
Northern Lambda Nord

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Commentary, by Dick Harrison

Thirteen going on 300

Northern Lambda Nord marks its 13th anniversary this month, the oldest gay-lesbian-bisexual organization in Maine, and one of the oldest in Atlantic Canada. Our first meeting was held January 27, 1980 in Van Buren, Maine. The thirteen people in attendance, from both sides of the border, could never imagine that what they started would be around more than a dozen years later. Over 275 different people have been card-carrying Lambs in the past 12 years. Many more have supported the organization through their participation in the variety of social, educational, and political events sponsored by NLN.

It's now the Gay 90s, and this is proving to be our decade. More and more jurisdictions, from towns and cities to provinces and states, are incorporating civil rights protections for us. In the east, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Québec; Massachusetts, Vermont, and Connecticut; the City of Portland, the Portland School board, and the Portland-area United Way, have all recognized that gays and lesbians are discriminated against and have said it is wrong. We are publicly challenging social institutions, from the military to organized religion to the definition of the family, and even the Boy Scouts. For the first time a candidate for the U.S Presidency spoke out in favor of our rights. He takes office this month, and we wait to see if his actions reflect the strength and conviction of his words.

Support for our cause is evident in the latest reports on the boycotting of Colorado, a state which passed a referendum

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Lessons From Geese

based on the work of Milton Olson

Fact 1 - As each goose flaps its wings, it creates an "uplift" for the birds that follow. By flying in a "V" formation, the whole flock adds 71% greater flying range than if each bird flew alone. Lesson: People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going quicker and easier because they are traveling on the thrust of one another. Fact 2 - When a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of flying alone. It quickly moves back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front of it. Lesson: If we have as much sense as a goose we stay in formation with those headed where we want to go. We are willing to accept their help and give our help to others. Fact 3 - When the lead goose tires, it rotates back into the formation and another goose flies to the point position. Lesson: It pays to take turns doing the hard tasks and sharing leadership. As with geese, people are interdependent on each other's skills, capabilities and unique arrangements of gifts, talents, or resources. Fact 4 - The geese flying in formation honk to encourage those up front to keep up their speed. Lesson: We need to make sure our honking is encouraging. In groups where there is encouragement, the production is much greater. The power of encouragement (to stand by one's heart or core values and encourage the heart and core of others) is the quality of honking we seek. Fact 5 - When a goose gets sick, wounded or shot down, two geese drop out of formation and follow it down to help and protect it. They stay with it until it dies or is able to fly again. Then, they launch out with another formation or catch up with the flock. Lesson: If we have as much sense as geese, we will stand by each other in difficult times as well as when we are strong.
Highlights
OF NLN’S DECEMBER BUSINESS MEETING

One guest and six members present, four of them Steering Committee members.

- The Treasurer reported that the money bag used at the Halloween party has not been located. It is believed to have been stolen, since it was placed in a drawer during the party and could not be found despite an extensive search. Estimated loss, $50-100 in US and CDN funds.
- All the books in the library collection have been put in order on the shelves. Beginning at the next “First Friday” they will be entered into the computer, one shelf at a time. Volunteers are needed to help.
- Two people will review the estimated costs for a statewide 800 number for the Phoneline in order to approach other Maine groups for possible financial support.
- Thank yous go to Stephen in Presque Isle for hosting the Christmas party, and to Dennis in Caribou for hosting the monthly meeting.
- Outreach: The Caribou Unitarian-Universalist Church has appointed a committee of three to meet with NLN members to discuss our use of church meeting space for the monthly meetings.
- The building fund incurred a $6.30 bank charge in November.
- The Portland-area United Way has adopted a non-discrimination policy re: sexual orientation. NLN will ask the Aroostook UW to clarify their policy, something they have avoided doing since January 1992.
- NLN has received information re: the weekly gay-lesbian radio program, “This Way Out”, and will contact a gay staff member at Maine Public Radio for advice in gaining MPR’s support to broadcast the program.

Activities calendar
- Discussion & Pot Luck - Sat, Jan 9, topic: Maine’s up-coming gay-lesbian civil rights bill, where it stands and how we can get it passed in 1993. Presenter, B.J. Broder, former Houlton resident and board member of Maine Lesbian-Gay Political Alliance;
- “First Friday” plus 2 weeks event - Fri, Jan 15, 7pm (Maine), set up system and begin entering library book info into the computer, volunteers needed (can you type?) followed by a film at 9pm (Maine);
- Monthly meeting - Sun, Jan 17, 3pm (Maine), Caribou;
- Fold & Stuff the February newsletter & calendar - Wed, Jan 20, 7pm (Maine), Caribou - at the Phoneline;
- Snow fun day, pot luck, and games - Sun, Jan 24, starts at noon (Maine), sledding, snowshoeing, fun-in-the-snow, pot luck, evening of board/card games, in New Sweden;
- NLN’s 13th anniversary dinner party - Sat, Jan 30, Carriage House Restaurant, Presque Isle;
- “First Friday” - Fri, Feb 5;
- Valentine’s Party - Sat, Feb 13, Caribou;
- Monthly meeting - Sun, Feb 21, location needed;
- Fold & Stuff March newsletter & calendar, Wed, Feb 24, 7pm (Maine), Caribou;
- Snow fun day, pot luck, and games - Sat, Feb 27, noon (Maine), New Sweden

The meeting adjourned after 1 hour 10 minutes.
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**Going on 300**

prohibiting the enactment of any civil rights laws, past or present, which protect gay people. It is not surprising that national gay & lesbian organizations have canceled planned conferences in that state, but several U.S. cities including New York and Atlanta have announced that they will cease doing business with Colorado firms, and the U.S. Conference of Mayors has changed the venue of their meeting, which had been planned for Denver.

We have lived through over a decade of criminal neglect by the government with regards to its lack of action in the face of AIDS, which has taken its toll on our community. Most every one of us has been touched in some way by the effects of this disease.

A new generation of gay & lesbian revolutionaries has claimed what had been a negative epithet and now use it unashamedly with pride - Queer. Lesbian and gay youth now grow up and see an older generation of queers who are their role models. We’re on “Donahue”, the nightly news, on the cover of national magazines. We have our own radio and tv programs, and even a new satellite radio station, KGAY which broacasts from Colorado(!). A lot has changed since January 27, 1980.

After thirteen years of community organizing in northern Maine and northwestern New Brunswick, Northern Lambda Nord’s work continues. There are many women and men in this rural region who remain self-oppressed and in their closets, who have a low self-esteem and have internalized their homophobia. They’re comfortable with their closeted lives and fear the changes and challenges that come with personal growth, a growth they will surely experience if they push aside some of those old-fashioned clothes and take a step away from their closet doors. This organization is here to act as a focus for activities, a resource – both materially and financially. Under the umbrella of Northern Lambda Nord we can publicly challenge homophobia, work to pass civil rights legislation, and fight anti-gay and lesbian forces while maintaining individual anonymity, to whatever degree we choose. NLLN should not be seen as threatening; it should be seen as a way through which each of us may gain personal freedom and growth. But it is for each of us as individuals, not for the organization, to bring our sisters and brothers out from the back of their closets so they may breathe the air of personal freedom they have yet to enjoy. In thirteen years, the original thirteen individuals with a dream have grown to almost 300. Let us make the personal effort to grow as gays and lesbians and to help others grow with us.

**Caribou Unitarians: UPDATE**

The Unitarian-Universalist Church in Caribou has been approached three times to allow Northern Lambda Nord to hold our monthly meetings in their building. The UUA is traditionally gay-supportive, but the local congregation has been an exception to the national organization. Lambda representatives will meet with three UUA Board members January 7th to discuss our most recent request for meeting space. It is hoped that in the next Communiqué it will be reported that the Caribou church is shedding its homophobic reputation. Film at 11.

KGAY is On the Air

A gay-owned radio station, KGAY, is broadcasting via satellite. You can pick them up on Galaxy 5, transponder 6, at 6.3 and 6.46 mhz, or on Spacenet 3, transponder 22, at 6.2 and 7.4 mhz. Call for more information: KGAY studio - 1-800 733-5429, administration - 1-800 758-6642.
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