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another.

Robinson brushes aside most such letters. "I get a lot of hate mail," he said. "I just file it."

Likewise, activists lobbying for Bill C-212 are not deterred by the ferocity of the opposition they face. Debbie Hughes, a member of EGALE (Equality for Gays and Lesbians Everywhere), said her group has met all the "normal resistance," but it doesn't bother them. EGALE is an Ottawa-based lobby group whose 20-odd members have taken on most of the physical lobbying in support of Bill C-212.

"I don't see where we can lose. We have the two largest provinces protected, and we have the federal civil service protected," said Hughes. "The kind of rhetoric that's been dressed up as religious belief is still discrimination by any other name, and I think that people are smart enough to recognize this nonsense."

Nonetheless, Hughes says her group is still counting on the speedy passage of the amendment. "We would like to see this legislation in place for March," she said. Otherwise, "you run into election mode and nobody does anything that's controversial during that

**"Can you feature a fairy RCMP constable trying to arrest a lumberjack with a powder puff?" Alberta Conservative Gordon Taylor asked the Commons . . .**

period."

The ones worrying most about doing controversial things are the MPs themselves. As the divisive vote in the Ontario legislature on Bill 7 proved, a member's political stripe doesn't dictate his or her vote.

Susan Fish, one of four Conservative MPs to break ranks from her caucus and support the amended Bill 7, says Conservative principles and gay liberation are not mutually exclusive. "I believe in the principle of the dignity of the individual, which is a Conservative belief," said Fish, who will try to influence federal Tories when debate on C-212 begins. (Fish, one of the most outspoken advocates in the legislature, was heavily lobbied before the amendment vote, receiving about 2,500 letters.)

For his part, Phil Gillies, the Brantford MPP who joined Fish in supporting the amendment to the Ontario Human Rights Code, bore a lot of jokes when he addressed EGALE, about spending a "chilly winter in Brantford."

"I know of colleagues of mine who would like to have supported it (the amendment to Bill 7), but because of the incredible barrage of opposition in their constituencies, they decided not to," Gillies said.

The New Democratic and Liberal parties are officially on record as supporting Robinson's amendment, with a few exceptions, including Liberal John Nunziata. The Conservative caucus will likely not vote as a block, given pronounced divisions between key Tories. While the vote of anti-gay backbenchers such as Gordon Taylor, Ron Stewart, Jim Jepson and John Reimer is predictable, many other MPs will vote carefully on amending the Act.

Gay and lesbian activists say support in public opinion polls for gay rights may sway the votes some undecided voters, while fear of a backlash in constituencies may prevent others from casting support.

There also appears to be a split in Cabinet. Health and Welfare Minister Jake Epp is an Evangelical follower (and appears on a cover of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada's magazine, *Faith Today*), and may meet opposition from Red Tories like International Trade Minister Pat Carney, who first introduced a gay rights amendment to the human rights act while the Tories were in opposition in 1980.

And if the amendment eventually does pass, will the gay rights battle be won? Hughes says it's hard to ask for more at the moment. Protecting sexual orientation in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms would be best, but Robinson's attempt to include such protection during the constitutional battles of

**"Our contention is that there is no need to group homosexuals into special categories. You wouldn't put obese people into a special group . . ."**

1981 was voted down in committee by 22 to two. Nonetheless, a Charter case being fought right now by a man demoted from the RCMP for being gay might accomplish that.

In other parts of the country, the Yukon Territory is introducing a comprehensive human rights code which includes sexual orientation as a prohibited grounds for discrimination, and Manitoba Attorney-General Roland Penner is planning to introduce similar legislation this spring.

Although no amount of legislation will change deep-seated attitudes towards gays and lesbians, it can still have a positive effect on how legislators behave, says Hughes.

**The struggle for gay rights is simply a struggle for human rights.**

"If sexual orientation was protected (in the Human Rights Act), would it have been possible for an MP to stand up in the House of Commons and call a person a powder puff? Could they do it to a black person? Would they do it with the legislation?" she said. With an amendment to the act, "I don't think everybody would accept it, but I think people would think twice about making derogatory remarks."

Hughes is disturbed by how her group's goals have been called anti-family and anti-social, and emphasizes that the struggle for gay rights is simply a struggle for human rights.

"Some of us are married and have our own children. When people say we don't have family values, it's a lie. We were not hatched from dinosaur eggs. We are the children of people who gave us family values."

**Thank-you to the contributors:**

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## Reflections . . .

What really felt good was the total honesty I could now display with everyone. I no longer had to censor my views, experiences, emotions and feelings. I could be my own person and not have to bother with lies about my relationships.

*Ian Patterson, Harry Ainlay student on coming out in high school.*

If a man also lie with mankind as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death: their blood shall be upon them.

*Leviticus 20:13*

The love that dare not speak its name.

*Oscar Wilde*

The love that won't shut up.

*Mike Nichols*

The only unnatural sex act is one that can't be performed.

*Alfred Kinsey*

Some people say, "If you have homosexual teachers, you're automatically going to have homosexual students." I don't know about that theory. Because if it were true, today I would be a nun.

*Mark Russell*

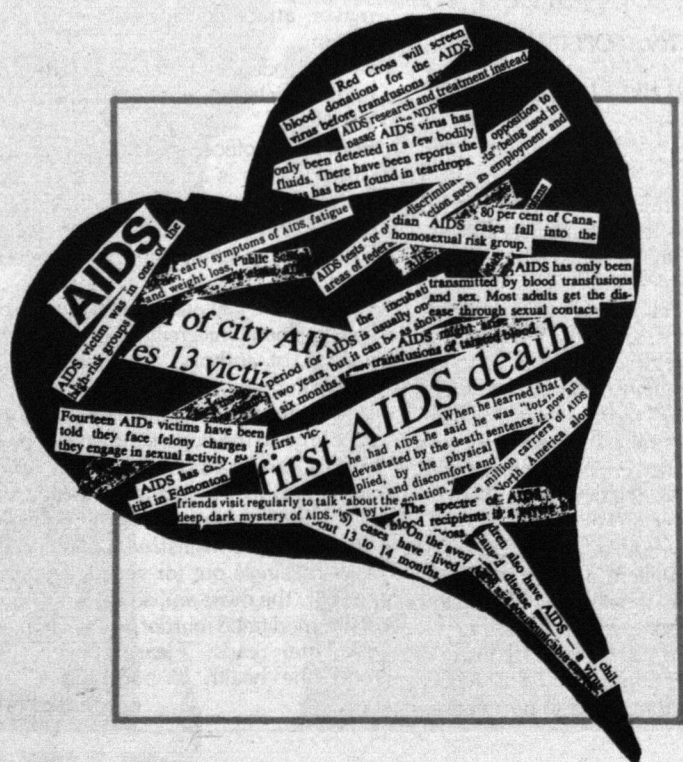
The liberation of homosexuals can only be the work of homosexuals themselves.

*Kurt Hiller*

Homosexuality is assuredly no advantage, but it is nothing to be ashamed of, no vice, no degradation, it cannot be classified as an illness.

*Sigmund Freud*

# The Normal Heart addresses AIDS



by Matt Hays

*The Normal Heart*, Larry Kramer's controversial play about AIDS is being produced as a Master of Fine Arts directing project at the U of A.

Thomas Usher must direct a series of plays for his MFA program requirement and chose *The Normal Heart* because he felt it was a strong character play.

"It develops very strong characters who have to interact. It's a very realistic piece — not an expressionistic piece at all. My work with the actors is very important. At this stage in my development I think that's good for me."

Usher believes that *As Is*, the other well-known Broadway play, is a better work.

"As Is" is written better. It's certainly much more theatrical in that it uses the sense of the theatre and draws us into it that way. *Heart* is a very linear episodic piece that takes us from point A to point B quite clearly. It's very pedantic. Kramer takes a lot of time to say some very simple things."

Usher and his cast have done a lot of research.

"We pulled out a lot of articles from that era. *The Normal Heart* is a very chronological piece in that it deals with the epidemic as it was first discovered in New York — the stigma and

panic that occurred then, in 1982, and for the next 3 years. The play deals with the initiation of the Gay Men's Health Crisis Centre. In this respect it's a very historical project. We interviewed a few Gay men about what it was like to be Gay, what it entails as far as lifestyle changes, if any, what it means to be in a homophobic society, and how people react to you — the whole idea of trying to be normal — as the title of the play suggests."

Usher worries that the issue of AIDS will eclipse the theatre project as a whole.

"My main concern is to put on a piece of theatre which is both challenging to me and effective in its message. The fact that it happens to be so issue-related today, is an added bonus and yet it is also a strain. It's important when you're choosing a play like this to choose one that means something to you. Rather than doing a Williams or Pinter, I found a live concern that — whether it effects me or not — is a very real issue and I have concerns over it."

Usher states that the fact the play is occurring in conjunction with GALOC's Gay Awareness Week is "sheer coincidence".

The award winning play *The Normal Heart* will run this Saturday and Sunday in the Fine Arts Building. Tickets are free, and are available in the Drama office on the third floor.