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Thoughts on Politics, People and Periodicals

by Dick Harrison, Editor

Off the Top of My Head

If you hadn’t heard by now, many of the people who were sitting in policy-making chairs in the United States Capitol have been asked to give up their seats and allow other, more right-wing thinkers to take their place. The new people in control of the national legislature would like to get the government “off our backs”. There’s too much interference from Washington. Too many regulations. Let’s ease things up. All those rules about protecting animals, why that just keeps the big companies from cutting trees and building things for people. Those companies make jobs, and that’s important. And the poor people who live on handouts from the government, well they’d better get a job; we don’t care if they can’t find work; let them pull themselves up by their bootstraps. And those women with babies, we’re not going to pay for any more mouths to feed. Let them go to work, too. They’ll figure out some way to handle the day care for those kids. And if they lose their government health benefits, well their employer should provide that, or at least pay them enough to buy their own health policies. You know that if we have a universal health care system, it may hurt the insurance industry, and we can’t do that because those folks provide jobs. And we’re right on social policies, too. It may not be easy, but we’re going to put our stamp, our values on the way this country works. Abortion may be legal but we’ll put back laws to make access more difficult. You know Clinton should never have removed those laws. And for gays in the military, they shouldn’t be there. They’re anti-family, anti-God, anti-American. Why, just look in your Bible. It says so. We’re in charge of Congress, now, and for the next two years we know what’s best for America. A chicken in every pot, a gun by every bed, keep the women makin’ babies like God intended, don’t let my son turn queer and all will be right with the world. Amen.

Politics, politics, politics. Did you hear that Ottawa now has a second openly-gay Member of Parliament? In addition to long-time MP New Democrat Svend Robinson from BC, now there’s a Bloc Québécois member (I don’t remember his name.) It seems that Liberal MP Roseanne Skoke from Nova Scotia began attacking gays in the House of Commons. She referred to homosexuality as immoral, unnatural, and a threat to the family. She wouldn’t apologize; she said she was defending “The Family.” In light of her verbal diatribe, the Bloc Québécois member decided he would stand up and be counted, or rather “outed!” Bravo!

South of the border another Member of the U.S. Congress has also come out. In a recent issue of The Advocate, Steve Gunderson, Republican from Wisconsin, admitted that yes, he, too was of the homosexual persuasion. That makes three openly-gay members of the U.S. House of Representatives. (The others are Barney Frank and Gerry Studds, both Massachusetts Democrats). And earlier this month all three won re-election to Congress. In Maine, Dale McCormick, our darling lesbian State Senator from Monmouth, was reelected to her seat in Augusta. It’s a bit early to say how the Maine gay-lesbian civil rights bill will fare in this new legislature. The State Senate has an equal number of Republicans and Democrats (17) plus one independent. The House of Representatives is dominated by Democrats, who tend to be more supportive of non-discrimination laws for gay people). Independent governor-elect Angus King was at the Maine Lesbian-Gay Political Alliance banquet last February where he pledged to sign the bill if it reached his desk. Let’s tell him he must do more; he must lobby for its passage, issue an order banning discrimination in the Executive Branch of state government, and be very outspoken both in favor of amending the Maine Human Rights Act and in opposition to the Carolyn Cosby/Concerned Maine Families’ anti-gay referendum.

Changes, changes, changes. People moving away, people moving in. We’ve lost several of the most active gay and lesbian activists in this area; either they’ve already moved away or they’ll be gone by Christmas. First Stephen moved to Bangor. Then Roger moved to Bangor. Soon Jody and Sara will be in Portland. But as they were leaving, new faces appeared. Bill moved here from Boston, Jim and Jim moved here from Wyoming, and Sheila, well...
she was already in the area but now she’s becoming active in Lambda. Which reminds me of the Steering Committee elections for this organization. There are 10 members on the Committee. With the last issue of Communiqué, you were sent copies of the position descriptions and a nomination ballot. If you like the kinds of things that Lambda has been doing, good; get involved and put in some energy. If you don’t like what the group’s been doing, good; get involved and change the direction. This may be an obvious statement, but I’ll say it anyway:

Northern Lambda Nord is not some abstract blob of plasma floating 250 metres above the surface of the planet; NLN is people. The library books belong to all of us, the Lambda members. The community center in Caribou may be paid for with a check that says Northern Lambda Nord, Inc. at the top, but the Center belongs to all of us. Have you visited the only gay-lesbian-bisexual community center in Maine or New Brunswick yet? It’s your money paying the rent!

There are four monthly publications in the state which regularly cover issues of interest to lesbians, gays, and bisexual people. 1) Community Pride Reporter 2) 10%, and 3) Apex are all based in Portland and are written by gay people. 4) The Maine Progressive is produced by both gays and non-gays from several communities in the southern half of the state (i.e. Bangor and south). NLN’s community center has been open since September. Guess which is the only publication to include an article about the first and only gay-lesbian-bisexual community center in Maine and New Brunswick. Maybe I should rephrase that. Guess which three publications have yet to say anything about the only gay-lesbian-bisexual community center in Maine.

Hello, is anyone there?

Which reminds me of what someone from S.O.B. (south-of-Bangor) said to me: Yeah, I’ve been to northern Maine; I was in Bangor once.

Finally, in this abbreviated Communiqué, Northern Lambda Nord is approaching its 15th anniversary. The first meeting was in Van Buren at the end of January, 1980. An anniversary dinner party will be held at the Carriage House Restaurant in Presque Isle, but is there something special Lambda people can do to mark the occasion? After all, NLN is the oldest community-based group in Maine, maybe even in New Brunswick, maybe even in all of northern New England and Atlantic Canada, maybe even in the entire galaxy!

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