

Dykebaiting

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and believing she would include lesbians as she had assured me she would. She never did move to Burlington, so if there is an outsider in this picture it is Matthews. To be fair, JM as she likes to sign herself, would probably support gay civil rights at the legislative level. But in a tough spot at the Council her first response was to use heterosexism to try to discredit women who questioned her authoritarian style.

After several meetings where Council members outside of the gang of four (i.e. JM, Sandy Baird, Lou Andrews and Maureen Dyer) attempted to address their frustration at the direction the Council was taking and the lack of input from the membership, we were finally able to speak. This followed two meetings where JM literally ran out of the room rather than listen to Council members. When we voiced our concerns about her lack of inclusion of members and dictatorial decision making, she stated that the group "didn't like her because she did dick". At this point jaws dropped around the room! Some didn't understand the remark thinking it meant do nothing but it became clear that she meant her sexual orientation. This is how she decided to deal with member's concerns even with the majority of them being heterosexual.

Later Matthews offered an apology for her remark but followed that apology with the lie that it had followed months of being called a homophobe. This is just not true; Matthews was the first to raise this issue at the Council.

Okay, anyone can make a dumb remark at a meeting and maybe we could go on from there. But then Maureen Dyer planted a story in *Seven Days* saying that I did not know Matthews was heterosexual when I hired her and that they had fooled me into thinking she was a lesbian by telling me she had made a pass at someone. This is nonsense. I was well aware of Matthews sexuality from before the time I interviewed her as many people I talked to during the hiring process could confirm. Dyer's story even if it were true shows her to be a liar and someone who thinks chicanery is the way to get what she wants. I asked JM to have the decency to repudiate this story and its dykebaiting, but she refused. In fact she went on talk radio with Maureen Dyer to endorse the slander.

During that broadcast and every subsequent one I have heard Matthews do, Kurt Wright called in to support her and say that before her term as director the BWC had been narrowly focused. His implication was that it had been mainly lesbian. Wright a City

councillor who fought the City's domestic partnership insurance initiative, also talked about the BWC on his Channel 17 show saying that now the BWC is open and his pal called in to say, "Yeah Kurt we were talking outside City Hall the other day and everyone knows it used to be a bunch of dykes". Well, Lou Andrews and Sandy Baird, now Wright's good buddies, were among that bunch of dykes and they never complained all those years about our focus. Baird and Wright have mayoral ambitions and both are invested in attacking the current administration. Baird, who talks about a non-partisan women's Council, is always a politician and is the chair of the City Democratic Party.

Now on public access TV we have the spectacle of misogynist Ed Moore saying there are women he approves of; Jennifer Matthews and Sandy Baird. He also repeats the lie Dyer and gang are trying to disseminate that BWC

when I was director was "just a bunch of dykes". Of course working with dykes is just fine with me but so is working with dedicated straight women like the many I worked with for over a dozen years in City Hall. I want to make clear here that this is not a gay / straight split but a homophobic/lesbian supportive split. I have nothing but admiration for the many Council members I worked with and their support as allies.

Ed Moore revealed on the air the Battered Women's shelter's necessarily secret location. Kurt Wright is someone who fought tooth and nail and with much homophobic intent to stop domestic partnership insurance and to defeat Peter Clavelle for introducing it. Perhaps it is inadvertent on Matthew's part but now Moore and Wright are getting aid and comfort in their attacks on lesbians from within the Women's Council. This is not feminist, it is not women positive, it is not sisterly and it is

dangerous to all gays and lesbians who are always subject to hate crimes. In fact in recent years gay bashing has steeply increased. It is a fact that gaybashers feel little remorse about their crimes because they feel social mores support their actions.

Consciously or not, this Women's Council is aiding and abetting anti-gay sentiment. That means it is supporting woman hating as well. I am personally disgusted and appalled at the turn things have taken at BWC. Of course the dykebaiting has been aimed at me. But we need to remember both as a queer community and as a feminist community that disparaging any lesbian hurts all members of these movements. Political lesbians have been among the greatest challengers of male dominance. For this the Kurt Wrights and Ed Moores will always hate us and I am proud to have them as opponents. On the days when this tedious struggle gets me down, I re-

mind myself of a truth about backlash. It is tribute to the fact that I, with the help of many women straight and gay, built a strong Women's Council. Our opposition are woman haters, right wingers and heterosexist women. I'm proud of my long record at the Council and I intend to continue the fight to see an open, egalitarian Women's Council that supports all women and rejects the gay-bashers in this community. The queer and feminist communities should demand a Women's Council that works against all kinds of sexism including heterosexism. This is a minimal demand for an ostensibly pro-woman organization.

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