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EDITORIAL

Miscue results in positive step

by Jay Brown

Deputy Chief Tom Potter was formally introduced, on September 12, by Police Chief Penny E. Harrington as the Portland Police Bureau's liaison with the city's gay and lesbian community. At the press conference announcing his appointment, Potter remarked that the decision to have a liaison with the gay community stemmed from "miscommunication" which left the Lesbian and Gay Parade without a police escort.

It is to Potter's credit that he refrained from saying that the "miscommunication" was not between Lesbian and Gay Pride Steering Committee and the Portland Police Bureau but among factions in the gay community itself.

One of the essential elements of the annual Lesbian and Gay Pride Parade is possession of a permit to hold a parade which is issued by the City of Portland. For the past several years the permit had been issued to Lesbian and Gay Pride Steering Committee, but this year the parade permit was issued to Oregon Community Pride Association, an organization established by some members of Lesbian and Gay Pride '84 Steering Committee and others.

The announcement, in the now defunct Eagle Newsmagazine, of Oregon Community Pride Association's plans for the traditional community-wide celebration caught many people by surprise and resulted in the formation of Lesbian and Gay Pride Steering Committee '85. (Portland's annual lesbian/gay pride celebration has been planned and executed each year by volunteers who have had little or no experience in such undertakings because steering committee members are rarely holdovers from the previous year. This situation may be changing soon, see story elsewhere.)

In negotiations with Lesbian and Gay Pride '85, Oregon Community Pride Association failed to divulge the fact that the parade permit had been issued for 10 a.m. instead of 12 noon, which was the traditional time of departure. (According to Police Bureau reports, an escort did appear at the appointed place at 10 a.m., found no parade and went off to another assignment.)

The parade proceeded without the escort and, thanks to the efforts of the security volunteers, few people realized that anything was amiss. (Or if people knew the escort was not in attendance, they were not about to give up their parade.)

Within a few days following parade "miscommunication" Deputy Chief Potter stepped forward and volunteered to act as liaison between the Police Bureau and Portland's lesbian and gay community. Potter's action came after a group composed of Lesbian and Gay Pride '85 Steering Committee members and other concerned citizens met with the Police Bureau to probe the origins of the "miscommunication."

So why has it taken almost three months for a formal announcement of Potter's appointment? The answer lies, again, with the lack of communication among factions in the gay and lesbian community.

During the past several months, a new group with political interests has been developing in Portland. The group, Spectrum of Gay and Lesbian Concerns, became involved in the "miscommunication" incident because some of the people who met with the Police Bureau were members of Lesbian and Gay Pride '85 Steering Committee and Spectrum of Gay and Lesbian Concerns.

Since the demise of Portland Town Council there has been only one gay political organization in the city — Right to Privacy Political Action Committee. For several years Portland's gay community has been the exclusive turf of Right to Privacy PAC and the emergence of Spectrum of Gay and Lesbian Concerns has caused no little consternation in Right to Privacy PAC's forces.

A Police Bureau press release, dated September 3, 1985, calling a press conference to announce Potter's appointment, included the following paragraph:

"Police Chief Penny Harrington will make the announcement and will be accompanied by Deputy Chief Potter, Keeston Lowery of the Right to Privacy Political Action Committee, and Gale Schmidt of Spectrum of Gay and Lesbian Concerns."

Lowery cancelled.

We believe that Potter's appointment as liaison between the Police Bureau and the city's lesbian and gay community is a positive step in the struggle against homophobia. We appreciate the efforts of all the people who brought it about.

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