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Common Circle for Human Rights, Vol.5, No.1 (March 2000)

M. Lichtman

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Common Circle for Human Rights

c/o M. Lichtman, P.O. Box 793 Belfast, Maine 04915 • 338-5889 • Vol. 5, #1 • March 2000

Campaign Kickoff on March 9!!!

At the recent CCHR Steering Committee meeting, those attending reconfirmed our commitment to focus energies in 2000 on passage of the Civil Rights law that will go to referendum this November. In order to do that we voted to form a Political Action Committee (PAC).

You are invited to an important local campaign kickoff in Belfast for the newly organized Waldo County for Equal Rights (WCER) group. A decisive victory in November will ensure that sexual orientation will be an included protected category under the Maine Human Rights Act. This bill has been especially long awaited by our gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered community. The legislature is expected to pass the amended version of L.D. 2239 "An Act to Ensure Civil Rights and Prevent Discrimination" in late February or early March.

This meeting will take place on Thursday March 9th at St. Margaret's Parish House, 90 Court Street (corner of Park St.), Belfast. Light Refreshments and music from 6:30 to 7:00 P.M. Meeting from 7:00 to 9:00 P.M. Information will be given about the civil rights bill, statewide activities and local efforts. We also want to hear your ideas and help people find out the best way that they can help the campaign. We hope to get people working locally in their own towns, identifying voters, doing education and fundraising efforts. We also need help on a county level as part of a steering committee that will help oversee the local voter identification work, education, media work, outreach and fundraising.

Please come, bring a friend. Your help is needed and deeply appreciated. If you can't come

Bill Supporters Outnumber Opponents at LD 2239 Hearing

Supporters outnumbered opponents among the three hundred people attending the February 16 legislative hearing on LD 2239 before the Judiciary Committee. LD 2239, "An Act to Ensure Civil Rights and Prevent Discrimination", amends the Maine Human Rights Act by adding "sexual orientation" to the list of prohibited bases for discrimination in the areas of employment, housing, credit and public accommodations. Senator Abromson offered an amended bill, the result of an agreement between the Roman Catholic Diocese and the Maine Lesbian Gay Political Alliance (MLGPA).

The Judiciary Committee was expected to vote on the bill at a work session scheduled Wed. February 23 at 1:30 p.m. Then the bill goes to the full legislature. Call 287-1692 for bill status; representatives at 287-1400; senators at 287-1500. Access is also available by Internet and email.

Please contact your legislators as soon as possible to express support for the amended bill.

Susan Farnsworth

but want to help please contact Lynne at 342-5017 or Mitzi at 338-5889.

A followup meeting is planned for the last week in March, focusing on Voter Identification and how to run an effective campaign. Contact above phone numbers for the date/time/place and other details.

Mitzi Lichtman

Here's my support for the Common Circle for Human Rights:

_____ \$10 _____ \$20 _____ \$35 _____ \$60 _____ \$Other _____

_____ Please contact me about helping the Common Circle in other ways.

Name _____

Phone _____ E-mail (if any) _____

Address _____

Organization/affiliation (if any) _____

Return this form to: CCHR, PO Box 793, Belfast, ME 04915, 338-5889, mitzijoy@mint.net

Common Circle Calendar

Feb. 29th - People of Faith Lobbying Day at the Statehouse in Augusta. 9:30 to 11:00 A.M. Religious/Spiritual leaders especially sought. Important to contact Ron at 941-0969 before attending.

March 9: Campaign Kickoff for Waldo County for Equal Rights at St. Margaret's Parish House, 90 Court St. (corner of Park), Belfast. 6:30 to 7 P.M. Light Refreshments and music. 7 to 9 P.M. Information sharing, brainstorming local strategies, volunteer recruitment. FMI or to help call Lynne at 342-5017.

March 13: Medicaid and Cub Care training in access to health care for children, 9 AM-noon, Belfast. For location and more information, Martin Sabol, Maine Ambulatory Care Coalition, PO Box 390, Manchester, ME 04351, 621-0677 x207.

March 18: Maine Coalition for Equal Rights - County Coordinator and Committee Member Meeting. 11:00 A.M - 1:30 P.M.. in Augusta area. Open to any interested person. At 2:0 P.M. a meeting with the MCER Executive Committee will take place. FMI contact Jim at 942-7681 or Mitzi at 338-5889.

March 21: Mid-Coast for Human Rights meeting in Thomaston, 7: 30 PM. Come to our Knox County counterpart. FMI call Mike at 354-8481.

March 28-30: Undoing Racism Workshop w/People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, East Sebago. Maine Coalition for Food Security, 871-8266 (Portland) for registration information.

March 31: Rally for a Living Wage, Capitol Building, Augusta, time TBA. Maine Rural Workers Coalition, 145 Lisbon St. #604, Lewiston 04240, 753-1922, mrwc@ime.net.

March 31: Diversity Dance and Art Raffle, 8 PM-midnight, Mr. Whoopie Band. Blue Goose in Northport on Rte. 1. Tickets \$10 for adults, \$7 for students. Tickets at Wild Rufus. Sponsored by MidCoast for Human Rights and the Diversity Committee of S.A.D. 28. FMI contact J.P. at 236-0810 Help staff a WECR table! Call Lynne 342-5017.

Maine Coalition for Equal Rights (MCER) News

On Feb. 13th I stepped down from the interim Executive Committee of MCER to focus on local efforts. The new Executive Committee will represent us well and consists of a strong core group of interim committee members including: Suzanne Brunner - 947- 6274, David Garrity - 774-5412, Ron Hersom - 941-0969, Susan Farnsworth - 626-3312 and Kevin Rubenstein - 780-5623.

This group will be working to develop a finance committee and do fundraising, do outreach, work closely with the campaign manager and maintain and develop communications with local groups. These folks are the outgrowth of numerous meetings to ensure that this campaign will be a grassroots, gay positive and educational effort. We believe that this time we will work more effectively with each other and allow for more local participation and initiative.

Let's give these folks our support and best effort. Most importantly if you can donate, the group does need immediate seed money to help hire a campaign manager and set up an office. Please make checks payable to: MCER and send to POB Box 250, 126 Western Avenue, Augusta, Maine 04330.

Mitzi Lichtman

April 8: Waldo County Child and Parent Day at Belfast Area High School, 10 A.M. to 2 P.M. To help contact 338-2200 ext. 109 or Kathy Hayes at 338-9702

April 8: MLGPA Award Banquet, 5 to 6 P.M. Cocktail Hour, 6 - Midnite dinner, awards & dance. Holiday Inn by the Bay, Spring St., Portland. Special room rates. FMI call 1-800-55-MLGPA.

April 29: HOPE Festival, 10 AM-4 PM, Brewer Auditorium. Peace and Justice Center of Eastern Maine, 170 Park St., Bangor 04401, 942-9343, peacectr.mint.net.

Lynne Kaplowitz, WCER Volunteer Coordinator

Lynne has taken on the overall responsibilities of Volunteer Coordinator for WCER. We could not find a better person for the job. She already has organized people to make individual contact with our members and other interested folks. She is already busy organizing an information and volunteer recruiting table for the Friday March 31st Diversity Dance in Northport. She will also be coordinating our local voter identification program so please contact her if you want to help or have names of friends or family who should be contacted by us. Please call her at 342-5017.

Mitzi Lichtman

Short Announcements

Save Sunday June 18th for Walk With the One You Love

Common Circle agreed to help the Maine Speakout Project organize a local version of a statewide event called Walk With The One you Love. This project was started two years ago in Portland and was organized to bring people of all sexual orientations together to walk and help move some of the attitudes that make something as basic as walking with the person you love a frightening and difficult proposition for same gender couples. Ideas include walking across the bridge to Heritage Park. If you want to help with this event please contact Mitzi at 338-5889

Community Discussions on Civil Rights

On Feb. 23rd there was a training for folks interested in leading a series of four two hour discussions over a four week period. These discussions will take place in our communities and will focus on a broad spectrum of minority communities who have struggled to gain civil rights.

Training for these discussions is being done by Sally Campbell of the Study Circle Resource Center and sponsored by the Maine Rural Network. Mitzi ~~attended~~ but is asking for some support to organize these discussions locally. Call 338-5889 if interested.

ML King Celebration in Belfast

We huddled together on a windy night in January, with a wind chill of what seemed like thirty below zero. It was the annual Martin Luther King holiday march and celebration on January 17.

Fortunately, we got our candles lit and marched quickly just a few hundred yards up Church St. from the Belfast Post Office to the First Church. Other celebrations had been held that day in Orono, Waterville, Lewiston, Portland, and other towns and cities in Maine.

Social Justice and Truth in History member London Mitchell, a former Bath Iron Works employee and civil rights advocate with the shipyard's union, spoke about his own history as an African-American in Maine and some current problems of racism that affect all Maine people.

We read excerpts from Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech and from his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." We discussed and debated civil rights, nonviolence, and what we could do to continue King's efforts for social change.

We ate cookies, had cold and hot drinks, and went home feeling a little warmer and more hopeful inside than we had earlier in the day. Thanks to Larry Hess, Percy Daley, and all the others who organized and participated in another celebration of the life of Martin Luther King Jr. in Belfast.

Larry Dansinger

Help for HOPE

The HOPE (Help Organize Peace Earthwide) Festival is the Peace and Justice Center of Eastern Maine's annual event on April 29, 2000, at the Brewer Auditorium bringing together sixty non-profit groups and well over 1,000 people. It is a free event combining entertainment, speakers, a children's program, and information on the many grassroots groups, like CCHR, doing valuable work in Eastern Maine.

Civil and human rights groups have had information tables at past HOPE Festivals. Can CCHR sponsor and help to staff a table this year, with a civil rights referendum on the horizon for November? It might be able to share cost and staffing with the Maine Coalition for Equal Rights. The festival is an excellent opportunity to reach out and find activists as well as supporters.

If you can give an hour or two to staffing the table (from 10 AM-4 PM), call Mitzi at 338-5889 or David at 338-1025. There will also be plenty of time to enjoy the festival, too!

Larry Dansinger

Contact Legislators LD2239

Please let them know you want them to vote to pass LD 2239 and put it out to a public vote. You can reach your State Senator at 1-800-423-6900 and your State Representative at 1-800-423-2900.

Our state senator Susan Longley of Waldo County, an active supporter of civil rights, has taken a position against the bill because she believes that the public should not vote on minority rights.

Rep. Donald Berry of District 109 (Swanville, Searsport, Morrill, Waldo, Lincolnville, Belmont and Searsport) - 342-5675. He's never voted for the bill.

Rep. Carol Weston of District 110 (Burnham, Freedom, Knox, Liberty, Montville, Palermo, Thorndike, Troy and Unity)-589-4481. Has stated that she will not vote for the bill.

Rep. David Lindahl of District 105 (Belfast, Isleboro and Northport)-338-1430. He has voted favorably in the past but was cautious this time "depending on the wording".

Rep. Joseph Brooks of District 107 (Brooks, Frankfort, Jackson, Monroe, Prospect, Stockton Springs and Winterport)-223-5041. He has been supportive in the past.

Please talk to these folks and let Mitzi know (338-5889) what they say about the reasons they will vote for or against this bill.

If you do talk to someone previously opposed to the bill, ask if they are aware of the changes in the bill. Let them know there's new language that makes it clear that the bill:

- *Does not grant special rights to any person or group covered by the Human Rights Act
- *Does not confer legislative approval to any person or group covered by the Act
- *Does not endorse or include sexual behavior
- *Does not protect sexual attraction to a minor by an adult
- *Does not require any school to promote or teach any sexuality or sexual orientation
- *Does not establish any affirmative action based on sexual orientation
- *Does not require or prohibit employers from providing domestic partnership benefits

Then contact the following and let us know all about your conversation with the legislator: Susan Farnsworth, MLGPA Lobbyist at 626-3312 or email to: farns@gwi.net

Mitzi Lichtman

Spotlight on WCER Steering Committee Member—Marcye

I have enjoyed my affiliation with Common Circle for the past few years, learned a lot, and look forward to working with WCER to obtain equal rights for all. I have also been focusing on conflict resolution and diversity issues in the school where I teach and have a good sample of books on lesbian/gay and related topics that are available for screening by interested individuals.

Adjusting to a lot of recent changes in my life, I am enjoying the quiet of winter.

Mitzi's note: Marcye neglects to add that she has helped maintain our data base for almost two years and our books. She also has added her special touch and thoughtfulness to our fund-raising efforts and public visibility work. Her help and appreciation has been deeply appreciated. If you wish to contact her regarding the books please leave your name and number with Mitzi at 338--5889.

David Demere at NCBI Training

Last November, I went to a 3 day Building Bridges: Leadership Training with the National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI) in Topsham with a wonderfully diverse group of about 50 people. NCBI is a nonprofit leadership training organization that is working to eliminate prejudice and intergroup conflicts in communities throughout the world. The training was geared towards doing prejudice reduction workshop, which uses personal stories (speak-outs), role-playing and one-to-one sharing.

The workshop reaffirmed my belief that every one is unique, good, doing their best and deserves love and understanding. My heart and mind were touched. I was very impressed with the leaders- Diane Gilman (Maine chapter director), and Robert Dungey from Canada, and the model.

I have been attending the statewide chapter meetings since then and will be doing a 5-7 day training with people from all over the world in April in D.C.

Thanks for helping to make it possible for me to go! Appreciatively,

David Demere