



COMMUNIQUE

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GAY-LESBIAN PHONELINE/TÉLÉGAI - 207 498-2088

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COMMENTARY by Dick Harrison

THE CLOSING OF "CLUB E" - WHAT LIES AHEAD?

In July 1988, *Club Equality* opened its doors. It was the first gay-lesbian bar/disco/club in the region. At the close of business Saturday, July 29, 1989 the Club closed its doors forever. In the brief period of one year, the existence of Club Equality has changed the lives of the gay-lesbian-bisexual community in northwestern New Brunswick and northern Maine.

Until last July, the dances and parties sponsored by Northern Lambda Nord were the only "gay spaces" in the area. Oh there's *Suzanne's* and *Friday's* in Grand Falls or *Le Brass* in Edmundston where you can find groups of gay people, sometimes clustered in one area of the predominantly straight club. But you'd rarely, if ever, see same sex couples dance together, especially not a slow dance. And *L'Arc-en-ciel* has had its "gay nights" on Sundays for quite some time, where you can go and pay as much as a \$5 cover, \$3 or more for a beer or soda, and have your U.S. dollars accepted at par, then receive change in Canadian funds.

When Gilles, the "home-town boy" from Sainte-Anne-de-Madawaska, decided it was time, that we need a space of our own, there were the skeptics. Many people stayed away at first, watching and waiting to see if a gay club would survive in the Saint John Valley town of 3,000. Was it safe to go there? Would there be trouble from queer-bashers? What will the neighbors think?

These past 12 months proved the skeptics wrong. Gilles opened Club Equality on a hot July afternoon, the ribbon-cutting ceremony presided over by the local member of the New Brunswick Legislature, & Gilles' family and friends in attendance. It was a great party all evening. Despite the skeptics, there was never any trouble from anyone. Never. The only real perceptible problem was the amount of support from our community. Though it was the only truly safe space between Fredericton and *Rivière-du-Loup* and Augusta, though it was open for us every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday evening, week after week, the patronage was minimal. Friday night saw less than a dozen people, including the staff. Even in the best weather. Even on a holiday weekend. Sundays didn't fare any better. It was Saturday night which paid the bills. Forty, 50 people, maybe more would be there. And always new faces. There were the regulars from Madawaska, Edmundston, *Rivière-Verte*,

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Grand-Sault. And there were the not-so-regulars from many of the small towns on both sides of the border. But there was still a very large number of people who stayed away. Their reasons run the gamut from not liking the type of music, too much smoke, too many men, not enough men, too many women, not enough women, or just a closet mentality. Paranoia. Maybe I'll meet someone I know.

Despite any of these complaints, many people liked Club Equality and supported it. It provided a social space. Once in a while there were gay newspapers from Montreal, Toronto, Portland. The small bulletin board by the front door provided a means to get information out to our community. And the signs posted in the lavatories with a pocket containing brochures from Lambda gave this organization another way to reach people, to let them know that this group exists.

But now what will follow? There's been talk about another place opening up in the area. Two businesspeople, one in Ste-Anne, one in Caribou, have mentioned doing something.

The existence of Club Equality proved that it could be done. Maybe it wasn't all things to all people, no one place can be that. But it was a start. This region is now primed and ready for a place of our own. A central location which can act as a community center of sorts, a central clearinghouse for people to meet people and create more networks of friendship and even activism. All it needs now is the right location and the desire by a committed person or group of people to put something together that will work. And of course financing. That's always the bottom line.

Gilles must be commended for his courage, determination, and dedication to the women and men of this region. Despite the naysayers, Club Equality was a reality. No one would have thought in 1983 that 5 years hence there would be a gay club in this rural area. As we approach the Gay 90s, just try to

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AIDS Safer Sex Guide

Unsafe

- * Anal or vaginal intercourse without a condom
 - * Inserting hands (fisting) or tongue (rimming) into the anus
 - * Sharing sex toys or needles
 - * Semen or urine in the mouth
 - * Blood contact
- Risk increases with multiple partners.*

Safe

- * Massage, Hugging
- * Masturbation - Solitary and mutual
- * Body to body rubbing
- * Unshared sex toys
- * Reading, viewing and talking erotica
- * Abstinence
- * Dry kissing

Possibly Safe

- * Deep wet kissing
- * Anal, oral or vaginal sex using a latex condom properly
- * Oral vaginal contact - except during menstruation

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imagine what will be 5 years from now. A Lesbian-Gay Community Center. A large two-story brick building, underground heated parking, swimming pool (indoors, of course with removable roof), movie theatre, bookstore, meeting rooms, disco, coffee shop, restaurant, bar, gymnasium, sauna, hot tub, suntan booths, pizzeria, aerobics classes, tennis court,...

— LA CROIX-BLEUE (magazine RG, Montréal) —

La Commission des droits de la personne du Nouveau-Brunswick a suspendu une décision face à la demande par la Croix-Bleue de se soustraire à la clause qui interdit la discrimination sur le handicap physique. Ce qui permettrait à la compagnie d'assurance de demander légalement à ses futurs clients s'ils sont séropositifs (SIDA) ou non.

— MAINERS SUPPORT CIVIL RIGHTS FOR GAY PEOPLE (The ADVOCATE, California) —

A poll published in the Brunswick TIMES RECORD found that 77% of Maine residents who were surveyed support a gay rights bill that was rejected by the Maine Senate (the bill passed the House). Another 15% of those surveyed said they opposed the antidiscrimination legislation, and the remainder were undecided.

— GAY COUPLES DEFINED AS 'FAMILY' (GAY COMMUNITY NEWS, Boston) —

A July 6 ruling by New York State's highest court said that the term "family" cannot be limited to a narrow, biological definition. The groundbreaking 4-2 decision is likely to influence courts nationwide. The ruling stated that a gayman in New York City must be allowed to assume the lease of his deceased lover's rent-controlled Manhattan apartment, something that until now was allowed only to members of one's family. The majority court's opinion focused on the relationship's function and nature, rather than the "family" structure, noting that the protection against eviction "should not rest on fictitious legal grounds or genetic history but instead should find its foundation in the reality of family life."

— MAINE, N-B GROUPS TO BE AT PARTY —

Members of the Maine Lesbian-Gay Political Alliance and the New Brunswick Coalition for Human Rights Reform/Coalition pour la réforme des droits de la personne au Nouveau-Brunswick, groups working for the civil rights of gay people, will be at the August 12th NLN party/BBQ/dance. This will give members of the Alliance and the Coalition the opportunity to meet with northern Maine and New Brunswick people in order to find out what the organizations can do for the lesbian-gay-bisexual communities in this region.

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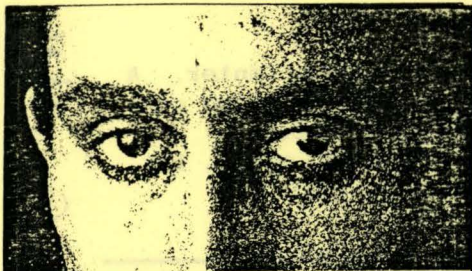


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And you?

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AROOSTOOK AREA GAY/LESBIAN AA GROUP meets
weekly in Madawaska; contact Northern Lambda Nord
for information

BANGOR AREA GAY-LESBIAN-STRAIGHT COALITION
(BAGLSC - "Bagels") c/o 87 Sunset Strip, Brewer
04412

DOWNEAST LESBIAN GAY ORGANIZATION (DELGO)
c/o Unitarian Church, 126 Union Street, Bangor 04401,
207/942-6603

DIGNITY/MAINE Catholic group, POB 8113 Portland
04104

FREDERICTON LESBIANS AND GAYS (FL-G) POB
1556, Station A, Fredericton E3B 5G2, 506-57-2156
**GAIS ET LESBIENNES DE MONCTON/GAYS AND
LESBIANS OF MONCTON** (GLM) CP/POB 1102,
Riverview E1B 1V0, 506-858-1013

GAY/LESBIAN ALLIANCE University of Southern
Maine, 92 Bedford Street, Portland 04102, 207/780-4085

GROUPE GAI DE L'UNIVERSITE LAVAL (GUL) CP
2500, Pavillon Lemieux, Cite Universitaire, Sainte-Foy,
Quebec G1K 7P4, 418/648-2751

HARBOR MASTERS, INC. leather-levi group, POB
4044, Portland 04104

**LESBIAN/GAY COMMITTEE, MAINE CHAPTER,
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS**
POB 5112, Station A, Portland 04101

MAINE BISEXUAL PEOPLE'S NETWORK POB 1792,
Portland 04104, 207-780-4085 (leave message)

MAINE LESBIAN FEMINISTS POB 125, Belfast 04915
MAINE LESBIAN/GAY POLITICAL ALLIANCE POB
232, Hallowell 04347

**NEW BRUNSWICK COALITION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
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BRUNSWICK POB/CP 1556, Station/Succursale A,
Fredericton E3B 5G2

**OUR PAPER: A Voice for Lesbians and Gaymen in
Maine** published monthly, \$12 for one-year subscription,
POB 10744, Portland 04104

OUTRIGHT: Portland Alliance of Gay & Lesbian Youth
POB 5028, Station A, Portland 04101

WILDE-STEIN CLUB Memorial Union, University of
Maine, Orono 04469

WOMLAND TRUST Womn Owning Maine Land Trust,
POB 55, Troy 04987

AIDS information SIDA

MAINE AIDS-line 1-800/851-AIDS (-2437) (Portland -
775-1267), Monday-Friday 9am-5pm, Monday &
Wednesday 6-9pm, Saturday 10am-1pm

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459-7518)

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