

# Notes From The Task Force

## Politics and Possibilities

BY BARI SHAMAS

Some folks choose to avoid politics as much as possible. Others find watching and participating in politics exciting and interesting. These days, no matter where we are, politics are affecting us. Whether our concerns are around availability of quality health care, reproductive choices, taxation, safe schools, fair working environments, or the equal right to marry, (to name a few topics) politics and politicians affect our lives in many ways.

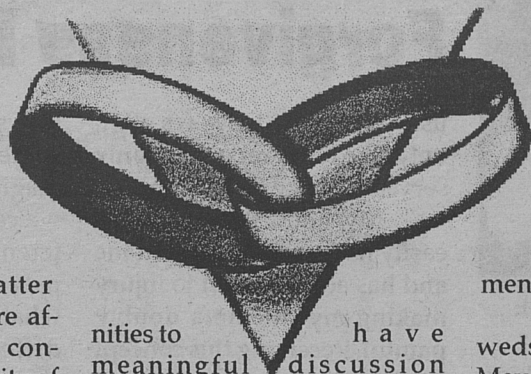
What happens in other states affect us also. In November' elections voters in Hawaii and Alaska will decide whether to amend their constitutions so that same-sex couples could be prohibited from legally marrying. These proposed constitutional amendments, advocated by political and religious extremists, were precipitated by same-gender marriage cases not unlike Vermont's Baker v. State.

The results of those ballot measures will have a profound effect on our efforts in Vermont. Pundits are especially watching Hawaii's vote. If the constitutional amendment passes there, the religious and political extremists will be charging towards Vermont to thwart our efforts to gain the right for same gender couples to marry. If they lose they will probably want to recoup their loss by stopping progress in Vermont. Either way, we anticipate being targeted by similarly well funded and organized campaigns to keep gay and lesbian Vermonters from advancing our efforts to have equal civil rights.

We believe that an analysis of our freedom to marry in Vermont is happening right where it should, in the living rooms of ordinary Vermonters and in the Vermont Supreme Court which is responsible for protecting our civil liberties. However, there is no doubt that in the coming year our opposition will seek to politicize our lives and our families by appealing to Vermont's legislature to perpetuate discrimination against families formed by same-gender couples.

Please, keep in mind the experiences of our brothers and sisters in Alaska and Hawaii in connection with the marriage issue, as well as the other issues that are important to you, when you vote in November. And by all means, please vote.

The Vermont Freedom to Marry Task Force continues to believe that holding public forums and having information tables at as many places as possible is our most important work. These panels and information tables give us opportu-



...nities to have meaningful discussion with people.

Towards that goal VFMTF recently had a booth at the Champlain Valley Fair. The thirty plus volunteers, who staffed our well attended booth, enjoyed the time interact with thousands of folks who would not ordinarily approach the topic. Thanks to all those volunteers as well as Laurie Caldwell, Joseph Watson and Michael Warner who lent their talents to create the booth panels. And thanks too to Beth Robinson who coordinated our presence there. The fair is one of the biggest in the state, boasting over 300,000 attendees over ten days.

We were also pleased to have a panel in St. Johnsbury. On September 16th, the Unitarian Universalist Church was the setting for a panel with Brendan Haddash, (Minister at Unitarian Universalist Church) Holly Puterbaugh and Lois Farnham (a long time couple and two of the plaintiffs in Baker v State). Keith Goslant gave a wonderful introduction and joined the panelists while Roberta Garr helped moderate the discussion. Thanks to all the folks in Central Vermont who put together that forum.

In Burlington on Sept. 27, representatives from Vermont Freedom to Marry Task Force

also spoke following regular services at The First Congregational Church. Thanks to Wendy Beininger for organizing that engagement.

On October 10, newly-weds Mark and Jeff Herman-May will staff an information table at the Putney School Harvest Festival. Also on that day, we will have a table at the VCLGR conference in Burlington. October 14 in Montpelier there will be a public forum titled "Civil Marriage for Same Gender Couples". There will be a showing our video, The Freedom to Marry; A Green Mountain View as well as a panel, and discussion. It will be at Pavilion Building Auditorium, State St. 7 p.m.

Big thanks to Sue Murray and Nancy Yannett, as well as the riders who volunteered their time and talents, who pulled together the Bike for the Right to Marry fundraiser.

Let's keep the possibility of equal access to civil marriage alive. We encourage your participation in VFMTF events and voting in November's elections.

If you would like more information about events or meetings or would like to invite representatives from VFMTF to speak at your workplace, community of faith, civic organization or whatever, you can contact us by: calling Wendy Beininger 802 652-0723, Roberta Garr 802 223-7620 or Bari Shamas 802 387-5788, or email info@vtfreetomarry.org or visit our web site, www.vtfreetomarry.org

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## community groups

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## Curbside

BY ROBERT KIRBY

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IT'S THE HEIGHT OF SUMMER, AND FOR SOME, THE BOREDOM IS AS THICK AS THE HEAT.

SIGH: WHATTYA SAY WE CHECK OUT THE MOVIE LISTINGS OR SOMETHING?

Hmm... HAVE YOU SEEN THAT NEW GAY FLICK? "BILLY" SOMETHING? THE ADVOCATE LOVED IT.

THE ADVOCATE? GEE, THERE'S AN ENDORSEMENT!

HEE HEE! GOTCHA! BUT I DON'T REALLY WANNA SIT THROUGH A MOVIE ANYWAY.

WELL, WHATTYA WANNA DO THEN?

FOR REAL? ACTUALLY, ALL I REALLY WANNA DO THESE DAYS IS FUCK AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE... IT'S THAT SUMMER HEAT THING HAPPENING, I GUESS.

HMPH. DREW MUST BE IN SEVENTH HEAVEN THEN.

NAH, HE'S BEEN ACTING ALL SAD AGAIN LATELY.... LOCKING HIMSELF IN HIS ROOM WITH HIS NOTEBOOK AND MOPING AROUND.. I WONDER ARE ALL WRITERS AS WEIRD AS HIM....

ROB, I'M GETTING SICK OF HEARING YOU DOGGING ON HIM ALL THE TIME. HE IS MY BOY-FRIEND, AFTER ALL.

I'M SORRY.. I JUST... HE'S SO..

I JUST DON'T GET WHAT THE CONNECTION BETWEEN YOU TWO COULD BE.

MEANWHILE...

"WHY AM I NEVER HAPPY? WHY DO THE PEOPLE I LOVE ALWAYS LEAVE? WHY AM I NEVER SUCCESSFUL AT ANYTHING? WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME?"

WELL, FIVE DAYS AND EIGHT NOTEBOOKS OF BITTER SELF-PITY SEEM TO HAVE DONE THE TRICK..... I GUESS I'M READY TO RETURN TO THE LAND OF THE LIVING.. NOT TO MENTION NATHAN'S WAITING ARMS...!

JEEZ, I HOPE NOT!

DO YOU LOVE HIM?

LOVE HIM? LIKE, IN WHAT WAY?