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Northern Lambda Nord

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Fighting the Right in northern Maine

Aroostook County begins to organize against antisemian/gay forces

A concerted organizing effort has begun in Aroostook County to counteract the right wing extremists who are attempting to limit our freedom. They wish to prohibit the enactment of any law which protects non-heterosexuals from discrimination in Maine and to repeal such existing laws in Portland and Lewiston. An Auburn-based group, "Concerned Maine Families," has organized a statewide petition drive to put such a law before voter referendum in November, 1994.

Eight people from The County attended a day-long series of "Fight the Right" workshops August 7 in Augusta. Co-sponsored by the Maine Lesbian-Gay Political Alliance and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, the workshops provided guidance and education on how to organize against the growing religious right extremists and Maine's Coloradotyle anti-gay petition drive in particular.

Seven of the eight Northern Lambda Nord members who attended the August 7 workshops were present at a September 1 follow-up meeting in Presque Isle. At the Augusta workshops they had split into two groups in order to attend the different workshop sessions. Two major topics covered at these workshops were discussed at the Presque Isle meeting.

The first half of this two-hour follow-up session focused on organizing and building a stronger community, as well as coalition-building both within our community and with other supportive groups and individuals in northern Maine. The second part of the discussion reviewed how to deal with the local media, how to get our message out, and how to counter the right wing in the electronic and print media.

Concensus was easily reached on the need to get more individuals involved, whether they are NLN members or not. Some people are easily motivated, in the privacy of their kitchen, or being interviewed by WAGM on television. All contributions to this fight, no matter how small, are essential. You can be sure the religious right has no problem getting volunteers.

A list was made of the initial goals of this local campaign. These include: contacting previous NLN steering committee members and past NLN people a way they can get involved (i.e., newspaper committee which monitors all the local papers and cuts out gay/lesbian- and right wing-related articles; phone tree committee to organize phone numbers to facilitate easy and quick communication, from Madawaska to Orient) • preparing a press kit for use with the media • get to know area reporters • sending out and following up on regular press
Lesbian-Gay Political Alliance.

During the four-hour gathering, ideas for the structure of a statewide organization were discussed in detail. As a model for community organizing, the way Idaho's "fight the right" group is structured was explained. The statewide group, Idaho Voices for Human Rights, includes local committees such as Boise Voices for Human Rights, and Pocatello Voices for Human Rights, incorporating their local community names. Those in the supportive religious community are called, Voices of Faith for Human Rights. The groups' slogan is, "Don't Sign On!"

The goal of the Maine group is to make sure the ballot initiative never passes and never becomes law in this state. As part of the strategy to stop the right wing, people in every community will be recruited to make sure that on election day, November 2, if there is a CMF member at the polls asking people to sign their petition then there is someone to explain to people why they should not sign. Training for these volunteer poll sitters will be held after the next statewide organizing meeting, which is Saturday, October 2, from noon-4pm at The Rage. ▼

**Voters will decide on civil rights ordinance**

The front line for civil rights in Maine has moved to the state's second-largest city, Lewiston. With the veto of anti-discrimination legislation by Governor John McKernan, a local referendum vote on a Lewiston anti-discrimination ordinance becomes the next battleground in the fight for equality.

The Lewiston City Council adopted an ordinance which outlaws discrimination based upon one's sexual orientation; this law is similar to one passed earlier in Portland which was then put to voter referendum. The law was upheld by city voters. Now it's Lewiston's turn.

Maine is one of 12 states targeted by the extreme religious right wing for anti-gay/lesbian referenda. They think that Lewiston is just the kind of place where their "No Special Rights" argument might work. A victory for us in a blue-collar French-Catholic city such as Lewiston is a key to countering opposition to gay and lesbian civil rights in Maine. The right wing awaits the outcome of this election. A positive vote in Lewiston will send a message to the leaders of the Right in Maine and across the U.S.

The ordinance was successfully defended in Portland, the most liberal city in Maine; Lewiston is one of the most conservative.

It will be harder to win in Lewiston, but the victory will mean even more. A winning campaign costs tens of thousands of dollars. Please send any contribution you can afford today to Equal Protection Lewiston, POB 7804, Lewiston 04243-7804. ▼
Readers of Gay Publications

Wealthier and better-educated than most

Marketing surveys show that gaymen and lesbians have substantially higher household incomes than the national average, and extra-ordinary consumer demographics, giving us one of the largest blocks of disposable income in the United States. These conclusions were reached by Strub Media Group after a February 1992 survey of readership of 10 gay publications.

The household income of those lesbians and gaymen responding to the survey averaged $63,100; the national average is $36,500. Only 18% of Americans are college graduates but 61% of readers surveyed have a college degree. Over half of the readers - 51% - are in professional or managerial jobs. The national average is 15.9%.

The ten members of the National Gay Newspaper Guild which surveyed their readers were Bay Area Reporter (San Francisco), Bay Windows (Boston), Dallas Voice, Frontiers, The New Voice, New York (City) Native, Philadelphia Gay News, The Washington (D.C) Blade, The Weekly News, and Windy City Times (Chicago).

Northern Lambda Nord conducted a regional demographics survey between January and September 1992. People residing in three of the four counties in this region, Aroostook, Madawaska, and Carleton, completed surveys. Rather than household income, the NLN survey asked for individual annual gross income, which averaged $22,300. Nearly one-quarter of the respondents - 24% - earned under $10,000; 4% earned over $50,000.

The education-level in the Lambda survey showed a 50%-50% split between those with and those without a college degree. ▼

An Annual October Event

National Coming Out Day Campaign

National Coming Out Day is observed every October 11 to help create a supportive environment for gay, lesbian, and bisexual people to come out. With "over 30 million lesbians and gaymen in America... most people think they don't know anyone gay or lesbian. It is no wonder people don't believe they can relate to us or our concerns. The price we pay for this invisibility is enormous. The poor government response to the AIDS epidemic, discrimination in employment and the military, and the perpetuation of anti-gay state ballot measures are but a few tragic examples of how costly our silence can be.

"Equality will be there for us only when we come out and show our pride. Our open participation in society is critical to our empowerment, our safety, and our well-being. For gaymen and lesbians to live in terror of being discovered is unacceptable. Future generations of gay and lesbian people count on our courage to come out now. If we don't commit to the process of coming out, anti-gay prejudice will continue. The future is up to us."

The goals of National Coming Out Day are to be visible, get political, educate...
the local community, and party. Some of the means include participating in local talk shows, handing out literature at a shopping center, an evening of letter writing to elected officials or newspapers, hosting a film event, book fair, or art show, or having a gay/lesbian entertainer: band, comic, variety show, etc. ▼

Another Annual October Event

New Membership Year Begins With Party

Dozens of people are expected to celebrate our local community Saturday, October 2 at the Caribou Country Club when Northern Lambda Nord marks the beginning of its 14th membership year with its annual Membership Drive Party & Dance. This is the first time this annual October event will not be held in a private home, and the second Lambda-sponsored party this year at the Country Club. Doors open at 7pm (Maine)/6pm (N-B). There is a cash bar which closes at midnight (Maine)/1am (N-B). A new mix of dance music is courtesy C&J Music. Admission is $5 (US/CDN funds) or it is free with the purchase of a 12-month membership in Northern Lambda Nord, $15 (US/CDN). Membership includes a monthly newsletter, access to the lending library, and notification every month of all activities. Membership lists are confidential. ▼

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