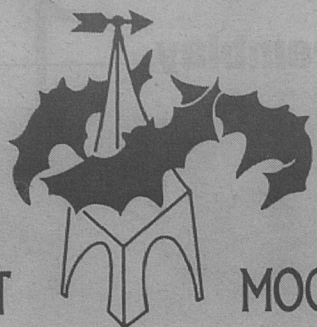


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Redefining Civil
Marriage

continued from page ten

the most comprehensive "reciprocal beneficiaries" legislation in the country—far more sweeping than even the most ambitious domestic partnership legislation gay and lesbian activists dared to dream about five years ago. That legislation was a direct response to the ongoing struggle for the freedom to marry in Hawaii.

4. This is about improving marriage.

The participation of gays and lesbians in marriage can only improve that social institution for everyone. Recognition of our marriages would mark an important shift in the public conception of marriage: marriage is not necessarily about gender roles and heterosexual procreation; marriage is about love, commitment, and families we choose.

5. This is about enormous practical protections for many in our community.

Theory aside, under our current laws, the practical benefits of marriage are undeniable. The laws provide family medical leave for us to care for our ill spouses, ensure that we can make the important medical decisions concerning our spouses if they cannot do so themselves, assure that we, and not the in-laws, will be entrusted with the remains of our spouses who predecease us, allow us to file our taxes jointly with our spouses, and presume that if our spouses die without a will, then we are the beneficiaries of their estates. The laws ensure that if a marriage does end, the more economically vulnerable party to the marriage isn't left without any financial support.

GLBT Vermonters, and our allies, face the opportunity of a lifetime: the chance to transform our state into one of

the first to fully respect its gay and lesbian citizens under the law. Regardless of what happens in the courts, we can expect an enormous backlash. We can expect an intense, well-funded media campaign attacking us and our families; a well-organized legislative effort to enact laws prohibiting us from marrying; thousands of post cards from fundamentalist churches throughout the state and country urging our political leaders to stand up for second-class citizenship for GLBT citizens. We must be prepared, and our passion and commitment must equal that of those who seek to deny us and our families equal protection under the laws.

Please, contact the Vermont Freedom to Marry Task Force (PO Box 1312, Middlebury, VT 05753 or E-mail Deb Lashman at dljob@aol.com), and join the struggle for all of us.

Demanding More
Than Marriage

continued from page eleven

bit deeper? Desire to prove we really are normal? That we are not those awful unloved lonely pathetic people everyone said we would grow up to be? When homophobia is driving the bus, it's time for Miss Endora to get off. What happened to being different and lovin' it? That's what I wanna know! Where's that sassy gay spirit that nursed me?

But I digress. I brought up Rev. Leslie's article primarily to point out that the fight for gay marriage is not about our right to have religious commitment ceremonies. That is a matter of a couples' faith, their spiritual choices. I do agree with Rev. Leslie that queer folk too often give up our spirituality as part of rejecting "straight culture." But, depending on which synagogue, mosque, church, meeting, fellowship or coven we go to, we already can join in the religious/spiritual blessing of our relationships. I support that choice as one possible choice. However, Gay Marriage has nothing to do with commit-

ment ceremonies. Rather, it is about accessing a "special right" of governmentally sanctioned relationships and the legal protections and privileges it entails.

Which gets this spinning queen to her point. YES! We should be fighting, but not for the right to marry. Rev. Leslie muses at what a "delightful thought" it would be if the powers-that-be changed marriage laws to include gays and lesbians. Why is that thought so damned delightful? I would be much more delighted if those powers-that-be changed the laws so that no one gets any special benefits because that are legally married, and so that everyone, straight or gay, would be treated as an individual. Instead of beating down the doors for inclusion in the FAMILY VALUES CAMPAIGN, we should unite with our non-gay nonmarried allies and fight for the following breathtaking list of demands:

* easily accessed legal structures that allow us to name our family (how ever configured) and for that to hold up in court.

* better laws to protect living-wills when they go against the wishes of the blood family.

* better laws to protect our will against blood relatives who come and demand the house, or tell us how to bury our loved ones.

* restructuring laws to treat us as individuals, not to give us special benefits when we are part of a couple.

Though it may be said often, I am not without a heart. I have also had terrible things happen to dear friends because they weren't married and so the estranged blood family had all the rights over the dying and burial process and a lover of years had none. I know the need for legal protection. But the right to marriage is not the only, or best way to accomplish our goals. And by fighting for the right to marry, we validate an institution and a society which has denied us our basic dignity and rights, and which is founded on patriarchal, sexist and classist notions of ownership, possession, and privilege. By fighting for the right to marry we fundamentally undermine our right to make a full range of choices about how we create family. We narrow our vision.

We can be anybody that we want to be. We can love whomever we will. Gay lib now! All Acts of Love and Pleasure are Her Rituals! Stay Free! Bless Aunt Bea!

to preserve "traditional" morality and uphold what they overtly expressed as Christian moralities. As the idea of same sex marriage is more critically examined by the general public and law makers, an evolution in thinking, reminiscent of the decision to legalize interracial marriages, may come.

The Lowdown on
DOMA

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Our struggles toward legal acknowledgment of our unions remains essential, re-

gardless of these current restrictions. The court proceedings in Hawaii, or any that may be in Vermont could well end up in the Supreme Court, and DOMA may eventually be struck down. The primary state interests noted by Congress in passing DOMA were

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