

Feelings of relief expressed at post-election rally

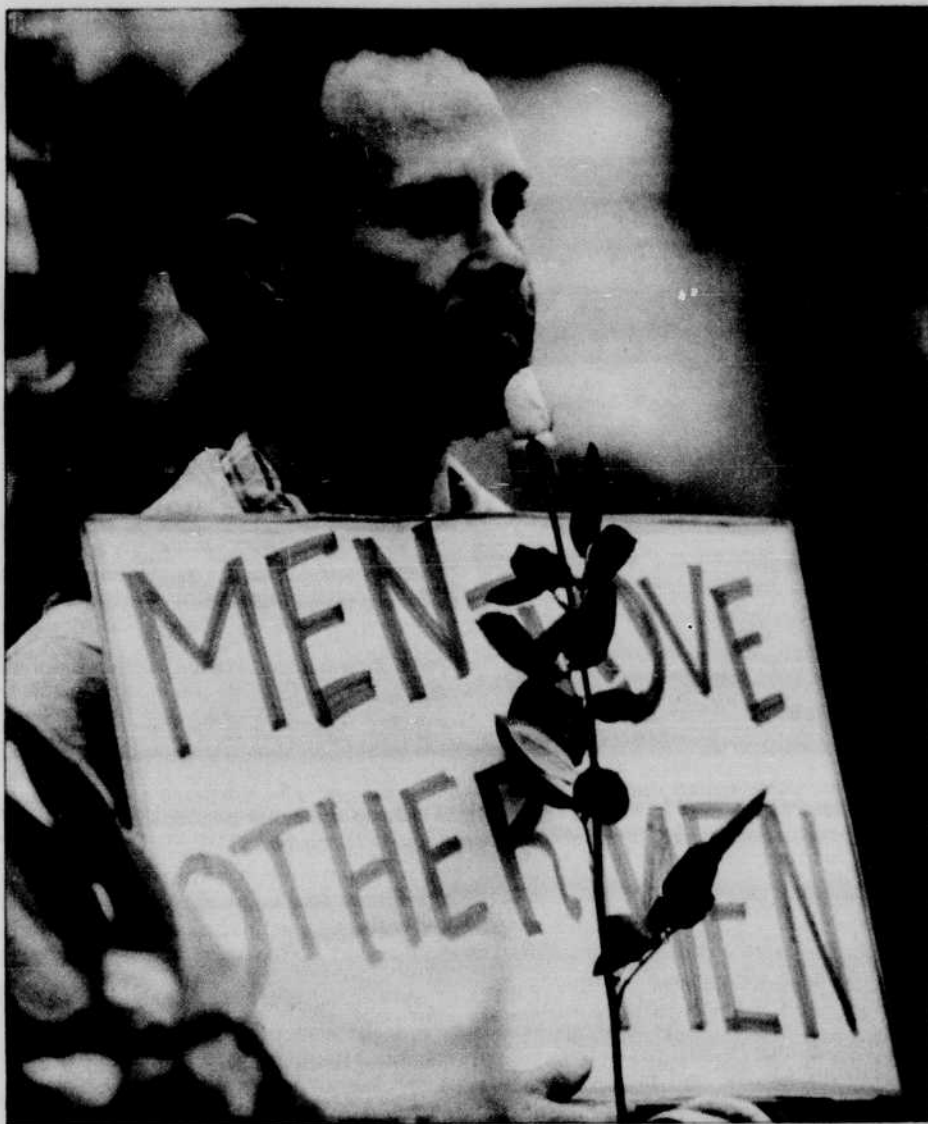


Photo by Michael Shindler

Participants at a rally in the EMU courtyard Wednesday expressed relief at the failure of Ballot Measure 9, but warned the OCA may attempt a similar measure in 1993.

By Tammy Batey
Emerald Associate Editor

Voters have defeated Ballot Measure 9, but the work to get gay-rights laws passed is just beginning, speakers said at a post-election rally Wednesday.

About 60 people cheered, clapped and chanted in the EMU Courtyard to celebrate the defeat of Measure 9.

Measure 9 would have amended the Oregon Constitution to label homosexuality "abnormal" and "perverse."

Marlene Drescher, director of the Office of Student Advocacy, said if Measure 9 had passed, she would have put a sign up on her office door that would have read: "This office will not abide by any law that promotes, encourages or facilitates discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation."

But Drescher said she was very excited such action wasn't necessary.

"We won. Let's hear it. We won, and that's what is important," she said. "Love, courage and intelligence won over hate, fear and ignorance."

The event was billed as a post-election rally where students could voice their reactions to the election results, especially Measure 9.

Only one speaker didn't specifically mention Measure 9. Sally Bryan, a Unitarian minister, said she was happy the Democratic ticket won its bid for the presidency.

"I think I speak for everyone when I voice my sense of relief, joy and anticipation of the future," she said. "Some very good candidates were elected and some very bad measures were defeated.

With the election of Bill Clinton and Al Gore, I have hope for the first time in 12 years."

A new democratic president means "we can get legislation that is pro-gay, pro-lesbian passed," said Jennifer Bills, the 1990-91 ASUO president.

The months preceding this election have been a "living hell" for many Measure 9 opponents, said Scott Seibert, treasurer of Oregonians United Together. In contrast, November is a month for celebration.

"I think it's a great month to have Thanksgiving in," he said. "We've built something that will be around longer than we are."

Oregon Citizens Alliance members say they'll put a measure similar to Measure 9 on the ballot by the end of 1993, Seibert said, and suggested gay and lesbian people can combat the OCA best by coming out.

"Being open about who you are is just the most important thing you can do for the next two years," he said.

Tiare Mathison-Bowie, minister of the Presbyterian Campus Ministry, said Measure 9 did cause some good in the community. The measure united many people and groups who are normally divided.

"Anytime you have the Catholic bishops and the LGBA on the same side of the issue, it is a coalition of uncommon alliance," she said. "What we have a chance to do is to create an open community that is tolerant."

The community must continue to stick together, however, if it is to defeat any other OCA-initiated measures, Mathison-Bowie said.

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haviors that do not warrant "special minority privileges," but the group does not object to people engaging in them "in the privacy of their homes and within the confines of the law," Neet said.

Neet said the OCA's attempt to "draw a line between private and public policy was misconstrued in news coverage."

The media were "by and large against us," and the measure's opposition received twice as much coverage as the OCA, Neet said.

"I found that very frustrating because I never had a chance to counter what they said," Neet said.

The OCA will propose another initiative to amend the Constitution because any successful measure would be more permanent than a lesser law.

"It doesn't do us any good to go to statutory law because the Legislature will just overturn it," Neet said.

Neet said the OCA will rewrite the measure, removing what they believe voters found objectionable. She said it is too early to determine the content of the new measure because the group's leadership has yet to discuss possible changes.

"With revamping the measure, we'll do a lot better in the next election round," Neet said.

Peggy Norman, campaign manager of the No on 9 Committee, said she's surprised the OCA announced its plans to propose another measure so soon after Measure 9's defeat.

"I think it's outrageous and really disrespectful of the voters," Norman said.

Norman said she doesn't believe the margin of defeat contributed to the OCA's decision to propose a new measure.

"Frankly, I guess if we had beaten the OCA 99-1, the OCA still would not have gotten the message," Norman said. "I guess they're just not amenable to logic."

Norman said the No on 9 Committee formed for the sole purpose of defeating the initiative and had no plans to function beyond Nov. 3. She said the committee will meet next week to discuss the OCA's announcement to propose another measure.

Neet said the OCA will be more successful with the new measure because she believes Measure 9's support extended beyond right-wing Christians.

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