

Out in the Mountains

VERMONT'S NEWSPAPER FOR LESBIANS, GAY MEN, AND BISEXUALS

Volume X, Number 10

January 1996

FREE

Queer Town Meeting 3: VCLGR convenes in Montpelier

MONTPELIER -- On October 28, 1995, approximately 400 gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transsexuals, and allies gathered at Montpelier High School for the Vermont Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights' third annual Conference and Queer Town Meeting. The day's events included workshops, networking sessions, a lunchtime performance featuring Cherie Tartt and Vermont's Radical Faeries, and a New England style town meeting. The keynote address was given by Keith St. John, who became the first openly gay African-American elected public official in the U.S. when he was elected to serve on the Albany (NY) Common Council in 1989.

The workshops and networking sessions, held in different rooms throughout the school building during three different "class periods," covered topics ranging from Sexism 101 for Men, Lesbian Sexuality 101, LGBQ Youth Issues, and Censorship & Silencing featuring Paula Baker, Director of the Rutland Free Library, recounting the story of one Rutland resident's attempt to censor g/l/b related material. Groups that took advantage of the opportunity to network included the Vermont Bisexual Network, *Dyke TV* (a national cable access program based in New York City), and *Out In The Mountains*. On the lighter side, Louise Brill led a session on Bulgarian singing and chanting, Dew B. Wilde taught others how to play with rhythm, and Gabriel Q facilitated pumpkin carving "for any spirit you want to welcome back."

St. John, before his keynote address, said that he was not only impressed by the number of conference attendees but also by the "tremendous curriculum," referring to the workshop sessions. In his speech, he spoke of a "right wing movement ... (that) has taken the lead in organizing against the most fundamental principles of democracy -- equal protection, equal participation, and

self-determination." In response, he said, we must form "effective coalitions (with our) strongest allies ... for example, women's groups, civil rights and civil liberties groups, ... labor unions and other business groups, education and health advocacy groups, groups that fight censorship, and human dignity groups."

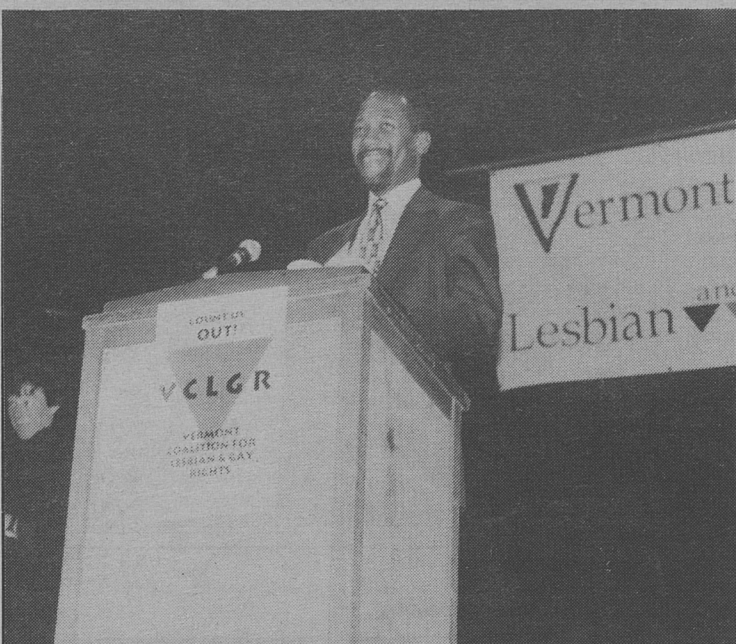
St. John received a lesson in Vermont demographics when he mentioned, "To be quite honest, I see too few (people of color) here today ... Vermont isn't that white a state. Right?" The audience quickly screamed back, "Yes it is!" St. John garnered a round of laughter and applause when he responded, "All right, I have some friends back in Albany. I'll send them your way."

During the actual Queer Town Meeting, which was held in the school's auditorium, participants were given the opportunity to say whatever was on their minds. Topics included the approval and disapproval of the word "queer" in the term "queer town meeting," the presence of bisexuals at the conference and the decision not to include the word "bisexual" in VCLGR's name, and the controversy surrounding gay Republicanism.

Before the Queer Town Meeting commenced, VCLGR Board members handed out the organization's first ever awards for service to the community. David Curtis was presented with the Leadership Award for lifetime achievement in his advocacy work dealing with issues of HIV/AIDS. The Volunteer of the Year Award went to Beth Robinson for her legal and research work in support of VCLGR's efforts in the adoption reform battle. Two people received the Pride Award -- Vermont State Auditor Ed Flanagan, who came out publicly last year, and Paula Baker, for her efforts in the Rutland Free Library's *Daddy's Roommate* controversy.

In a vote by VCLGR members, a new Board of Directors was elected to serve until October 1996. Terje Anderson of Burlington and Deborah Dudley of Strafford are currently serving as Board Co-Chairs. Susan Aranoff of Randolph and Keith Goslant of Plainfield are Co-Liaisons to the Governor and State Legislature. Board members also include Craig Belon of Middlebury, Duane Gajewski of Montpelier, Carey Johnson of Brattleboro, Judith Lashof of Sudbury, Rachel Lurie of Burlington, Susan Murray of North Ferrisburg, Gabriel Q of Brattleboro, and Paj Wadley-Bailey of Plainfield.

Make sure to check out the rest of *OITM's* extensive coverage of the Conference in this issue. ▼



Keynote speaker Keith St. John

(Photo: Bennett Law)

Her Name is Barbara: The *OITM* Interview



(*OITM* file photo)
Lt. Gov. Barbara Snelling

Paul Olsen
OITM Staff

Ending months of speculation, Republican Lieutenant Governor Barbara Snelling recently confirmed conventional wisdom and announced that she will challenge Democrat Howard Dean in the 1996 race for

Governor of Vermont. As the widow of former Governor Richard Snelling, Barbara Snelling has been a part of Vermont's political scene for decades. Snelling, 67, formally entered Vermont politics after the death of her husband with successful races for Lieutenant Governor in 1992 and 1994.

Political pundits predict that Snelling will face an uphill battle in her race against incumbent Governor Howard Dean. Characterizing herself as the "underdog," Snelling's campaign announcement focused on the economic issues facing Vermonters. "This election is about the problem of Vermonters' shrinking paychecks," Snelling said at her November 20th press conference. "My ambition is to make a difference in Vermont, to work towards a brighter future for Vermonters."

Snelling met with *Out in the Mountains* the day after her announcement to discuss her upcoming campaign, her position on same-sex adoptions, her support of Senator Bob Dole, and the rescission of her invitation to speak at the 1995 Gay Pride Day celebration.

OITM: After your invitation to speak at Pride Day was rescinded you indicated that your position on gay rights was misunderstood. For the record, what is your position on civil rights protections for lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals?

Snelling: That they should enjoy the same civil rights that anybody does. I don't know what more you can say than that.

OITM: When you met with representatives of the Vermont Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights (VCLGR) during the Gay Rights Bill debate in 1992, you withheld public support of the bill until after the bill passed. What role, if any, do you think that decision played in the g/l/b community's perception of your support?

Snelling: I was not asked to go public with any statement. I specifically asked (State Representative) Vi Luginbuhl "what is it you want me to do?" She said we don't need you to go public. We need to know that you support this. I said repeatedly during the actual campaign that had I been there and had been voting I certainly would have supported the law.

OITM: How do you reconcile your position on gay rights with your support of Senator Bob Dole's presidential candidacy?

Snelling: I think it's unfair to judge somebody just by one position and overall I believe that Bob Dole

OITM HISTORY: January Through The Years

1988 ... Anti-Discrimination Bill in VT Senate Vermont's 30 member State Senate will hear new legislation regarding civil rights for lesbians and gay men. The bill, sponsored by Harvey Carter (D-Bennington), is similar to the bill which moved slowly through the Vermont House last year.

1994 ... Creating Crowds: Hundreds turn out for Conference Over 300 people turned out for a day long conference sponsored by the Vermont Coalition of Lesbians and Gay Men in Randolph on December 4, 1993. The conference, "Creating Change/Creating Community," was a first-of-its-kind event for the newly revitalized coalition.

1995 ... Creating Crowds II: A Queer Town Meeting Over 500 Vermonters attended the second annual Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights statewide conference and celebration held at Middlebury College on November 12, 1994. VCLGR's "Queer Town Meeting" included a spirited keynote address by lesbian columnist Jorjet Harper, workshops, a lunchtime fashion show, and a New England style town meeting.