World Naked Bike Ride ...

Commentary by Mark Storey
Board Member, Naturist Action Committee

Summer is here, which means you are likely hearing about a regional World Naked Bike Ride. Initiated in 2004 by Conrad Schmidt of Vancouver, British Columbia, WNBR has shifted somewhat from its original dual mission of celebrating the inherent goodness of the human body and urging people to reduce their dependency on fossil fuels, to the latter coupled with advocacy of bicycling as transportation. Nudity remains the key feature for nearly every participant, even though clothes-freedom is now more of a tactic than a goal. Most events encourage cyclists to ride "bare-as-you-dare," with everyone welcome to participate no matter what their comfort level with public nudity.

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... and its backlash?

MADISON, Wisconsin - Madison Assistant City Attorney Jennifer Zilavy insists that there's absolutely no correlation between Madison's World Naked Bike Ride event and the anti-nudity ordinance she drafted at the request of the police. The ordinance, which Zilavy presented as a "tool" to control "deviants," does address the urban evils of voyeurism and public masturbation, but at its center is a ban on public nudity. The city has never had such an ordinance.

Nor has it felt the need for one. But after police cited ten cyclists for participating in the 2010 WNBR event in Madison, the City Attorney's office found itself unable to prosecute expeditiously. The charge against one participant has been dropped, while charges for the remainder have been left in limbo.

As introduced by Alder Paul Skidmore, the Madison ordinance sought to replace the brief, existing "exposure of a person" ordinance with a wordy three-part prohibition.

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The Naturist Society early on applauded the international rides, acknowledging that though the events might roil the political waters in some regions, their artful, good-natured fun has been consistent with thoughtful naturist activism. Although only a portion of the naked cyclists consider themselves naturists, members of TNS and other naturist/nudist groups have fit in well with the colorful throngs taking it to the streets.

The Naturist Action Committee has carefully and frequently considered the rewards and repercussions of WNBR. It's fair to say that NAC's activists reflect a healthy range of views on the topic. Having participated myself, I'm among those who staunchly defend the ride, and I've been vocal in encouraging other naturists to enjoy the experience, while contributing to the incremental advancement of body acceptance in North America.

Still, NAC knows full well that when legal rights are used or anti-nudity laws are challenged, political backlash is a possibility. It has happened before that an individual or group has some fun injecting non-sexualized nudity into the public sphere, and knee-jerk legislators have responded with a new ordinance or statute banning all forms of nudity in public. Those who have enjoyed the unclothed public fun then call out to NAC to save the day. The regional NAC board member sighs, knowing that his or her life is going to be far more interesting for the next several months.

However, if we don't use what rights we have to be nude, we've for all intents and purposes given them away. Naturists need to support and take part in well-planned activities that apply steady pressure against social unease with human bodies. Frequently, NAC must ready itself for what is often a thankless and under-supported job of responding to anti-nudity legislation precipitated by the actions of other naked activists.

WNBR Commentary  cont'd from page 1

NAC board member Mark Storey participated in the 2011 Portland WNBR. He counted approximately 100 riders (most nude) at the height of the 20-mile, 3-hour ride. The ride wound through all four main portions of the city: downtown, the Rose Quarter, residential areas, across bridges, alongside US Navy ships and cheering sailors, etc. Storey writes: “Perfect weather for nude cycling. No police hassles; police cars with their lights flashing ‘corked’ streets for us the first half of the ride, allowing us all to get through light signals and minimize traffic disturbance. A patrol car followed us for the first few miles seemingly to assure our safety in traffic. The VAST majority of people cheered us on, or were seemingly indifferent to the nudity. The group passed by a bike rental store in downtown Portland, and the owner stripped naked hurriedly, jumped on one of his rental bikes, and joined us for a few blocks. NO PROBLEMS!” The picture above of Storey taking a break was taken at the entrance to a large street fair the riders passed. No one in or entering the fair seemed to care that 60-100 naked people were standing in the shade by the entrance sipping water.

There's probably not much to be done about this, as more people will want to enjoy a seemingly safe naked group outing than attend a clothed city council meeting primed with anti-nudity zealots. But NAC must reject the option of discouraging naked folk from doing anything that might cause a political ripple. Unless we want to become a naturist trade organization merely supporting the status quo, we must encourage creative, artful, playful, imaginative events that bring society into contact with the full human form. That will mean encouraging thoughtful actions by those who use nudity in public in ways consistent with naturism, even if those doing so are not self-identified as naturists or if the actions are not directed at specific naturist agendas.

When a legislative problem arises, NAC will respond, with the support of naturists and others. We must do no less.
SALEM, Oregon - Senate Joint Resolution 28 has died in the Oregon legislature, without ever having been scheduled for a vote by the chair of the committee to which it had been assigned.

Had it been successful, SJR 28 would have placed a question on a statewide ballot in the next Oregon election, asking voters to amend the portion of the state constitution that protects freedom of expression. While retaining many of Oregon’s existing protections, the amendment would have removed certain protections relating to nudity. Specifically, the change would have allowed any county, municipality or district to create its own local definition of “nudity” for use in local zoning regulations.

SJR 28 was introduced on February 17 by State Senator Mark Hass, a second-term Democrat lawmaker and former TV news reporter from Portland. The resolution had support in the House from Rep. Tobias Read (D-Beaverton), Rep. Jeff Barker (D-Aloha) and Rep. Andy Olson (R-Albany). All are veteran lawmakers; Barker and Olson have law enforcement backgrounds.

The proposed resolution garnered backing from the Oregon Family Council and from neighborhood organizations. Many supporters had allowed themselves to become convinced that specifically excluding nudity from certain protected rights in the state constitution would be the only way to keep adult entertainment establishments out of their neighborhoods and away from their children. In addition to SJR 28, Sen. Hass also introduced SJR 37, another constitutional amendment measure with a similar goal, but a different approach. NAC considered SJR 37 to be a lesser threat.

On March 14, 2011, Naturist Action Committee Executive Director Bob Morton called Government Affairs Chair David Graber of the American Association of Nude Recreation. Both organizations had been following SJR 28 since its introduction, but with a scheduled increase in legislative committee activity on the measure, it was time to shift to a higher gear. Morton proposed to Graber that their respective organizations should work together on the Oregon matter.

Graciously accepting in principle NAC’s suggestion of cooperation, AANR’s Graber wished to see further details before making a commitment. It was agreed that NAC would do the work of interviewing legislative Oregon lobbyists and qualifying one for the joint effort. AANR would give its final word on its participation when factors like cost could be more closely pinned down.

NAC understood the need to move quickly. When the time came to act on hiring the lobbyist, AANR said that it needed an additional ten days to consider the matter of sharing the expense of a lobbyist, before saying yes or no. NAC saw the delay as placing its action outside the time frame for effectiveness, and Morton told Graber that NAC had to take AANR’s withheld consent as a “no.” NAC would hire and pay for the lobbyist, without the help of a partner. There would be, Morton pointed out, other opportunities to work together.

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Victory in Oregon!
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NAC had chosen its lobbyist carefully. NAC lobbyist Jonathan Manton had been the campaign chair for State Senator Floyd Prozanski (D-Eugene). Sen. Prozanski is Chair of the Oregon Senate Judiciary Committee, to which SJR 28 was assigned. NAC had found the choke point for the resolution and had intentionally applied its effort and resources there.

Sen. Prozanski never scheduled SJR 28 for a work session or a vote in his committee. It was no accident or coincidence that the measure died there. As NAC Executive Director Morton pointed out, “Legislation like this doesn’t just ‘go away.’”

The Portland Mercury sent out questionnaires to all state legislators and legislative staff asking them to score thirty-eight Oregon lobbyists on their integrity, commitment to public interest and effectiveness. Jonathan Manton, NAC’s lobbyist, received the highest ranking in each of the categories.

Meanwhile, AANR’s Graber wrote in June: “[t]he Naturist Action Committee and AANR considered having a jointly funded lobbyist, but because of tremendous work and dedication of AANR-Northwest, AANR did not need to hire a paid lobbyist.”

The testimony and letters of AANR and AANR-Northwest deserve appreciation. With the exception of offering West Virginia’s flawed exemption language as an appropriate model, what AANR did is the same sort of thing NAC frequently does in legislative situations. In this case, however, it became clear to NAC that letters and public comments would not be enough. Ultimately, the difference was made by NAC’s grasp of the situation and its choice of a well qualified and well placed lobbyist. The reason that “AANR did not need to hire a paid lobbyist” is that NAC did hire the professional lobbyist, and NAC paid the entire invoice.

An important message
As you've looked through this Newsletter, you've seen the many ways in which NAC helps naturists - time and time again.

... Now it's time for YOU to HELP NAC.
The Naturist Action Committee exists to advance and protect the rights and interests of naturists, and that's exactly what NAC has been doing. Understandably, recent vigorous activist work has depleted NAC’s coffers.

NAC needs your help NOW!
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Thank you for choosing to make a difference!

On NAC’s RADAR: DALLAS COUNTY, Iowa - There's no law prohibiting mere nudity along the rural Raccoon River, so that's where thoughtful folks go to skinny-dip. County authorities intend to reward the freedom seekers by passing a county-wide nudity ban. WRECK BEACH, British Columbia - Pushing barges and vessels loaded with jet fuel along the sensitive Fraser River Estuary and right past clothing-optional Wreck Beach? Gee, what could go wrong? Look for these and more in the August issue of The Newsletter.
Madison Ordinance cont’d from page 1

Presently, Madison’s “Exposure of a Person” ordinance says: “It shall be unlawful for any person to make any indecent or immoral exhibition or exposure of her/his person or to cause or to procure any person to do so.” Indecency and immorality are left undefined.

Section 1 of the new ordinance provides definitions. Nudity, it says, means: “the showing of the human male or female genitals, pubic area, or buttocks with less than fully opaque covering, the showing of the female breast with less than a fully opaque covering of any part of the nipple, or the showing of covered male genitals in a discernibly turgid state.”

Beyond the questionably enforceable inclusion of buttocks, note the ban on the breasts of women, but not of men.

Section 2 was the real threat to naturists. *Whoever does any of the following is guilty of public indecency:* 
- (b) Publicly and indecently exposes genitals or pubic area.
- (c) Appears publicly in a state of nudity.

Once again, “indecently” in Section 2(b) is a fuzzy qualifier. Perhaps even worse, Section 2(c) is a “strict liability” law, one in which an individual’s intent does not matter. Locally, conviction under the proposed ordinance would require a $500 “deposit,” with increasing fines for subsequent convictions. However, someone who was convicted just once under the Madison ordinance would automatically be a sex offender upon moving to (or just making an extended visit to) a place like Boulder, Colorado.

Among members of the public opposing the ordinance and speaking against it were riders associated with the Madison WNBR. A group that met with Madison Mayor Paul Soglin on the topic of nudity and disorderly conduct included Bike Ride activists, as well as naturist activist Jim Dickey. NAC Area Rep Claudette Richards worked behind the scenes and at Mazo Beach, where she raised the awareness of naturist volunteers like Nicholas Wootton, who spoke to the City’s Public Safety Review Committee, as well as to the Madison Common Council.

The activism paid off. At the July 5 meeting of the Common Council, Alder Mark Clear successfully amended the ordinance to remove Section 2(c) altogether. An amendment by Alder Satya Rhodes-Conway was passed, adding the requirement that exposure must be done with lewd and lascivious intent to be a violation of the ordinance. The ordinance was passed, as amended.

At a June 28, 2011, meeting of the Kauai Planning Commission, nudity opponent Bruce Laymon sought to defend his fencing of the traditional trail leading to Larsen's Beach on the Hawaiian island of Kauai. Speaking of NAC Area Representative Richard Spacer, Laymon told the commission: "He's a known, worldwide nudist activist."

In the image above, which was taken from the web site of the Planning Commission, Laymon holds up a copy of the Newsletter from June, 2011. Spacer can be seen over his left shoulder, seated in the audience.

Before donating his copy of the Newsletter to the Commission for inclusion in the record of the meeting, Laymon had altered it. "Out of respect for you folks, we blotted out this," Laymon said, referring to Spacer's nude picture and the layer of WiteOut correction fluid that Laymon said he and his sister had used to paint over certain portions of it.

Of course, the Newsletter article that accompanied Spacer's "offensive" image also included accounts of how Laymon had illegally thumbed his nose at citizens and officials alike. At the Planning Commission hearing, Laymon read from the article. While claiming no specific inaccuracies at all, he nevertheless omitted large portions. There's no telling what "offensive" passages of text he and his sister had simply "blotted out" before Laymon delivered the doctored document to be a part of the permanent record of the meeting.

Naturists will not be surprised to learn that the Naturist Action Committee subsequently sent the Kauai Planning Commission an unbowedlerized copy of the Newsletter's June issue.

Find an archived copy of the June Newsletter at: www.naturistaction.org/newsletter
NAC Update
California Parks

SACRAMENTO, California - Naturists continue to press the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and the State Park and Recreation Commission to consider the designation of clothing-optional areas in units of the park system. The idea is not a new one, and existing regulations allow DPR to set aside areas for nude recreational use.

Getting the attention of officials at California Parks is frequently difficult, especially at a time in which those same officials have been forced to announce the budget-driven closure of seventy state parks. Nevertheless, armed with copies of supportive letters and e-mails from hundreds of naturists and others who had written to the Commission in response to a NAC Action Alert, Naturist Action Committee board member Allen Baylis and NAC Area Rep Donald Stanton addressed the Commission at its most recent regular meeting on July 8. NAC has officially petitioned for the setting aside of clothing-optional areas.

DPR continues citing park-goers for nudity at San Onofre State Beach and elsewhere, and NAC keeps getting the tickets dismissed. NAC’s defense of naturists is now 11 for 11.

DPR’s insistence on legal confrontation while it ignores requests to designate is a policy that seems unresponsive to the public it exists to serve.

In the 2009 NEF California Poll, 62 percent of Californians agreed that DPR should exercise its authority to designate areas for clothing-optional recreation. The public’s preference is to move forward, and NAC has proposed a way to do so.