

EDITORIAL

Ballot Measure 19 invites censorship

Ballot Measure 19, which would authorize state and local governments to prohibit any materials deemed "obscene," opens the door to state-sanctioned censorship and should not be approved by voters.

The Oregon Supreme Court has held that under the state constitution, no form of expression may be prohibited on the grounds of obscenity, including child pornography.

That means that the Oregon Constitution provides more freedom than the U.S. Constitution, a fact Measure 19 supporters have correctly pointed out. They also are correct when they claim that many other states have passed restrictions that allow the government to prohibit obscene materials.

But they are incorrect when they state that these limitations are a good thing.

There is no doubt that this measure would result in censorship. That is precisely what is intended. It would allow government to make decisions about what adults should be allowed to read, see or watch.

The list of books, plays, movies and artwork that have been deemed "obscene" by one government agency or another could fill this page: *Clan of the Cave Bear*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, the movie *Romeo and Juliet*, even Michaelangelo's statue of David. Many items have been censored even here in Oregon, where the state constitution ought to have protected them.

Passing Measure 19 would only encourage more attempts at censorship, by giving the impression that such attempts would be successful.

Measure 19 advocates argue that their definition of "obscenity" would be whatever definition the U.S. Supreme Court offers. But that definition is not hard and fast, and we can hardly expect to be able to just call up the justices and ask about a particular book or magazine. Librarians have better things to do than fight endless censorship crusades in court.

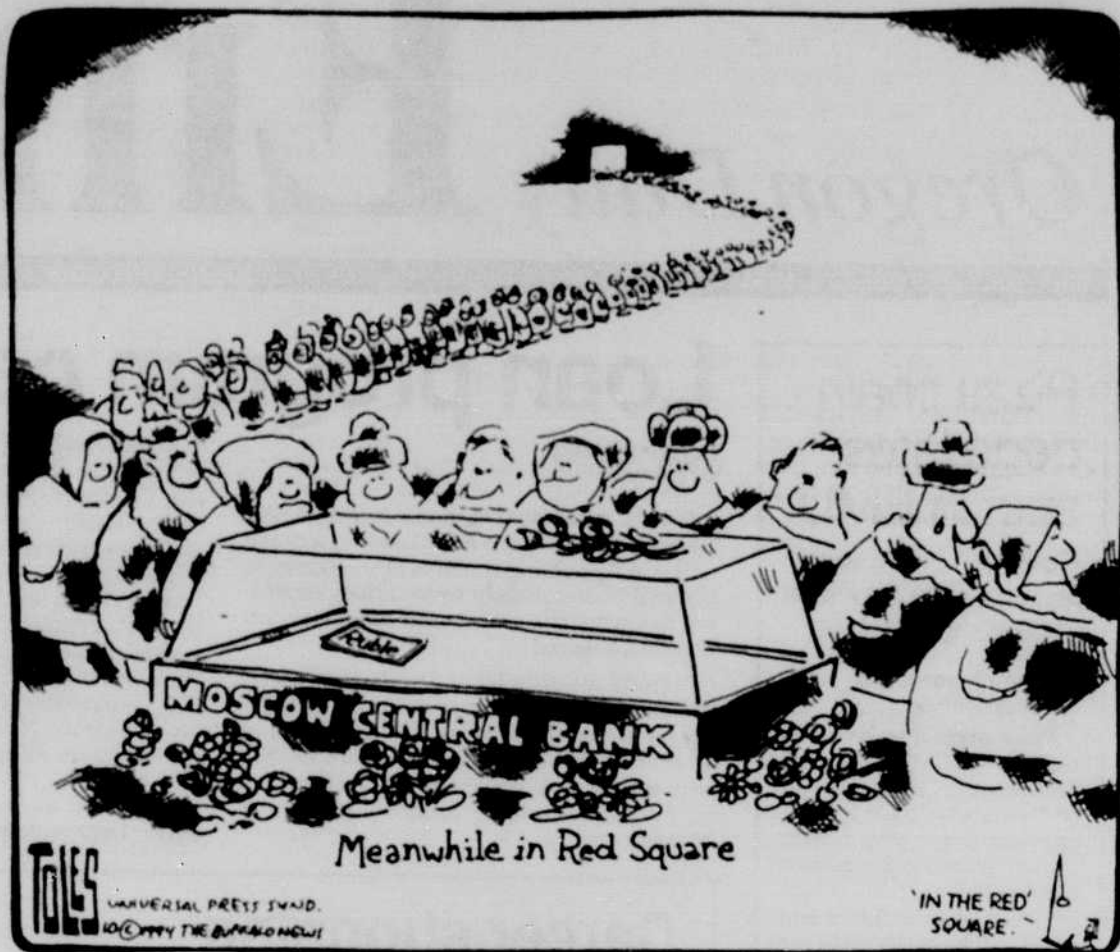
Measure 19 supporters are banking on a couple of things to improve their measure's chances at the polls.

For one, they know that many people believe that pornography causes sexual crimes. And while a high percentage of sexual offenders do possess pornography, so do many law-abiding citizens who would never consider such violence. There is simply no proven correlation between porn use and sex crimes.

And supporters of Measure 19 know that most Oregonians are against child pornography, and that is why such materials are specifically mentioned in the measure.

But the production and possession of child pornography are already crimes. It is against the law to use a child in a display of sexual activity, or to visually record any sexual acts involving children. It is also illegal to duplicate or distribute child pornography. That's the law, and that's enough.

Measure 19 does more than authorize the government to prohibit child pornography; it also gives the green light to outlaw any materials deemed "obscene," even for adults in their own homes. And that's too much.



OPINION

Statistics easily compromised

In responding to Brian Womack's column (*ODE* Oct. 14), I would simply like to defend my views concerning the treatment of homosexuals. Their treatment in the recently published sex survey still concerns me.

I am not necessarily calling into doubt the ability of the researchers who conducted the survey, but it is important to question what implications their results might have. Those implications include whether or not Womack himself has some politics that don't fit the data that we have been given by this survey.

If 4.7 percent of homosexuality prevalence rates were taken from male prostitutes, and 20 to 25 percent of the sampling came from prison inmates, why is that a problem? Are prisoners and male-prostitutes not "real" homosexuals? Are they somehow inferior or not "fully" gay because they are in prison, or engaging in illegal activity?

I am not Stephen Hawking, but I am sure that even he would not understand how that logic is "skewing" the data.

I am very concerned with Womack's perceptions that substantial anti-homosexual sentiments do not exist. Portland and Eugene aside, Oregon is still very conservative.

Do you remember what city lies just across the Willamette River from us? The same one that passed a certain anti-homosexual measure just about a year ago?

It is true that the majority of counties that passed Ballot Measure 9 were in rural Eastern Oregon, but the problem isn't really that far from home.

The OCA is a very real threat to civil rights in Oregon. The same state in which a new measure is on the Nov. 8 ballot that would set back the civil rights of a substantial group of people several decades.

Ask any gay person. They'll tell you just how accepted they feel in Oregon.

It is because of groups like the OCA that events such as Coming



PAUL VAN SICKLE

Out Day have become necessary. If people feel discriminated against, to the point that they are scared to admit they are homosexual, something needs to be done to make sure they feel comfortable being themselves. No one should be committed to living as someone they are not - for example, straight - if they are not.

Yes, I did go to school on Tuesday. I thought National Coming Out Day was an important step towards the acceptance of homosexuals in our area. I didn't feel guilty about not being homosexual. I am sorry if you did. But giving gay people a format in which they can speak out and be heard, without being threatened, shouldn't make anyone feel uncomfortable about their sexual orientation. It was intended to make everyone feel more comfortable with everyone's sexuality.

The pro-homosexual movement has brought on some important changes, only palpable in recent years. The film *Philadelphia*, is a good example. No film chronicling the efforts of a gay man to save his job and his dignity would have been possible in the 1940s when the Kinsey report was published.

We have been witnessing a change in public tolerance toward gay people, which has never before been seen in this country. We should be grateful that such positive change is happening at all, not feeling guilty or frightened.

It's true, I am concerned with the reporting of the number of homosexuals in this country. Low percentages give anti-gay

promoters a dangerous weapon with which to squash further gay-rights advances. I don't promote the use of faulty data to further one's cause, whether you are for or against the gay movement, but who does it hurt more?

People working for gay rights aren't hurting anyone. Contrary to what the OCA might have you believe, no one's children is going to be corrupted and no one is going to hell on account that they believe gay people are humans.

Conversely, those who work against the gay movement, armed properly, could take away rights that have supposedly been given to us unconditionally. Millions of people could have the right to acceptance taken away because of some misused statistics.

You are partly right, Brian. I do tend to look at those statistics that meet my politics with a little more favor.

However, statistics are an incredibly dangerous tool. As the potent and fallible thing that statistics are, we should always be wary of the information they portray. Statistics can be made to show anything or favor anybody the user desires. No statistic should be taken lightly.

I am for gay rights. I admit it. I want gay people to be accepted in our society as equals.

I want them to be able to lead productive, independent lives free from prosecution. I want homosexuals to be able to get a job when they are deserving, or a place to live if they need one. I want gay people to be able to walk down the street holding hands without worrying if they will be killed that evening.

Homosexuality is such a tricky thing to define, no matter what the statistics show. It all depends on who the individuals feel they are, not what the newspaper numbers tell them.

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