

COMMUNIQUÉ

VOLUME • XVI • NO. 7 • JUILLET-AOÛT / JULY-AUGUST • 1995

FROM THE NLN DIRECTOR

A Word From Wyoming

by Jim Fotter, Director

The following is a reprint of an article I received on the Internet. It appeared April 13, 1995 in the Casper *Star Tribune*, the only statewide newspaper in Wyoming. It was written by Karen Love, and is titled, "Some Old Values Step Backward."

People complain because the news is always bad. I don't think so. Recently I've seen news reports of real human progress just when we seemed to be slipping backwards. A news story like the recent one from Mississippi restores my hope.

In March, the State of Mississippi outlawed slavery. I think this is big news, and I'm not sure why it was on the back pages instead of in the headlines of the nation's major newspapers. Outlawing slavery is a big positive step for human beings. It deserves our attention. We've come a long way, baby.

It ranks with the reinstatement of Galileo into the good graces of the Catholic Church a few years back. After 350 years of excommunication for declaring the earth was not the center of the solar system, he finally was forgiven. Like Mississippi, the church proves it can change with the times. This is progress.

The Republican Senate majority in Montana needs to take a lesson here. There, as in 23 other states, homosexual sex between consenting adults is still against the law. In Montana it is a felony. What's more, recently the Montana Senate voted 41-8 along party lines to require homosexuals to register with the police for the rest of their lives, the same way convicted rapists and child molesters do.

That way, I guess, the police could warn citizens if homosexuals were living in their neighborhood.

Parents could keep their children indoors with the blinds drawn when the homosexuals took

off their shirts to mow the lawns on hot days.

I guess the Montana legislature hadn't heard of the study done by Dr. Carol Jenny, director of the Child Advocacy and Protection Team at Children's Hospital in Denver, who found that a child is 100 times more likely to be molested by a heterosexual man than by a homosexual. I suppose if they had, Montana would be requiring heterosexual men to register with the police so neighbors could be warned that there was a man living in their neighborhood.

In the same vein, I suppose because a woman is statistically more likely to be assaulted or murdered by someone in her own home, they might want to warn a woman when there is a man in the house.

During the Montana Senate debates, Senator Al Bishop of Billings warned the Senate that gay sex between consenting adults is "even worse than a violent sexual act."

The public outcry in the first twenty-four hours after the 41-8 vote forced the Senate to withdraw the requirement to register with the police. But the remaining law still says homosexuals are felons.

Senate President Bob Brown said the "Republicans tend to represent the views of rural and traditional Montanans." If this is what they meant by "traditional values," I would like to suggest that just because it is a "traditional value," that doesn't make it right.

Ler's look at some famous

"traditional values." Galileo was bucking "traditional values" in the 17th century when he declared that the sun was the center of the solar system. It didn't mesh with the biblical interpretation that man on Earth was God's most important creation. And those who doubted that the earth was at the center were considered godless.

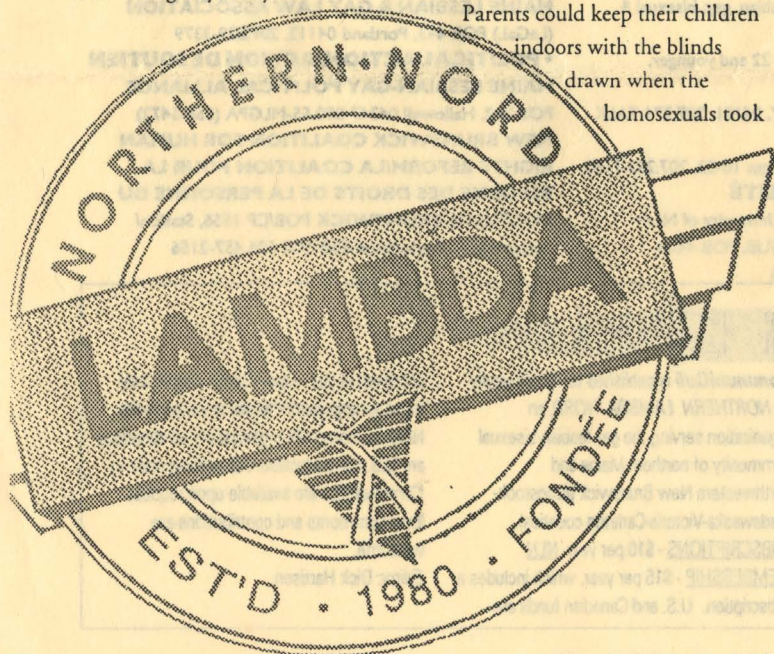
Pre-Civil War Southerners found a biblical basis for slavery. Because slaves were admonished in the Bible to obey their masters, that had to mean God approved of slavery. Here was a "traditional value" Southerners were prepared to die for on the battlefield with the Bible as their guide.

It was a "traditional value" to keep women uneducated and unable to hold property, subject to the will of husbands who were free to near them or rape them as they pleased. Men quoted Saint Paul in the New Testament to back up their rights. "Women, obey your husbands."

By the way, Paul also insisted that women keep quiet in church and keep their heads covered, but we've conveniently let those rules slide. We also gave up turning the other cheek.

For hundreds of years most people believed in witches. The Christian judges of Salem, Massachusetts burned alive 19 of them to rid the community of the devil's influence, all in the name of "traditional values."

One 80-year-old man was pressed to death with heavy stones because he would not plead innocent or



publié par/published by NORTHERN LAMBDA NORD inc.

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guilty. Those who killed him believed they knew God's will and how to carry it out.

The great American principle that "all men are created equal" traditionally did not include slaves or women, and now, it seems, it does not include homosexuals.

I am beginning to wonder how the argument that something is a

"traditional value" carries any logical weight. How does it sway to argue, "We've always done it that way"? In fact, it begins to appear that some of the new values are better than some of the old ones.

From the perspective of 50 or 100 years in the future, I have a feeling this active hatred and fear of homosexuals will be the great shame

of our era. In the annals of human history, it will rank with slavery, abuse of women, and burning of witches. They will marvel how people could use the Bible as an excuse to persecute fellow citizens.

In Montana, both sides agree that no one ever enforces these laws. But it's the principle of the thing. Either we start patrolling bedrooms and

arresting these "felons," or we get realistic and take these laws off the books. It's time to give up this "traditional value" of homophobia and let those people live in peace.

Listen up, Montana: "In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

/s/ Jim ▼

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APEX: A Point of Departure, published monthly by Phoenix Press, POB 4743, Portland 04112

COMMUNITY PRIDE REPORTER: The newspaper for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community of Maine, published monthly, 142 High St, Suite 634, Portland 04101, 207.879-1342

FRUITS OF OUR LABORS monthly Lesbian-Gay-Bi events calendar, POB 125, Belfast 04915

GAEZETTE for Lesbians & Gay Men in Atlantic Canada, 10 issues/year, POB 34090, Scotia Square, Halifax NS B3J 3S1

10%: Maine's monthly newspaper for lesbians & gay men, POB 10536, Portland 04104

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COMMUNIQUÉ

CommuniQué publié dix fois par année par **NORTHERN LAMBDA NORD**, une organisation pour la communauté gaie-lesbienne-bisexuelle au nord-ouest du Nouveau Brunswick et au nord du Maine (les comtés Madawaska-Victoria-Carleton-Aroostook). **ABONNEMENTS** - 10\$ par année. **COTISATION NLN** - 15\$ par année, dans lequel inclus la subscription. Les fond E-U et canadiennes sont acceptés au par.

Ceux qui ont de la difficulté financièrement, des paiements à terme peut être organisée. NLN est une organisation a but non-lucratif; toutes donations sont taxe deductible aux E-U seulement. Les tarifs de publicité dans le **CommuniQué** sont disponible. Vos commentaires et contributions sont les bienvenue. **Rédacteur en chef:** Dick Harrison

CommuniQué is published ten times yearly by **NORTHERN LAMBDA NORD**, an organization serving the gay-lesbian-bisexual community of northern Maine and northwestern New Brunswick (Aroostook-Madawaska-Victoria-Carleton counties). **SUBSCRIPTIONS** - \$10 per year. **NLN MEMBERSHIP** - \$15 per year, which includes a subscription. U.S. and Canadian funds are

accepted at par. Low-income people may make arrangements to pay in installments. NLN is a non-profit organization; all donations are U.S. tax-deductible. Advertising rates in **CommuniQué** are available upon request. Your comments and contributions are welcome. **Editor:** Dick Harrison