Maine Lesbian/Gay Political Alliance [newsletter] Vol.1, No.2 (September 1991)

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Referendum Update

No is not the answer the Christian Civic League wanted to hear on a referendum on gay rights. The league last month announced a petition drive to force any legislated gay issues to referendum. That effort was thwarted when an opinion from Attorney General Michael Carpenter prompted Secretary of State G William Diamond to refuse the campaign because of its questionable constitutionality.

The league announced September 4 that it was going to court to challenge Diamond's ruling and Carpenter's opinion. MLGPA President Ed Shannon attacked the league's latest move as political opportunism. He called it "another opportunity for Wyman and the CCL to show up in the limelight appearing to be a representative of the people." Shannon characterized Wyman's court challenge as a "vain attempt to cover the embarrassment of his ill-fated, poorly-researched and unconstitutional work to bypass the powers vested in the legislature."

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Auburn Police Promise Sensitivity and Fairness

Following press accounts of arrests for sex in a rest area, Auburn Police Chief Roger Stricker has promised fairness in handling cases. Police cracked down on rest area sex between men earlier in the summer, resulting in a number of convictions and considerable press. Charges arose in the gay community that gays were unfairly targeted and straights were ignored.

MLGPA President Ed Shannon wrote the Auburn department urging adoption of guidelines developed by the American Civil Liberties Union, the San Francisco Police Department and the Gay & Lesbian Advocates. Over a "reasonable" period of time the escalation procedure would:
1. Make "passing calls" in police cruisers with spotlights.
2. Post signs warning of surveillance.
3. Have uniformed police give verbal warnings.
4. Have undercover police give warnings.
5. After the above steps, make arrests, using identical procedures for both homosexual and heterosexual public sex.

The department was advised to precede the escalation policy with press releases to gay press and gay sympathetic press.

The policy had been adopted earlier by the Portland Police Department following arrests in the Eastern Prom area of the city.

In his response, Auburn Chief Stricker assured Shannon that "our approach has been one of sensitivity and mutual respect for all regardless of their sexual orientation." The Auburn Police already were using the escalation procedure. The Chief pointed to a ratio of six to one in terms of warnings to summonses.

Frank Urges Outness

Recently, here, Massachusetts Congressman Barney Frank made the following comments on being out.

"...almost everyone has a gay or lesbian relative. It is very hard to stop loving those you love, even when they bring new and albeit potentially controversial information about themselves to the table. "However, as more and more of us build courage and with the help of our families of choice do come out, the walls of this unwarranted fear and bigotry will rot.

"Let me tell you from my own personal experience, it has been amazingly empowering. So, you might want to think about coming out sooner than you might otherwise.

MLGPA RAFFLES Ogunquit
SEE PAGE SIX—MAY BE YOURS
Wyman is believed to be under pressure to perform because of his disastrous track record in recent years. Recall that fresh from his nasty "Who Put the Sex in Six" campaign to scuttle ERA, Wyman was crushed as he tried his hand at censorship. After a battering as the token Republican opponent against Senator George Mitchell, Wyman has returned to an area where he appears fixated: Homosexual Rights. Jack tells his flock that "Christian action organizations in many other states have the same eyes glued on Maine to see what will happen next. Our question on homosexual rights could become a model for other states."

President Ed Shannon told Maine's press in an aggressive statement that this campaign is "another Wyman exercise in political opportunism. Money needs to be raised," he said. Perhaps anticipating Ed's comments, Wyman declared during his press conference that "Our books are open for you or anybody else." Wyman told reporters that MCCL fundraising was 40 thousand dollars ahead of last year.

It is time to tell Jasper Wyman to stop this shameful work.

Accompanying the petition drive --perhaps its centerpiece--was a fund-raising campaign, strident in tone and full of MCCL Director Jack Wyman's bigoted hyperbole. Wyman is convinced that opposition to his referendum is politically motivated. He told his followers that Carpenter and Diamond "...are squarely on the side of homosexual activists. They are counting their votes for future statewide office." Wyman avoids mention of his own political intentions regarding a soon-to-be-vacant Senate seat in the district where he lives, nor the Blaine House which he is regarded to so passionately covet.

Ed Shannon in his press release says "it is time to look beyond this unwarranted fear he spreads, this shame he asks us to swallow and this divisiveness with which he tears our families apart. It is time to look to the health and well-being of a united and caring community of all Maine's families. It is time to tell Jasper Wyman to stop this shameful work."

Senator Cohen Responds To Letters

For those who wrote Washington in response to a recent mailing, you have received replies by now. We're including Senator Bill Cohen's response. He writes:

"Thank you for contacting me to express you opposition to the Helms amendment regarding HIV-infected health care workers. I appreciate the time you have taken to share your views with me.

Last Month, as you know, Senator Helms proposed an amendment to the Treasury Postal Appropriations bill which would hold health care workers who know they are infected with the AIDS virus criminally liable if they perform an "invasive" or exposure-prone procedure on a patient without first notifying that patient of their condition. While there were rumors to the contrary, the Helms amendment did not mandate imprisonment of HIV-infected health care workers, and it did not call for mandatory testing. It would also not apply in an emergency situation. As you may know, the Senate voted 81 to 18 to approve the Helms Amendment.

While far more is unknown than is known about AIDS, there is a risk—though small—of transmission between a health care worker and patient. Therefore, while I understand your concerns, I supported the Helms amendment because I believe that patients have a right to this information, and that health care workers who knowingly expose patients to risk, without first informing them of that risk, should be held accountable for their actions.

Again, thank you for contacting me, and I hope that you continue to share your views on issues of mutual concern."

Signature.
Annual Retreat

I would like to congratulate and thank those who attended our annual retreat on August 17 at Lake Quantibacook. On a gorgeous day amid peaceful surroundings on a beautiful lake we mixed hard work with the fun of socializing and recreation.

It was agreed by all that, despite the difficulty in making the decision to take time out of a summer weekend to attend, it was a very worthwhile and fulfilling experience. The interpersonal work done as a part of the retreat process was found to be invaluable in setting the foundation for a new level of teamwork and cooperation among members and board.

The fruits of our work at the retreat will be borne out over the next year. Watch for details of goals and issues discussed in future newsletters.

A one day weekend retreat is planned the week following our Annual Meeting and elections in order to orient new Directors. Next year we are looking to having a facilitated two-day weekend retreat during September.

Many, many thanks to John and Michael for the use of their beautiful home!

And again, congratulations and thanks to a great group of women and men who made it a powerful and worthwhile experience. Ed Shannon

Abortion Rights and Gay Civil Rights: Making The Connections

There has been much discussion about why choice is a bottom line issue for an organization like ours. This document from the Human Rights Campaign Fund may answer some of your questions about the relationship between choice and civil rights.

1. Both are issues of protecting privacy and individual choice in matters of reproduction and sex. The Supreme Court is attacking the constitutionally protected right of privacy in matters of reproduction and sex from two angles: limiting the right to abortion and allowing the states to control consensual, private sex. The Fourth Amendment based right to privacy penumbra is the legal underpinning for attacking sodomy laws. When this right is undermined in abortion cases, the precedent of narrowing the right to privacy is set for future sodomy and gay civil rights cases. The loss of Roe v. Wade will significantly aid the radical right in its judicial campaign to eradicate any court recognition of a constitutional right to privacy and limits government intrusion into any reproductive choices.

2. Both are issues of freedom of religious and moral decisions. It is the religious right-wing which opposes both abortion rights and lesbian and gay rights. Their opposition is grounded in their particular moral view of homosexual behavior and the act of abortion as inherently evil. This religious/moral view grants a special sacred status to monogamous, heterosexual relationships with procreation as its true purpose. No one religious viewpoint can be legally sanctioned without creating a precedent for further religious dictates. Both the choice to have an abortion and the choice to have lesbian or gay sexual relations should be based on an individual's own moral precepts and convictions, not some alleged moral majority's definitions of good and evil.

3. To put it simply, the abortion rights movement and the lesbian and gay rights movement are both about the right to control our own bodies.

4. The abortion rights movement and the lesbian and gay rights movement are both fundamentally about the right to define our families. Each issue directly impacts on an individual's right to control the composition of the unit of human beings we choose to embrace as "family."

5. Class issues arise when examining both issues. If abortions are illegal, the reality is that wealthy women will continue to pay the price for blackmarket abortions or travel to countries without restrictions. It is low-income women who are denied access to abortions or forced to find dangerous alternatives. It is the low-wage worker who faces the most serious threat of loosing his job because he or she is homosexual. The wealthy can at least insulate themselves from the economic impact of gay and lesbian discrimination.

6. The value and respect granted to women in our society is reflected in both issues. The anti-choice position relegates women to a position where the quality of their own lives is less important than their ability to incubate a fetus. Women are not granted the ability to make the judgment of when they are ready and best able to take on the role of a mother.

7. Themes of violence are entwined in both issues. As the feminist community contends, if homosexuals are denied access to legal abortions, they will return to the days of coat hangers and back-alley butchers. Women will be left scarred and sterilized for life. Others will hemorrhage to death. The bodies of women will be once again found in bathtubs, near hospitals, and in back alleys. As long as sodomy laws remain on the books and lesbian and gay discrimination is legal, those who prey on lesbians and gays in the alleys and outside our bars will feel the imprimatur of the law as they beat, rape, mutilate, and murder. Lesbians and gay men are branded criminals and forced to hide their activities. Women who survive illegal abortions are also branded criminals and live in fear of discovery. (T.J. Anthony)
A Few Words About Who We Are In The Maine Lesbian/Gay Political Alliance

The development of "WHO WE ARE AS GAYS AND LESBIANS" in the eyes of greater Maine is taking place on a number of fronts, one of which is the on-going work of the political alliance. We have a commitment to working within the political system of the state in order to educate and lobby state government, the legislature, the governor and the public at large on issues that are important to our community's needs.

**ML/GPA's Agenda**

- Gay and lesbian civil rights legislation
- An end to violence against gay men and lesbians
- AIDS-related advocacy
- Coalition-building with other progressive organizations
- Changing attitudes through education
- Becoming more involved in the electoral process

**Accomplishments**

ML/GPA has actively worked for the rights of Maine lesbians and gay men in many ways:

By continuing our vigorous effort to add the category "sexual orientation" to the Maine Human Rights Act.

By assertively working with state officials on AIDS-related policies and programs to protect the interests of the gay and lesbian community.

By successfully formulating and lobbying for bills to establish written consent for HIV antibody testing, ensure confidentiality, protect against discrimination in insurance, and to provide funding for AIDS education.

By successfully creating a coalition of progressive organizations to write, lobby and pass legislation to protect all individuals from harassment and hate crimes.

By increasing the visibility of gay and lesbian people and issues in the media.

By establishing working ties with national gay and lesbian organizations and groups in other states.

**HOW CAN YOU HELP IN THE WORK TO ACQUIRE CIVIL RIGHTS?**

If you are not part of our efforts and want to be, you may attend our monthly meetings which are open to all members. If you are not a member, you may join ML/GPA by completing the application for membership which is included in this newsletter.

Your membership gives you...

- a voice in a successful organization working to improve the lives of all lesbians and gay men in Maine.
- a chance to meet and work with lesbians and gay men from all over Maine
- regular mailings keeping you up-to-date on issues of concern to you
- the opportunity to learn new interpersonal skills as part of lobbying efforts.

Wilde-Stein Homecoming

The University of Maine's Wilde-Stein Club—the gay student organization-- has announced homecoming activities for the big October weekend.

GALA-UMAINE was formed in 1989 to provide a social and educational network among gay lesbian and bisexual alums of the University of Maine.

**Schedule of Events**

Ram's Horn, UM Campus
10 a.m.-12 N Meeting/Elections
12N-5 p.m. Visit time/Films
5 p.m.-7 p.m. Pre-dinner reception
7 p.m.-8 p.m. Spaghetti dinner
8 p.m.-9 p.m. Evening Program

For more information contact:
Mike Stickney (207) 774-0712
Doug Dunton (207) 775-7948

Unpleasant Facts

The front page news about the referendum campaign of the civic league brings home an unpleasant truth. Homosexuals help raise money. Big money. Jack Wyman told reporters that his outfit's money is running 40 thousand dollars ahead of last year. He is using us to bring in that money by the bucketsfull.

Ed Shannon made no such announcement. The painful truth is that this community has so many places to send its dollars that organizational budgets get worn thin.

Jack Wyman may be the salesperson we need. Take a look at the top line of the label on your newsletter envelope. If the expiration date is earlier than the current year and month (91-09), it means it has been more than a year since you sent us a check.

The final unpleasant fact is, that without your financial support in addition to your moral support, we're going to be hard-pressed to keep the hounds of bigotry at bay.

Thank You for Helping!
A conversation with his creator:

John: “How can being gay and being in love be wrong?”

God smiled and said quietly:

“How can love be wrong? It all comes from me. I made you whole. You are one as I am. You are my son. Nothing can separate you from my love. I have given you gifts, share them. I’ve given you light! Brighten the world. I empower you with my love. Love then.”

John: “But they call my light darkness, my gift corruption.”

God said - with a voice filled with compassion, a voice that enveloped me with love:

“Love them anyway”

He said, “Love them anyway.”

John: “But how?”

God said:

“You begin by just being who you are - a loving caring whole person, created in my image, whose special light of love happens to shine on men, as I intended for you.

You must also speak your pain and affirm the wholeness I’ve made you to be when they assail it. You must protest when you are treated as less than a child of mine.

Teach them that the world of their imagining is not the world I have made. All creation is one, and that all I create I redeem.”

John: “But they will persecute me, destroy me.”

God said:

“O yes - I know. How well I know.”

Then two strong motherly arms reached out and drew me close to the bosom of all that is. And I was just there. Just being. Enveloped in being.

And we wept - for joy.

It’s Easier to Thump a Faggot than an Average Joe. Who Cares?
L.A. Police Officer

HRCF Studies Political Campaigns

Does support for lesbian and gay rights help or hurt a political candidate? That’s the question a new Human Rights Campaign Fund study hopes to answer. The study, funded by the Triangle Institute, will examine electoral results from around the US on federal, state and national levels.

Following release of a similar study in 1980, the Democratic National Convention first adopted a gay rights plank in its platform.

The new study will chart the challenges and advances made by the movement during the past decade. AIDS and its impact on politics will be included.

Researchers will document instances when candidates’ support for gay and lesbian issues was raised in a hostile way, and how campaign strategists responded. The effectiveness of gay and lesbian community support for candidates also will be studied.

Anecdotes, stories and examples from campaigns throughout the country will insure that the study is comprehensive. Any individuals with information to share for the study should contact Eric Rosenthal at HRCF, 1012 14th St NW, Suite 607, Washington DC 20005.

DIRIGO Dinner

MLGPA coalition partner DIRIGO Alliance will hold its Annual Dinner on Saturday, November 2. For information: DIRIGO Alliance, PO Box 17534, Portland ME 04101, or 871-7793.
Obituary Policy Action
The obituary policy of the Portland papers has come under attack. The papers limit the list of survivors to legal or blood relatives.

Criticism arose when the papers refused to include the name of a lover in the obituary of a man who died from AIDS. A letter to the editor from Portland Physician ONen Pickus built a solid argument against the practice, but brought only the limp reply that the policy was predicated on "purposes of space and consistent administration."

A petition drive is underway in the Portland area against the policy of excluding the names of unmarried partners. You can participate by writing: Letters to The Editor, Portland Press Herald, 390 Congress St, Portland ME 04101.

MLGPA Joins Taxation
Taxes will soon be on all our minds as we feel the slimfast effect a tax surcharge will have on our purses. For that and other reasons, MLGPA has become a member of the Coalition for Fair Taxation.

The coalition was formed to develop ongoing rational proposals for the handling of a budget that will meet the needs of all. Hopefully, the coalition could become an important influence upon the Legislature and avoid the budget embarrassment suffered during the past session of the 115th. More than 30 statewide political action organizations have joined in this important coalition. If you have an interest in participating, contact David Shah 871-17793.

Win a Holiday in Ogunquit
A three day and night Columbus Day weekend at beautiful Perkins Cove could be yours. That, and Sunday Brunch, too.

To win this incredible weekend all you need do is send in your name with a check for the number of entries you wish. And, each entry is only two dollars. Specials are being offered, too. Take three entries for five dollars. Get seven for ten! Add your support to MLGPA!

There are no tickets to carry around either. Send the coupon below and your check. Your entries will be put into the drum with all the other contestants until the drawing on October 2. That's the day you get the call announcing YOU ARE THE WINNER!

Make your entries right away and make this weekend yours!

Entries made based on amount enclosed. Letters postmarked after October 1 not eligible. Drawing will be made in Hallowell on October 2. Proceeds benefit MLGPA.

MLGPA Ogunquit Getaway Weekend
Sign Me Up

Name ________________________________
Address ______________________________

City __________________ State _______ Zip ____________
Phone ________________________________

I want _____ Chances to win. A check for $ _________ is enclosed.

Clip and Mail to MLGPA Getaway, PO Box 232, Hallowell ME 04347

So...Do They Know About You At Work?

We work at Loring Air Force Base, LL Bean and UNUM. We're guidance counselors, accountants and sales reps. And sure, some of the men are florists and some of the women drive trucks for a living.

Our jobs provide income. They also provide our identity, more strongly for some of us than for others. If we're closeted on the job, and the majority of us are at least to some degree, our job may be a 40 hour-a-week reminder that we are not always-free to be who we are. Or are we?

While we lobby our legislators to finally protect us from job discrimination, we can do wonders to educate our co-workers about our lives by coming out on the job.

At a workshop at Symposium XVIII held this year at the University of Southern Maine, about 30 answered the question: "So...Do They Know About You At Work?"

At the workshop we learned that although many of us are more out at work than others, we all would like to take our next step. By sharing our situations, we inspired one another. We answered questions like: "Do I want my partner on my benefit plan?", and we wondered if we could be truthful when asked, "So what did you do this weekend?"

For those of us who could use a list of good reasons to come out on the job, the following may help. The participants of the Symposium workshop came up with eight. Can you come up with more?

1. You can feel more honest.
2. You won't have to worry any more that they will find out.
3. You will hear fewer gay jokes—in your presence.
4. You will have most co-workers feeling good that you could trust them.
5. They won't fix you up with co-workers (opposite sex) any more.
6. You will be a role model for closeted workers.
7. You could bring your partner or a same-sex date to the company picnic.
8. Your partner could receive the same benefits given to other workers spouses.

Bob Gordon