

Gays join in apartheid protests

by Ginny Foster

Many diverse protesters — men and women of color, liberal politicians, a dressed-for-successer on her lunch hour next to a guy in an army jacket, college professors, ex-60's radicals, secretaries, a woman from a retirement home, a roofing contractor, an artist, a minister's wife — turn out to picket Calvin van Pelt, the Oregonian who is South African Honorary Consul, at his office every Wednesday and Friday noon. And some gay men and lesbians are right there as part of the picket, shouting "Van Pelt Must Go" and "Apartheid No." One man wears a pink triangle; two lesbians confer on leafletting the Lesbian Forum.

If these people were in South Africa protesting apartheid (laws governing the separation of races) they would be in jail. As a result of demonstrations in South Africa between September and December 1984 more than 160 people died violently and more than 5,000 were arrested.

South African laws concerning residence of blacks are enforced by means of humiliating passbook laws; the books have stamps indicating where the holder can go. Figures show 206,000 arrests in 1982 for a crime only blacks can commit — that of being in a white area illegally. City workers are housed in barrack-like dormitories in townships (ghettos) outside the white town. A black woman domestic may not have her children live with her in her rooms in the backyard. All "superfluous" black Africans — including the old, the sick and disabled, the mothers and children, the unemployed — are transported to reserves, located in the poorest, most eroded and over-farmed land, to live in tin shacks on tiny plots where there is seldom any work. Infant mortality is the highest in the world.

Black South Africans cannot vote and cannot own land; they are legally confined to the worst housing, education, and employment. They are subject to deportation, curfews, "banning," and arrest under laws which allow the police to hold anyone indefinitely, in isolation, and without charges.

A wave of protest has swept South Africa and is catching fire here. Last November, in Washington D.C., demonstrators went to the South African Embassy to ask for the release

of thirteen South African labor leaders not heard from since their detention. Since then visible protest has spread throughout the country. At our local picket, two people go up to Van Pelt's office each day. When they refuse to leave without seeing him, police issue a citation (that is, unless your name is Margaret Strachan or Gretchen Kafoury; police refused to arrest them).

You can send a message to the white minority rulers of South Africa and to Ronald Reagan, whose policy of "constructive engagement" is designed to protect U.S. investments. You can join the picket at 838 SW First (behind Yamhill Market) on Wednesday and Friday from noon to one. The picket will continue until Van Pelt resigns. Black South Africans are giving their lives for freedom; can you get away an hour at noon to help and legalize racism? Call 230-9427 if you need more information.

(When I began to write this I spent some time doing research at PSU to see how gays were treated in South Africa, but they must be so far underground they aren't even written about. I found one reference to immunological diseases, but that was all. Anyone else know?)

Calvin L. Van Pelt resigned on January 18, citing the demonstrations as the reason for his action.

Anti-apartheid groups, including the Black United Front, American Friends Service Committee, Rainbow Organizing Committee and Portland Is Organized for Southern African Freedom, will now push for elimination of all Oregon connections to the South African government.

Springfield teacher appeals to Supreme Court

by Rosanne King

The Oregon Supreme Court has been asked to hear the case of a Springfield school teacher fired for "immorality" after he was observed in sexual activity with another man by police.

Dismissal of teacher Frank M. Ross by the Springfield School District in 1980 was upheld by the Oregon Court of Appeals by a 2-1

decision in late November. Ross and his attorney, Robert D. Durham of Portland, filed a brief with the Supreme Court Jan. 18.

According to Durham, the appeal to the state's highest court will address three major issues in the Ross case.

First is the question of private versus public conduct. Ross was observed at an adult bookstore, inside a stall, with seven-foot-high plywood walls and a door with a bolt lock. A police officer observed Ross by standing on another officer's shoulders.

The second issue involves policies set by the Springfield School Board, which require open communication between parents and teachers. A breakdown in communication was not a direct result of Ross' actions, Durham said. Rather it was the parents' response to inexact information and to Ross being "just somehow involved" with the adult bookstore in Eugene.

Ross' activities had "no direct impact on his students," Durham stressed.

Constitutional questions were raised in Ross' case before the state Court of Appeals and that court's failure to address those issues is the third issue the Supreme Court is being asked to consider in the case.

If the Supreme Court agrees to hear the case, Durham said it would be at least five or six weeks before any court action would occur and "many, many months" before any decision would be reached. The Supreme Court is the last avenue of appeal on the case and if the court declines to consider it, it will be dropped, Durham said.

A safe place to grow

by Helen Lottridge

What's so special about Tuesday nights at Phoenix Rising? A social growth group called the Tuesday Night Program.

Bob Weinreich, Ph.D., Co-Director of Counseling heads up the program, and describes it as more than just a social chat. It's a place to grow socially, and networks people from diverse parts of our community.

Participants can expect a safe and comfortable place — an environment neither sexual nor alcoholic — to meet other gay people and work with them on personal issues. It's also a good place to play and have fun.

The Tuesday Night Program generates its own leaders. All the leaders are paraprofessionals who have participated in the group.

New leaders receive group leadership training from Bob, allowing people to progress to a leadership role in a natural way, and providing them with valuable new skills. This program is designed not as a professional therapy group, but is by-and-for-equals.

The program is divided into two parts for all participants. The growth portion is a place for sharing and working on personal issues with goal setting and cooperative problem solving. The activity portion involves participation in leader-planned activities designed to encourage communication and personal awareness. People learn more about themselves and how they relate to other people — in a fun way.

Feedback from participants is overwhelmingly positive, indicating that the program fills a need not readily available elsewhere. The cost for the program is based on a sliding fee scale beginning at \$35.00 for the entire eight week block.

Another "current event" at Phoenix Rising is the first annual fund-raising campaign. In order to make our services affordable to the largest possible number of people, we use a sliding fee scale. The fees do not cover costs of operation, so the balance of our support comes from private donors and an occasional small grant. The campaign is organized by divisions: major gifts, professional organizations, social events, phone-a-thon and mail, and gay businesses.

If you want more information about Phoenix Rising, call 223-8299.

(Phoenix Rising Foundation is a private, non-profit, tax-exempt social services agency for the Lesbian and Gay community, providing counseling, referral service, and a Speaker's Bureau.)

Gay radio needs coordinator

KBOO is seeking a replacement for the person who has been coordinating the lesbian/gay programming for NIGHTRAP, Tuesdays, 10-11 PM. The coordinator seeks out individuals or groups who will be willing to speak about topics of interest to the lesbian/gay community. The programs may be pre-recorded, call-in, interviews, or whatever techniques would best work for the topic and participants. Call Ross Reynolds at KBOO, 231-8032 or 231-8187.

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