



MAINE LESBIAN/GAY POLITICAL ALLIANCE

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PO BOX 232

HALLOWELL ME 04347

Creating Change

Seven from Maine were among the 900 who attended the 1991 Creating Change conference sponsored by NGLTF, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. They joined participants from 42 US states, Great Britain and Mexico in Alexandria, Virginia for the fourth annual national conference on gay and lesbian organizing and skills building.

South Portland Board Member Bob Gordon told us that many of the topics related to situations we find here at home. He related that a workshop called "Referenda Campaigns" related particularly well. The Equal Protection Ordinance Coalition was formed in Denver, Colorado recently to fight an attempt to repeal a city human rights measure.

see **CREATING** on back page

Health Bill Targeted In Second Session

The heavy hitting Health Insurance Association of America has targeted Maine for a \$5-million lobbying campaign to defeat LD 701, the Community Rating Bill. HIAA represents commercial for-profit insurers who want to avoid requirements the bill would impose. LD 701 is backed by MLGPA coalition partner Consumers for Affordable Health Care.

Community rating would require all small group insurers to take any applicant regardless of age, health status, sex or occupation. It sets a single rate for a geographic region which could be the same for all insured persons in that region. This is what Blue Cross does for most of its products. HIAA has said that community rating will take the profit incentive out of the market and that insurers will not want to sell in Maine if they cannot discriminate on the basis of occupation, sex, health status and age.

Rep. Charlene Rydell (D Brunswick), a tireless advocate for affordable health care for all Maine citizens and for lesbian and gay civil rights, is the bill's sponsor. Co-sponsors are Sen. Beverly Bustin (D Augusta), Rep. Harriet Ketover (D Portland) and House Speaker John Martin (D Eagle Lake).

Since the bill was held over from the last session, it will be coming up very early in the session. Contact your Representative and Senator and let them know you support LD 701. Too many Maine people are unable to afford health insurance, or are excluded from policies altogether. That HIAA has earmarked such a big-bucks campaign indicates the bills is in the best interests of Maine citizens, including persons with HIV infection.

Solidarity Proclamation

A proclamation of solidarity was sent to California lesbians and gays following the veto by governor Pete Wilson of AB101, the California civil rights bill. Authored by Bob Gordon, the proclamation was adopted by the MLGPA Board of Directors at their October meeting.

We stand with you in solidarity, California.

A horrible alarm rang out when your governor cowardly vetoed AB 101. Three time zones away we heard the alarm!

A governor put selfish political gain in front of a people whose civil rights he promised to protect.

- *We hear your outrage.*

- *We share your outrage.*

- *We won't forget what Pete Wilson did!*

Lesbians and Gay men will not take "veto" for an answer.

Annual Meeting/Banquet Set

February first will be a busy day for MLGPA. The annual meeting is scheduled for the afternoon, followed that evening by the gala awards banquet and dance.

Election of officers and setting the agenda for the coming year take place at the annual meeting which gets underway at 1 p.m. in the Kennebec Room of the Augusta Civic Center.

The evening gala kicks off at 5:30 with a mixer. Dinner and a shortened awards presentation will be followed by dancing. Reserve your seat now--see page five for your reservation form.

Register and Get Involved

The Presidential election season is here--and proving a lot more exciting than anyone would have thought six months ago! As before, MLGPA members from both parties are urged to participate in their town caucuses and from there get elected as delegates to their state conventions.

Statewide caucuses for Democrats will be held Sunday February 23. For Republicans caucuses will run from mid February to early March--check with your local Republican Committee for the date in your town.

If you would like to be part of MLGPA's mobilizing effort, call or write Bob Gordon, 70 Albany St Ste 4, S Portland ME 04106, 871-1014; or Sive Nielan at RR 2 Box 5541, Union ME 04862, 763-4161.

Nominating Committee Wants YOU!

MLGPA's fabulous nominating committee has been re-activated in anticipation of elections to be held at the February 1 annual meeting. The committee is seeking volunteers to fill seven District Board seats, seven at-large Board seats, and the offices of President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

The committee asks that you consider one of these positions. Candidates must be willing to make a commitment to attend the monthly board meetings, to participate in at least one standing committee, and take an active role in fundraising.

Officers and Board are vital to the success of MLGPA and have a direct bearing on the success of our programs. You can help.

If you are interested or know someone who is interested contact the committee member nearest you. Ellie Goldberg in Union at 763-3838 and Allen LaPan in Augusta at 622-2245.

California Gays Consider Initiative

Following California Governor Pete Wilson's September 29 Veto of the civil rights bill, lesbian and gay activists are considering taking the issue to the people.

Wilson said the bill was unfair to employers: "Proponents argue that...simple fairness demands the elimination of discrimination in employment on the basis of sexual orientation...The test of fairness to be applied to AB 101 is whether there is evidence of discrimination so pervasive as to warrant state government imposing so widely a burden so oppressive to potentially numerous innocent employers."

Bill author Assemblyman Terry Friedman said that "When faced with a decision between fundamental fairness for gay men and lesbians and the hysterical distortions of extremists, he surrendered to the right wing in order to protect himself and Senator John Seymour." Friedman vows a new bill in January when the legislature opens.

Citing Mervin Field's California Poll, released on September 30, activists are considering a statewide gay/lesbian rights initiative, taking the decision to the people. The poll indicated that 62% of Californians believed Governor Wilson should have signed the rights bill.

Human Rights Campaign Fund spokesperson Tim McFeeley claimed that the veto was designed to bolster the chances of Senator Seymour in his primary fight next year against anti-gay Congressman William Dannemeyer. McFeeley called the veto "an unconscionable act of political cowardice," accusing Wilson of "caving in to...Dannemeyer and his extremist allies."

Rhode Island Gets Hate Crimes Law

A hate crimes bill passed the Rhode Island Legislature in the last session without controversy or fanfare. The state's Alliance for Lesbian and Gay Rights reports that it is the first instance of the words "Sexual Orientation" appearing in Rhode Island law.

The bill increasing the penalties for assault when the attack is motivated by hatred based on race, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation was introduced by Warwick Rep George Zainyeh. The RI Alliance applauded Zainyeh for working the bill through the Judiciary with no assistance from any of the affected groups. The bill passed the Legislature and was signed by the Governor without any publicity.

New Jersey Plans Rights Blitz

The New Jersey Lesbian and Gay Coalition has announced an 18 week campaign to pass an amendment to the state's "Law Against Discrimination". The amendment would make it unlawful to discriminate on the basis of affectional or sexual orientation in the areas of employment, public accommodation, housing, and credit or loans.

The coalition gives the bill its best chance to pass this year because of three factors. Governor Florio signed an Executive Order banning discrimination in state employment this summer, two days after signing legislation extending coverage of the Domestic Violence Act to same-sex relationships. A recent Eagleton Poll revealed that an overwhelming majority of New Jerseyans support fair and equal protection for lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. The coalition cites as the third factor that more than 20 states have enacted or are in the process of passing such legislation.

The New Jersey survey was encouraging in four areas. 70 percent said civil rights should be extended, 65% said they believed that gays and lesbians are subjected to the most discrimination of any minority, and 76% said they would vote for a candidate supporting rights. Pointing in favor of coming out campaigns, the survey indicated that when a respondent knew someone who was lesbian or gay they were more aware of discrimination and more sympathetic to passage of the bill. Survey organizers conclude that it is in the best interest of the community to increase the number of people who know someone lesbian or gay.

Gay liberation should not be a license to be a perpetual adolescent. If you deny yourself commitment then what can you do with your life?

Harvey Fierstein

Formula for Achieving Agenda

What has become more evident over the past year to all of the lesbian and gay politically active community, not only in the State of Maine but elsewhere in the country, is the importance of remaining focused upon the goals we set to improve our lot in the state, while not forgetting that each of us is a human being with feelings and emotions.

Our movement is a young one. Many of us are still working to more fully embrace and experience what it is to be out, and what is the best way to understand and work for our issues. Others of us are members of the "old guard." Some of us are more "grass roots" oriented, others more oriented toward confronting our political leaders one-on-one in frank and open debate. Some of us find that marching in the street and civil disobedience works best.

But most importantly, we are all working to achieve the same ends for all our sisters and brothers. While we "keep our eyes on the prize," we must be as aware as possible of each other as human beings and respect the ways in which each of us have chosen our activism; be aware of where the anger and frustration must be directed, and have that not be toward each other.

If there be differences, settle them without abuse, without victims. god knows we have lived lives of abuse and victimization. It should never be that the abused become the abusers.

Most often we find the differences are minor, that they are readily solvable, that a combination of more information to enlighten the subject, in a discussion with mutual respect, without presumption, with empathy and good listening leads to understanding. Confrontation leads only to loggerheads and resentment.

Our enemies are large enough that we need not make each other victims of their kind of tyranny. Excuse this analogy, however, it seems to work here. The lesbian/gay organizations in the state, with our coalition partners, can be viewed as regiments on a field of battle facing oppression and those individuals and organizations that espouse it. We will be so much more successful that much sooner if we are able to exert all our energies at the enemy in unison.

We owe it to ourselves to take care of each other.

To that end, MLGPA will be proposing the convening in 1992 of a political forum of all organizations representing our community in Maine and encourage the support of the members of all these organizations for such a forum.

Ed Shannon

OUTRIGHT in L/A

Support for lesbian and gay teens has become a reality in the Lewiston/Auburn area with the establishment of OUTRIGHT Central Maine.

The group has three female and three male advisors and board members from the medical profession, local high schools and police departments, and business.

OUTRIGHT originated in Portland and has a similar group in Bangor.

Open to those under 22 years old, the group holds its meetings on Friday nights at 7:30 p.m. at the First Universalist Church on Pleasant St in Auburn. Their mailing address is PO Box 802, Auburn ME 04212.

HRCF 10th

The Human Rights Campaign Fund recently celebrated its Tenth Annual New England Fundraising dinner in Boston. HRCF is a national organization lobbying congress on community concerns and supporting campaigns of progressive politicians.

Former Annapolis Midshipman Joseph Steffan was the keynote speaker. Sen. Ted Kennedy, Rep Pat Schroeder and Mayor David Dinkins were honorary co-chairs.

HRCF supported Sen. Bill Cohen of Maine in the last election. Cohen is "not convinced that sexual orientation should be treated as a civil right which warrants explicit protection under federal law..."

Referendum News

The Christian Civic League of Maine has filed a brief challenging Secretary of State William Diamond's denial of their referendum petition. The league had intended to initiate a referendum which would force to referendum any future sexual orientation legislation passed by the Legislature.

The league has until December 11 to respond to interventions by the Maine Civil Liberties Union and Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders. The two legal agencies represent numerous parties to the intervention, including MLGPA.

MLGPA President Ed Shannon had strong words for the league action at a recent press conference. He called the petition "nothing more than a sophisticated hate crime perpetrated by a rightist PAC, the CCL." He accused the religious organization of "fanning the fires of bigotry."

Shannon told reporters that MLGPA is "more than pleased to take an active role in this intervention in support of the Secretary of State's decision." MLGPA has encouraged other community organizations to participate in the intervention.

League spokesperson Jasper Wyman has been generating considerable press and has made the issue the centerpiece of its fall fundraising effort. League members have received monthly updates on the action—each with a clipoff urging financial backing for the campaign to "protect family values."

Ogunquit Winners

Winners in the MLGPA Ogunquit getaway weekend contest enjoyed their holiday weekend in the coastal community. MLGPA members Joyce and Diane told us it was really exciting being notified they had won.

"It was a really nice way to get to visit Ogunquit and all its beauty," the couple said, continuing, "this must be the general consensus of our many brothers and sisters, since we've met a lot of them here."

Boy Scout Discrimination

"Mother, father, sister, brother type of family..." is the "socially accepted family," according to the Boy Scouts of America. Controversial for years for their exclusion of gay males, scouts in Maine now exclude lesbian mothers of scouts.

Terry, a business woman from Portland says the Pine Tree Council of the BSA told her she could never be on a committee, serve as a den mother or hold a position with the BSA. Scout leaders Paul Conley and Harold Cooper confirmed scout policy when Terry was enrolling her eight-year-old son in the scouts. Conley was discussing the discrimination cases pending against the scouts when Terry asked if her being a lesbian would be a problem.

Terry's son was singled out for ill treatment by leader Cooper at the very next meeting. The boy has since stopped attending meetings. Cooper uses the titles "Rev." and "Dr."

Terry objected to the discriminatory teaching of the scouts. "There are children who don't have two active parents, or whose parents don't live together. And what about children in blended families who have more than two parents. The BSA model is unhealthy for my son and children like him," Terry said.

Terry suggested that people who do not want their children to learn the discriminatory values promoted by the BSA can:

- enroll their children in 4-H which acknowledges diversity of family relationships;
- ask the Portland United Way to stop spending \$82,000 per year on Boy Scouts;
- ask local public schools not offer meeting space or services funded with tax dollars.

Why is it that the people most outraged when government puts its hand in your pocket for taxes are often the people quickest to applaud when government sticks its nose into your bedroom?

New York Times

Voices From The Hearing

The hearing before the Legislature's Judiciary committee on the civil rights bill varies literally from the sublime to the ridiculous. Late one stormy hearing day an ancient polyester-clad man rose to excuse himself from the proceedings because his cows needed milking. But, before leaving, he wanted to say: "We need this bill like we need a spare pump in a dry well."

Not all the opponents fit the ridiculous, but many proponents approach the sublime. As space permits, we'll present selected testimony for your edification and inspiration. Voices from the Hearing.

My sixth grader tells me that he and his friends play "Bashing the Queer" and ask questions of their classmates to determine "if they are fags." Last week when I spoke to him about his intolerance of people's differences, he picked up a copy of the *Bangor Daily News*, waved it under my nose and informed me that, "Gay people don't have rights, Mom. It says so right here in the paper. There's this bill to try to give them some rights, but they don't have them yet and until they do why should I care or treat them like they have any? It's not like I'm breaking the law!"

Judy Harrison
League of Women Voters

Shannon Meets Sen. Mitchell

MLGPA President Ed Shannon met late last month with Senator George Mitchell to discuss the need for Mitchell's leadership on issues of interest to the lesbian and gay community. The pair discussed the Senator's opposition to the Thomas nomination to the Supreme Court, overturning the "gag rule" on abortion, and CARE (Ryan White) AIDS funding for the upcoming budget year.

Co-sponsorship of S. 574, the Civil Rights Amendments Act of 1991 was a topic of conversation. Mitchell remains uncommitted on the bill. It would include sexual preference in prohibiting discrimination in housing, employment, public accommodations and federally assisted programs.

"There should be no doubt of the importance to develop working relationships with our federal representatives," Shannon said. "It's important our agenda be discussed frankly and our legislators be urged to support our agenda."

Lewiston Police Hate/Bias Group

Former MLGPA Treasurer Raymond Robichaud is a member of the Lewiston Police Department Hate/Bias Citizen's Committee. He is helping organize various minority groups to make the committee more effective.

The Hate/Bias policy of the Lewiston Police Department is extensive and well-defined with detailed procedures. It specifies race, religion, ethnic background or sexual orientation. It tells officers that: "Any acts or threats of violence, property damage, harassment, intimidation or other crimes designated to infringe upon these rights are viewed very seriously by this agency and will be given high priority."

The Police Officers in Lewiston are told they "must be sensitive to the feelings, needs, and fears that may be present in the community..."

Endorsement Suggestions

New Guidelines for endorsing candidates for office have been developed by a committee guided by Rita Clifford. The suggestions have received an initial reading and are pending adoption.

1. For races in which there is an incumbent, we will support those incumbents who have previously voted for the civil rights bill.

2. For races in which there are no incumbents, we will support those candidates who agree with our positions on civil rights, choice, AIDS related issues and health care.

3. In very unusual circumstances, we could choose not to support an incumbent who voted for the civil rights bill. However, we would not support any candidate who runs against an incumbent who has voted for our bill.

4. We reserve the right to take no position on a race if we so choose.

The committee provided questions to keep in mind when considering the recommendations.

1. What are our purposes in adopting a procedure by which to indicate support for candidates? Suggestions include: to inform membership; to encourage elections of candidates who support our issues; to clearly support incumbents who have voted correctly.

2. How well would the guidelines work when applied to specific scenarios, *i.e.*: (a) a reactionary incumbent who has voted for our bill running against a Dirigo-endorsed candidate? (b) A conservative incumbent who has voted for our bill being challenged by a former legislator who has previously voted for our bill?

3. How much of this process needs to be public and how much can be accomplished privately within the membership?

4. Once we choose to support a candidate, what are ways in which we could urge our members to demonstrate that support?

The recommendations are pending further discussion before adoption.

Symposium XIX In Aroostook

Symposium XIX, the annual statewide gathering of lesbians and gays and our friends is scheduled for the University of Maine campus in Presque Isle this year. Northern Lambda Nord has announced they will host the event over Memorial Day weekend, May 22-25.

The Lambs, who added new dimensions to Symposium when they became sponsors, are holding monthly planning sessions. They request ideas from those who might have suggestions for workshops or entertainment. Contact the committee at PO Box 990, Caribou ME 04736, or phone 489-2088.

Lambda has announced that Halifax NS Canada activist Anne Bishop and Boston City Councillor David Scondras will be keynote speakers.

April 25, 1992 The National March

Organizers of the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay rights have set April 25, 1993 as the date and are expecting well over one million people to participate. The last such event, held October 11, 1987, saw more than a half-million march.

Funds and volunteers are needed. For more information, contact the March on Washington Hotline at 1-800-832-2889 or write PO Box 14573, San Francisco CA 94114.

Upcoming MLGPA Meetings

Sunday, January 19, 1992, All Soul's Church King St Augusta 2 p.m.

Saturday, February 1, 1992, North Wing, Augusta Civic Center, 1 p.m.

Maine Lesbian/Gay Political Alliance

presents the

5th Annual

GAYLA AWARDS BANQUET

With Dancing!

Don't miss the social and political highlight of the year!

A curious and comfortable mix of the savvy and the naive, the active and the supportive, dine together, dance together, and applaud each other.

**CELEBRATE OURSELVES
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 1991
THE AUGUSTA CIVIC CENTER
5:30 p.m. to 1 a.m.**

Guess who's coming to dinner (\$25.00 per person enclosed)

Name _____

Address _____ Phone _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

send to: Allen LaPan, 18 Summer St, Augusta ME 04330

CREATING from front page

MLGPA Vice-President Sive Neilan relates that the workshop reinforced how critical coalition building is. The Denvans were able to forge a huge coalition of nearly a hundred organizations and with the support of many prominent people to back the campaign. "We have been very effective with Dirigo and WLAC and we were able to form a coalition around the Hate Crimes Bill," Sive said. "We could do a knock-out job in that situation because of the wonderful resources we have out there," she added.

Rep. Pat Shroeder (D-CO), Denver Mayor Frederico Pena and Coretta Scott King were among the prominent people backing the effort. Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) also played an important role. One woman was quoted as challenging the right: "I'd like you to tell me why my kids don't deserve housing and employment in Denver."

The centerpiece of the campaign was media training. The Denver group distilled the message to two or three sentences, pointing out the value of a consistent media message. Another part of the success of the campaign was negativity. To lead voters to the correct "no" vote, negatives were used in campaign slogans like "Repealing rights is wrong," and "Don't legalize discrimination."

Campaigners were urged not to debate their fundamentalist opponents, but if a debate did take place they were warned: "Don't wrestle with pigs. You'll get dirty and they'll enjoy it."

One workshop was devoted to making a scene. An organizer from **Queer Nation** Atlanta and one from **ACT UP** Chicago conducted a session on the value of staging visibility actions, including zaps, candlelight vigils, sit-ins and the like. A number of actions were reviewed in terms of what was done and the result was quantified in terms of media response.

Public protests—not demonstrations—accomplish four things.

- Provides a vehicle to voice opposition.
- Speaking truth to power.
- To stop something from happening or to *start* something.
- For ourselves. To vent. To show anger. To show that we care.

The first public protest in the United States was the Boston Tea Party.

Another session Bob Gordon said he related to was Media Activism 101. "For me it's the most scary thing of all to have a microphone thrust into my face asking for my words of wisdom," Bob said. Organizers told the participants that they were big news and they should go out and get the coverage they deserved. Comparing the experience of the unit to the Maine experience, he said he finds that Maine reporters are not very knowledgeable about the lives of gay people.

Sive Neilan was enthusiastic about the conference, calling it "an intense education of being gay in straight society and a marvelous introduction to the tools we have—the tremendous resources there are in our community." After hearing the **Queer Nation** slogan: "We're here, We're Queer, We're Fabulous, Get used to it," Sive said: "God, we really *are* fabulous. There were so many wonderful, incredibly articulate people there." She cited the inspiration of keynote speaker Mario Solis-Marich, the Director of Public Policy of the AIDS Project Los Angeles. Solis-Marich pointed out that the main effect of the gay rights bill veto in California was to remind gay people that they were *not* insiders. Speakers Minnie Bruce Pratt and Jewelle Gomez spoke about learning from mistakes they had made. They talked about owning their mistakes and what a freeing experience that is.

"Exhausting," is the word Sive used for the pace of the conference, citing the experience of going from the morning sessions to a brown bag lunch where instead of relaxing, challenging conversations developed. Sive lunched with Susanne Pfan and shares with us Susanne's view of her life as being acts of survival and acts of resistance, concluding: "Now the task is to move from survival to resistance to creation."

Creating Change conference is held each year over the November 11 Veteran's Day weekend. Los Angeles California will be the venue in 1992.

And, They Talked About Sex

Not all the workshops at the Creating Change Conference were centered on politics and social change. They also talked about sex. Sive Nielan told us about changing workshops in mid-session when the one she was attending was not what she had expected it to be. After waiting what seemed to be a polite amount of time, Sive left the room and made for a workshop on lesbian sex.

"I went rushing into the meeting room a half hour late for the workshop to discover six women at the panelists table nude to the waist. 'I can see the beauty of it now', Sive said. It was a wonderful workshop; much more frank than lesbians usually get. 'Usually lesbians talk about relationships. Here we talked about sex.'"

Dues Appeal

Membership Dues print newsletters, pay the postage and phone bills and help get the work done.

Only half the members have paid their dues in 1991, seriously hampering our working budget. For your organization to remain effective and represent you well, it must be well financed. Your dollars help. Dollars may be scarce, but remember, those who oppose you are finding people willing to sacrifice to impose their lifestyle on you!

Elze Honored

Board Member Diane Elze was honored by the *Maine Progressive* last month for her outstanding achievements in the area of human rights. The newspaper featured a photo of Diane on its cover. She was among the honored guests at *Maine Progressive's* awards banquet.

Rep Look Looks Bad

Rep. Theone Look had homophobic remarks quoted by the "Bangor Daily News" in August. In a story emanating from the Machias area Look was among people attending a meeting discussing changing the Department of Human Services child protective custody system.

Look told the News: "I was astounded to have one of their (DHS) top people—though not the Commissioner—tell me that, personally, he would have no problem putting children in the home of a homosexual." The Jonesboro Republican was among lawmakers who voted in favor of LD 1455, a bill calling for an independent review of the Department of Human Services.

"I have not forgotten, nor will I ever forget it. There definitely needs to be an investigation into DHS," Look said.

Michael Elected

Democrats retained the 97-54 majority over Republicans in the Maine House of Representatives following a special election in Auburn. Former Legislator John M Michael defeated Republican Stacey A Slack 1,109 to 929. The election was called after Rep. Jo Anne LaPointe resigned, citing her husband's poor health.

Michael previously served from 1979 to 1986. He voted to support the Civil Rights bill during those four sessions (109 to 112). The rights measure will not be considered again in the 115th Legislature. It is unknown if he will be a candidate for the next session.