NEW BRUNSWICK REPORT
GAY RIGHTS IS THE LAW!

NEW BRUNSWICK HAS A "GAY RIGHTS" LAW! On Wednesday, May 13, the New Brunswick legislature gave third reading to a bill outlawing anti-gay discrimination in private and public sector employment, housing, public services, and professional associations and signs. The amendment came into effect May 20.

"This is not a question that challenges the morals of the people," said Advance Education Minister Vaughn Blaney in his introduction to the bill. "This is a human rights question." However, during the two-hour long debate, several COR members (Confederation of Regions party) said that the government could not divorce the morality aspect from its human rights laws. "People in this society should not be accused of discrimination because they refuse to associate themselves with activities they consider immoral," said COR member Beverly Brine. "I'd like to remind the member that discrimination is also immoral," Blaney responded. A few COR members concluded on page 2.

MAINE'S LARGEST CITY
PORTLAND PASSES RIGHTS LAW

On Monday, May 11, the Portland City Council passed the first law in Maine prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. City ordinance Chapter 13-A covers employment, housing, credit, and public accommodations such as restaurants, theatres, hotels, etc. The vote was 7-1 with one absent. No sooner had it passed than right wing religious groups threatened to mount a petition drive to send it to a public referendum. The repeal drive is led by James Duran, a Baptist minister and official of the Maine Christian Civic League. Though Duran denies it, most people believe that Civic League executive director Jasper Wyman and his organization are behind the move. Opponents of the ordinance need 1500 validated signatures in order to place the repeal measure on the November ballot; a small number of signatures in a city of over 60,000 people.

Citizens for a United Portland, a grassroots group formed to fight the repeal effort, is planning an intensive education campaign to counter what is expected to be a negative and bigoted media blitz. Persons interested in supporting Citizens United may reach them at POB 1894, Portland 04104, 780-5656.
bers also sought media coverage by asking red herring questions about bestiality, such as would the bill "allow an old man to live with a sheep" and a bride to marry a goose. Blaney later aluded to COR members when he said, "When I look across the floor, my mind turns to turkeys."

The amendment passed third reading by a 34-8 count in the 58-seat legislature, the vote was along party lines. The amendment had been proposed by the governing Liberal Party and was supported by the New Democratic and Progressive Conservative parties. However, a few Liberals and one PC left the legislature at the last minute to avoid the vote, presumably because of their opposition to the bill.

The bill was opposed by eight members of the right wing populist COR party, which forms the Official Opposition. COR raison d'être is to oppose the law requiring the government to deliver its services in French to the francophone minority, one third of the New Brunswick population.

The legislation also included amendments which outlawed discrimination against children and pregnant women, issues that COR members voted against.

The only public opposition came from Fredericton's chronically homophobic newspaper, The Daily Gleaner. A May 7th editorial stated, "what is not morally right cannot be politically right," and that the government should rely on the good sense and decency of the people rather than introduce legislation providing for "special" treatment.

With the addition of protection of the New Brunswick population, nearly three-quarters of Canadians are covered by similar anti-discrimination laws. Québec adopted a law in 1977, and since then Manitoba, the Yukon, Ontario, and Nova Scotia have passed legislation. British Columbia and Saskatchewan are expected to follow suit in the near future.