon to increase when Dean and the State of Vermont host the National Governor's Association (NGA) conference July 30 through August 2. As the theme of this year's NGA conference is "Campaign for Children," policy issues expected to be discussed include budget cuts, block granting, welfare reform, health care, and school lunch programs. In addition to President Clinton, expected to be among the more than two thousand conference participants are many of the nation's governors, more than 500 journalists, and a number of 1996 presidential candidates.

Dr. Howard Dean's political career includes service in the Vermont House of Representatives from 1983 to 1986, five years as Lieutenant Governor, and service as the Governor of Vermont since 1991. Shortly before the annual milking contest pitting Dean against Vermont Agricultural Commissioner Leon Graves, Dean was interviewed by *Out in the Mountains* in his Montpelier office. What follows are excerpts of the interview in which Dean discusses same-sex adoption, Vermont's Human Rights Commission, outing, and his future political plans.

(OITM file photo)

Gov. Howard Dean

Governor of Vermont since 1991. Shortly before the annual milking contest pitting Dean against Vermont Agricultural Commissioner Leon Graves, Dean was interviewed by *Out in the Mountains* in his Montpelier office. What follows are excerpts of the interview in which Dean discusses same-sex adoption, Vermont's Human Rights Commission, outing, and his future political plans.

OITM: You were an early supporter of and ultimately signed legislation making Vermont one of nine states to ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. From your perspective, has the Gay Rights Bill been effective?

Dean: I think it has. In general, there is more of an atmosphere of tolerance in Vermont than there is in a lot of other states, which doesn't mean that we don't have a long way to go. There have been court cases and that's what it is for . . . to make sure that people have proper legal remedies.

OITM: What is your position on Senator Leon Graves' (now Vermont's Agriculture Commissioner) amendment to the adoption reform bill that would prohibit adoptions by same-sex couples?

Dean: I oppose it and I won't sign the bill if it is in there. That bill has to come out with only one criterion for adoption and that is what's in the best interest of the child.

OITM: The Supreme Court in Hawaii is currently reviewing a case around the issue of gay marriages. If the court rules that Hawaii cannot bar gay marriages, how do you think Vermont will respond?

Dean: I appreciate the way you asked me that question so as not to put me on the spot in making difficult political declarations ahead of time. I would expect that Vermont would comply with the law. I expect a rharbar in the legislature but not anything that would alter that decision.

OITM: You supported the extension of domestic partner benefits to State employees. Was there any political backlash from that decision?

Dean: We're the first State in the country to do that. We got four letters . . . my attitude is just do it and don't make a cause celebre about it. I'm a big believer in just quietly getting the job done and not making a big flap about it.

OITM: In the Legislature a number of changes have been proposed to Vermont's Human Rights Commission. What changes, if any, would you like to see made at the Human Rights Commission?

Dean: I would like to make it less formal and intimidating. We're trying to work with the Commissioners and with the Executive Director to make the process appear to be more fair. It's hard to sort out, some of the most vocal complainants are people who have appropriately been found guilty of discrimination but there are people who have had problems. I've never talked to anybody who had a problem about a case involving the gay community.

OITM: Currently the State of Vermont spends approximately \$150,000 on AIDS services and nothing on HIV prevention. Will you propose increased appropriations for these areas in the future?

Dean: The federal government spends money on AIDS prevention. That number has been going up every year because of federal spending. We're just about to cut the daylights out of the budget so I don't want to give any promises that I'm going to propose new spending anywhere. There will be holes that we will fill. They will all be in the area of prevention and children's issues. I can't rule that in or out.

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Who's Evicting Daddy's Roommate?: One parent's crusade against the Rutland Free Library

Bennett Law

RUTLAND -- The "parental rights" campaign of Karol Raiche, a Rutland mother of three young boys, has brought national attention to Vermont's burgeoning statewide debate on Article V of the Library Bill of Rights, which states, "A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views." Raiche

has identified materials made freely available to the public at the Rutland Free Library which she believes should be segregated from the general collection as a precautionary measure in an effort to protect the innocence of those who are "age impressionable." Among those items which Raiche finds objectionable are a children's picture book entitled *Daddy's Roommate*, by Michael Willhoite, the magazine *Art Forum*, and *Out in the Mountains*.

Raiche penned a petition, ultimately signed by approximately 300 Rutland area residents, requesting that the library "clearly identify materials in the children's section of the library that promote alternative lifestyles, explicit and/or illustrated sexual material." Raiche was blunt in her assessment of *Art Forum*: "A man putting a plunger up his ass does not need to be viewed by a child and labeled as art." Of her concern with *Out in the Mountains*, Raiche said, "Let's play fair. Why does this have to be out where children have access to it, somewhere between *Popular Mechanics* and whatever else starts with O?"

Raiche's campaign began after her six-year-old son brought *Daddy's Roommate* home from the Rutland Free Library. *Daddy's Roommate*, published by Alyson Publications of Boston, Massachusetts, depicts a young boy getting to know his father's new roommate, Frank, with whom Daddy is shown working, eating, sleeping (in the same bed), shaving, embracing, arguing, and making up (which is depicted as conversational, with



(Photo: Susan Aranoff)
Karol Raiche, at the June 6th public hearing in Rutland

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Queers and Friends Fight The Rain: PRIDE DAY 1995

BURLINGTON -- Despite inclement weather, Vermont's gay, lesbian, and bisexual community celebrated its twelfth annual Pride Day on June 3, 1995. The festivities included a Pre-march rally on the front lawn of Burlington's Unitarian Universalist Church, a March through downtown Burlington, a Post-march rally in Battery Park, and an indoor/outdoor dance party courtesy of 135 Pearl as part of its Unity Celebration.

Keeping in mind this year's Pride theme, "Queers and Friends Fight The Right," pre-march speakers included Vermont Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights (VCLGR) Co-Liaison to the Governor and State Legislature Susan Aranoff, VT NOW President Judy Murphy, and VT Human Rights Commissioner Jim Morgan. Rev. Brendan Hadash, who officiated Vermont's first mass gay and lesbian wedding at the Post-march rally, also spoke.

The Post-march rally, which was hosted by Janice Perry aka Gal with musical entertainment provided by Noel, was the scene of the celebration's only protest. The incident involved a spectator burning a rainbow flag, a symbol of the gay and lesbian rights movement. The rain, however, made his task more difficult than he had anticipated.



(Photo: Tom Aloisi)
VCLGR's Gabriel Q and Susan Aranoff marching with Pride

On June 7, the VT Pride Committee announced the proceeds from Pride '95 events benefitting the following organizations: \$1,035 for VT CARES, \$200 for Burlington's Unitarian Universalist Church, \$850 for Outright VT, and \$1,450 for the Burlington Women's Council.

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OITM HISTORY: July & August Through The Years

1986 ... 500 Rally in Burlington The largest Vermont Lesbian and Gay Pride Celebration yet took place in Burlington on June 14. Approximately 500 people took part in the rally and parade. Speakers throughout the event referred to the celebration's theme of "No Turning Back!"

1993 ... Supreme Court Approves Second Parent Adoption On June 18, 1993, the decision of the Vermont Supreme Court that a same sex partner may become the adoptive parent of the natural mother's children was the first by any state appellate or supreme court to address the issue. It reversed the Washington County Probate Court's denial of the two adoption petitions filed by Deborah Lashman and Jane Van Buren.

1994 ... Vermont Cares for Vermont CARES On June 7, 1994, a devastating fire destroyed the offices of Vermont CARES at 30 Elmwood Avenue in Burlington. At press time, the incident had not been deemed a hate crime, and police had no suspects. Damage from the fire was estimated at over \$100,000.