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E D I T O R I A L

2001: A Reagan Court?

by Jay Brown

For the first time in recent American political history, appointments to the Supreme Court are emerging as a key issue in a presidential campaign.

Only twice in this century — Franklin D. Roosevelt and before him, William Howard Taft — has a president had the opportunity to make so many appointments in a single term.

Five of the current justices are over the age of 74, and because of the possibility of shaping the court for a generation, Supreme Court appointments, next to arms control, will affect the nation's future more than any other issue.

The 1984 election will determine a president whose term will last until January 20, 1989, when five of the current nine members will be octogenarians. Chief Justice Warren Burger and Justice Lewis F. Powell Jr. are 76; Justices Harry A. Blackmun and Thurgood Marshall are 75; Justice William F. Brennan is 77.

Ronald Reagan, if elected, would undoubtedly make appointments which would be ideologically rigid and which would imperil the integrity of the court. Three of the justices over the age of 74 — Justices Blackmun, Brennan and Marshall — constitute the core of the dwindling

liberal wing of the court.

There is no reason to believe that a Reagan Court would be anything but conservative, but it could also be radical, discarding long settled legal doctrines in a constitutional disaster unknown in American judicial history.

Reagan's one appointment, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, the youngest member of the court, has shown the narrowness of the Reagan philosophy by constantly voting with the conservative bloc.

An example of the kind of Supreme Court nominee in a Reagan second term is his nomination of White House Counselor Edwin W. Meese III to succeed William French Smith as U.S. attorney general. Meese's name has been floating around Washington recently as a probable Supreme Court appointee. Meese is unacceptable for every reason one could think of — lack of judicial experience, the rigid ideology of his opposition to basic legal rights and his statements about the rights and interests of poor people.

A Reagan Court has the potential of crippling social change for a generation. No court should be stacked in any philosophical direction because that would pervert democracy. The Supreme Court should be a panel of many political views; a Reagan Court would be narrow, ideologically rigid and out of the mainstream of traditional judicial policies.

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LETTERS

Dear *Just Out*,

Finally, a program upon television that didn't totally burden the lesbian/gay lifestyle with yet another homophobic stereotype — the "26th Annual Grammy Awards," telecast February 28th at 8 pm. Hooray for the performances of Eurythmics' Annie Lennox and Culture Clubs' Boy George, for not being afraid to be themselves and bring into the music world a new edge of vitality and raw energy.

I jumped for joy when George's words rang out after receiving his Grammy last night: "You have good taste . . . and know a good drag queen when you see one," closing with a wink and kiss to the camera which I'm sure ruffled a few feathers last night. And Annie Lennox coming onstage in full drag and reminiscent of Elvis in a GQ suit — magnificence in itself. Funny, in rehearsal she had orange hair . . .

Most inspiring, poignant and hardhitting, the cast of "La Cage aux Folles" with "I am what I am." Bravo to all of you. Your outspokenness and determination gave myself and I'm sure many of others a new feeling — hope. Please print this in your letter section. I hope it will inspire others as I myself have been inspired. There's a light . . .

In Sisterhood,
Kathy
Portland, OR

P.S. So ironic that such a giant step was taken in hope of equality, while at the same time Eddie Murphy (carrier of "Eddie Murphy's disease") received a Grammy for his comedy album, chock full of trashy retorts and shocking innuendoes pertaining to homosexuals and their lifestyles. Oh well, we must learn to cope. Until we can overcome.