

Northern Lambda Nord Communiqué

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ATLANTIC REGIONAL CONFERENCE IN MONCTON by Dick

Over the three-day Canadian Thanksgiving Weekend (Columbus Day in the US), I attended an Atlantic Lesbian and Gay Conference, sponsored by the Gays and Lesbians of Moncton/*Gais et lesbiennes de Moncton*, an organization which serves the southeastern part of New Brunswick and has a membership of over 500. The GLM conference was the first held in Atlantic Canada for several years. About 50 attendees were at the opening plenary session, but I was told that closer to 100 people were registered. The conference was held on the campus of l'*Université de Moncton*, and housing was provided in people's homes throughout the city.

There were four workshop periods offered, two Saturday and two Sunday. Each workshop was scheduled once in English and once in French. Two workshops were listed "bilingual". At the opening plenary and during subsequent announcement periods, we were addressed in both English and French. However, since most francophones are bilingual and it seemed the anglophones were not (many from Nova Scotia, English parts of New Brunswick, and several from Maine), the keynote address and many announcements reverted to English-only. Even one of the workshops I attended, labeled "bilingual", was in English. It seems only too apparent why francophones feel the use of their language diminishing, even in *Nouveau-Brunswick*. All written materials at the conference were available in both French and English.

The first workshop I went to was "Lesbian Couples". I was the only man among 40 women. I listened attentively as these women spoke of the problems they had as couples, their relationships, and being gay couples in society. After a long period of time, it seemed to me that every statement made during the workshop could have substituted the words "gay male couple" for "lesbian couple" and the issues and concerns would have been the same. When I brought up this point, questioning what the difference was between gay male and lesbian couples, since our concerns seemed the same, the issue arose of the difference in finances. Men are generally more financially secure than women, and that colors their "lifestyle". If a couple has children, the males are more likely to be able to afford outside childcare than are the women. It is also traditionally more acceptable for women to live together than men. An important issue which was raised was the question of support - what kind of support do lesbian and gay organizations provide for couples? Some women were critical of a lack of support by the organized community.

"Homosexuality and the Bible" was the title of the second workshop I attended. A sometime-interesting but boring presentation of the passages in the Bible which condemn gay people to one degree or another. The workshop facilitator treated participants as students in a classroom, posing questions, hoping we would be able to come up with the answers, and oftentimes surprised at the knowledge among those of us in attendance.

A meeting of representatives of the Gay-Lesbian Phonelines in the region allowed for comparisons of our respective operations. The representative of the Halifax phoneline was unable to attend, but Moncton, Fredericton, and Northern Lambda Nord were represented. We all seem to operate in the same manner: volunteer help (Fredericton has 6, Moncton 15, NLN 2); limited operating hours (Fredericton and Moncton, Tues-Wed-Thurs for two hours each night, NLN on Wednesdays only, two hours). All keep records of incoming calls and require meetings between phoneline staff and callers to be attended by two people from the group, with a third being notified of the meeting - for the protection of all involved. Only the size of

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the operation seemed to differ. Because of the large communities which the Fredericton and Moncton lines serve, their calls include numerous inquiries from high school age people; NLN's incoming calls are limited by the relatively small local calling area served by our phoneline.

By far the most interesting of the four workshops I attended was the one titled, "Gays and Lesbians in New Brunswick and a Double Lifestyle". The facilitator, Maurice Basque, is one of four researchers (two from U de Moncton, two from U de Québec à Montréal) studying the New Brunswick gay community, with an emphasis on the question of social tolerance of our lives in the province. Their research to date confirms a "double lifestyle" - (1) the Official Story - we are not married and lie about our friends, it's the story we tell at work and on the street (2) the Private Story - that which reveals our true identity as gay people, being open only to select groups. The acceptance by some heterosexuals of gay people depends upon our being viewed as "neutral" - we don't date and are not seen with the opposite sex, but we are not seen with the same gender, either. Many gay people are "living a reality which is not theirs" - gays who get married and those who fall to the pressure to play-act a role in life, a role different from the true story of who we really are. These researchers have found numerous rural gay networks throughout New Brunswick, for example the social network throughout Madawaska County -- the Edmundston-Grand Falls area. A good example is at a Labour Day party in Ste-Anne-de-Madawaska, where between 100 and 200 gaymen and lesbians will attend, all aware of the gathering through an informal network, not from any organized mailing list or group of people. These networks have existed throughout the province for many years.

During the next year, these researchers will be contacting people in these rural parts of the province to interview them. They hope to publish their findings in two-to-three years.

Maurice Basque noted that many physicians in the province are unaware of the rural networks and thus conclude that AIDS will not be as prevalent among rural gaymen as in the cities because of the lack of the rural "night life". But the opposite is true - the chances of AIDS transmission among rural gaymen is just as possible because of these social networks. Education about safe sex is important, and getting the information to these informal networks must be done.

M. Basque announced that l'Université de Moncton will be hosting a national conference on homosexuality during the October 1987 Thanksgiving Weekend. One of the presenters at this gathering will be John Boswell, author of the award-winning book, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*. More details will be forthcoming.

THE AIDS SHOW -- A 'MUST SEE' EVENT

"Artists Involved with Death and Survival", called "The AIDS Show", is a one-hour television special based on the stage production of the same name. The original play was a series of comic, dramatic, and musical sketches about AIDS. The television program combines excerpts from the play with interviews with the show's creators, backstage activities, and narration by the film makers. This highly-acclaimed presentation will be aired by Maine Public Broadcasting Network on Channel 10 in Presque Isle. Two showings have been publicized - check your local listings to see which is correct: either Friday, November 14 at 10pm or Sunday, November 16, 11pm. (MPBN - 841-1010).

PORTLAND-BOUND? - GAY-LESBIAN DANCE IN NOVEMBER

The Gay-Lesbian Alliance of the University of Southern Maine/Portland, is holding a "Chem-Free Boogie Bash" Saturday, November 22, 9pm-1am at the Chestnut Street United Methodist Church, 17 Chestnut Street; admission is \$4, which benefits the G-L-A.

ANTI-GAY VIOLENCE HEARINGS IN U.S. CONGRESS

Widespread violence against gaymen and lesbians was the subject of broad-ranging testimony presented October 9th before the House Subcommittee on Criminal Justice. Those testifying included witnesses from the law enforcement, social science, and gay rights communities. "The gay community is not only battling AIDS, but is also

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confronting a second epidemic, one that has received far less attention from our public officials. That epidemic is anti-gay violence," noted Kevin Berrill, Director of the Violence Project of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. The hearings focused on the extent and roots of anti-gay violence as well as innovative ways to tackle this growing problem. Citing a recent Task Force study, Berrill noted that "More than one in five gaymen and nearly one in ten lesbians have been physically assaulted because of their sexual orientation..." All persons testifying called upon Congress to enact legislation protecting the civil rights of lesbians and gaymen, and to develop educational programs which would challenge prejudice and foster understanding. Robert Gravel from Lewiston, Maine, testified as to the incidents involved in the attacks upon him and the subsequent killing of one of his attackers.

DAY-LONG AIDS CONFERENCE IN MAINE

Living With AIDS in Maine is the title of a conference November 20 held at Verrillo's in Portland (Exit 8, Maine Turnpike). Sponsored by The AIDS Project, the University of Maine System, the V.A. Cooperative Health Education Program, and the Maine Consortium for Health Professions Education, speakers will include physicians and social workers, and Gary Anderson, representing the Gay Community and The AIDS Project. Topics include: * An Overview of AIDS in Maine * Home Care/Community Care * Labor and Insurance * Legal Aspects and Ethics * Issues in Public Education. All interested persons are invited to attend.

HARBOR MASTERS ANNOUNCE ANNUAL GATHERING

The Portland-based Harbor Masters, Inc., a leather-levi group, will hold their fourth anniversary Friday through Sunday, November 7-9. Registration and a welcome buffet will be at Backstreet in Portland. The weekend is billed as "fun, games, parties, awards, distance by bike, and more". There will be a formal dinner on the waterfront on Saturday. "Put the clues together, and tell us 'who-dun-it' during the weekend and solve the murder mystery...Experience Gerry McKee demonstrate Maine's largest organ." The weekend cost is \$80 for members and \$85 for "G.D.Is" - this includes five meals, coffee and doughnuts, cocktails, intown motel housing (two per room), free drinks for afterhours parties, and more. HARBOR MASTERS, Inc., Box 4044, Station A, Portland 04101

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AND
GAY MEN
IN MAINE

DID YOU SEE...?

The October 24, 1986 issue of the student newspaper at the University of Maine at Presque Isle, *The University Times*, featured a two-page article, "A Primer on Homosexuality". Approved for submission by the members at the last meeting, October 18, the article was requested by the News Editor of the paper. She was concerned about the anti-gay atmosphere at the UMPI campus and wanted to spark some discussion. In addition to the appearance of this article, members of the NLN Speakers Bureau will be making a presentation to the "Human Sexuality" class at UMPI in early November.

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 - FREDERICTON: Fredericton Lesbians and Gays (FLAG), POB 1556, Station A, E3B 5G2 - FLAGline, 506/457-2156
 - ORONO: Wilde-Stein Club, Memorial Union, University of Maine 04469 - meets in Thursdays, 6-9pm in Sutton Lounge, Memorial Union Building
 - BANGOR: Bangor Area Gay-Lesbian-Straight Coalition (BAGLS), POB 1805, 04401 - meets the second Tuesday of each month, 7pm, at 87 Sunset Strip, Brewer - 989-3306
 - BANGOR: Interweave, Inc., POB 8008, 04401 - Meets 2nd and 4th Saturdays, 8pm at University College Center, Texas Avenue, Bangor - Dance and coffee house every Saturday, 9pm-1am at University College Center - \$3.00 - Information: 884-7079
 - QUEBEC: Centre homophile d'aide et de libération (CHAL), 175, Prince-Edouard, G1K 2M2, 418/523-4997
 - QUEBEC: Groupe gai de l'Université Laval (GGUL) et Groupe des femmes gaies de l'Université Laval (GFGUL), CP 2500, Pavillon Lemieux, Cité Universitaire, Ste-Foy, G1K 7P4
 - MONCTON: Gais et Lesbiennes de Moncton/Gays and Lesbians of Moncton (GIM), CP/POB 7102, Riverview E1B 1V0
 - PORTLAND: Gay/Lesbian Alliance, University of Southern Maine, 92 Bedford Street, 04102, 207/780-4085
 - PORTLAND: Harbor Masters, Inc., leather-levi group, POB 4044, 04104
 - HALIFAX: Gay Alliance for Equality (GAE), Box 3611, South Postal Station, B3J 3K6, 902/429-6969
 - NEWFOUNDLAND: Gay Association in Newfoundland (GAIN), Box 1364, Station C, St. John's, A1C 5N5
 - MONTREAL: Télegai, 514/933-2395
 - ARCHIVES FOR THE PROTECTION OF GAY HISTORY AND LITERATURE: Box 6368, Station A, Saint John, New Brunswick E2L 4R8
 - OUR PAPER: A Voice for Lesbians and Gaymen in Maine - monthly newspaper, \$12 for one year subscription, POB 10744, Portland 04104
 - MAINE LESBIAN/GAY POLITICAL ALLIANCE: POB 108, Yarmouth 04096
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- AIDS information SIDA
- AIDS-Line, information and referral service, 207/775-1267 - 1-800/851-AIDS (-2437)
 - GAY HEALTH ACTION COMMITTEE, POB 10723, Portland 04104
 - MacAIDS, the Metro Area Committee on AIDS, POB 1013, Halifax, B3J 2X1

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