

LETTERS

Defend rights in unison

To the editor:

On January 24, 1986, the Community Clinic Defense Coalition (CCDC) organized an abortion rights rally at Portland State University which mobilized 340 abortion rights defenders. The rally was inspiring to those who got in to hear the rousing panel of speakers. But it was marred by a lockout of 140 pro-choicers, who were left alone to face 60 rightwing bible-thumpers and hostile police. CCDC organizers allowed the lockout to happen out of fear of confrontation with the right wing and intimidation by police and PSU security. And CCDC security enforced the cops' line rather than putting up a fight for control over our own rally.

At post-rally evaluation meetings, Radical Women, a member of the CCDC, raised our criticism of the lockout policy and urged the committee to admit their mistake to the community and pledge that a lockout would never happen again. However, CCDC's defense of its actions in a March 1986 letter to the community requires a response.

Radical Women is glad that the Coalition is committed to preventing similar situations in the future. But we disagree with CCDC's statement that the large turnout of abortion

rights defenders "necessitated" blocking access to the rally. Allowing our supporters to be excluded was an abdication of CCDC's responsibility to those who came at our invitation. Instead of running away from a fight with PSU and the police, CCDC should have led the demands for entry and protested the outrageous violation of our right to assemble. They should have insisted that PSU unlock an adjoining room. And they should now be protesting the trampling of pro-choicers' rights of free speech and assembly that occurred.

The spirited crowd that gathered on January 24th, eager to rally against right wing violence, shows a strong movement is developing in Portland. By working together, the Coalition organized the largest abortion rally held in this city since the right launched its ugly assault. But the movement will be truncated if fear of right wing violence and refusal to confront the authorities causes the Coalition to abdicate its responsibility to defend our supporters and their constitutional rights to freedom of assembly and free speech.

"Pro-life," as Sandy Nelson of Tacoma Radical Women said from the rally podium, "is a fascist movement, and abortion is only the first step in their program." They aim at the total destruction of the rights of women, lesbians and gays, people of color, workers, radicals and the poor — all those whose demands for equality challenge the capitalist

system. Local and federal power structures refuse to stop this vicious minority, as abortion clinicians can testify. So it is up to us to build a bold and organized movement of the majority to defend ourselves. We can't do that if we collapse into fear and trembling at the mere threat of a confrontation with the right.

The right wing thrives on intimidation and fear, but withers when faced with determined resistance. We must let the right know that they will never again see the abortion rights movement divided and leaderless as they did at PSU. When we defend our rights in unison, these anti-life terrorists are vastly outnumbered and easily out-organized.

In struggle,
Adrienne Weller
for Portland Radical Women

Careless Love not careless, says author

To the editor:

I'm writing in response to Sandra De Helen's review of my play *Careless Love*, in the March '86 issue of *Just Out*. The play is not intended to be, as Ms. De Helen asserts, "a subtle political piece." It's a personal and human story about two volatile individuals

suddenly dealing with the problems of unplanned pregnancy and parenthood. The play is certainly not pro-life "propaganda." Right-to-lifers would, as we all know, take away a woman's right to control what happens inside her body and, in my opinion, Ms. De Helen has permitted her understandably passionate feelings about this to blind her to the human drama of the play. It is a mistake to interpret things a character says in emotionally charged moments as "the author's message."

Unfortunately, though, in her review, Ms. De Helen goes beyond simple interpretation. In fact, she deliberately misrepresents the play's content. At no point does the text of the play state, as the review says it does, that "rape or incest victims should not have abortions." Or that "white people should not have abortions because there are so many lovely white folks who want to adopt these little unexpected babies." To attribute such offensive statements to my play is irresponsible and slimy journalism. The issues dealt with in the play — pregnancy, parental responsibility, abortion, the artist's life in contemporary America — are important. These issues, the play and the artists at the Oregon Stage Company deserve a more honest treatment than that given them by Sandra De Helen.

Sincerley,
John Olive

NEWS

Kicking homophobes in the 1-800's

by Rhia Weinhaus

For the past few years, Jerry Falwell and his obedient cult following have delivered heavy blows to the civil rights of lesbians and gays. Our attempts at fighting back have often left us frustrated and empty — we have struggled for so long and seen so little movement. But recently, Jerry Falwell's empire of homophobia has begun to show signs of cracking.

In a six-page, hand-written fundraising letter to his following, Falwell announced that lesbians and gays are putting him out of business: "The militant gay community have encouraged their people to jam our toll free counseling lines. They have ordered thousands of Bibles, books and materials — and we are told that they have burned them."

Falwell closes his letter with the best news of all: "We are in trouble. We do not have enough regular monthly support to continue much longer."

Falwell says he has been forced into closing down his toll-free number, no other choice, explaining that "gays have made over a million phone calls, at a dollar a call. They're breaking us."

Falwell says he has to lay off staff people at his Liberty University, *The Old Time Gospel Hour* and many of his other so-called "ministries." He says his debt has become so heavy that many cable companies are dropping his broadcasts. Some cable companies have refused to run Falwell's programs because the companies have been boycotted by lesbians and gays.

How encouraging it is to see that our efforts against homophobia are working, but it is still a long way from seeing our enemies crumble. We must continue to pound away at the power structures that institutionalize

homophobia. We must also broaden our attack on homophobia to include all those others who are attempting to restrict lesbians and gays from full citizenship in this nation.

There are many other "Christian" television ministries besides Falwell's, and they, too, regularly preach hatred for our community. Three of the most rabidly homophobic are: Praise the Lord Network, 1-800-435-0435 (toll-free); The 700 Club, 1-800-446-0700 (toll-free); Trinity Broadcasting Network, 1-714-731-1000 (not toll free). Falwell's new phone number is 1-804-847-2000, but it is not toll-free.

Chief homophobe on the 700 Club is Pat Robertson, who is being touted as a presidential candidate in 1988. Robertson has been receiving quite a bit of mainstream media coverage recently. So give him a call and let him know how *you* feel about his candidacy.

Gay/Lesbian rights on the move

by Jay Brown

A bill allowing certain kinds of employers to discriminate against lesbians and gays was narrowly defeated in the Wisconsin legislature this session, reports *The Windy City Times*. A similar bill is expected to be introduced in the 1987 session.

The bill would permit religions or non-profit organizations which work with youth to require adherence to certain religious beliefs concerning marital status or sexual orientation by employees.

Wisconsin's law prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in employment, housing, and public accommodation was passed four years ago and is still the only such law to be passed by any state.

In New York City, Mayor Ed Koch has

sought support for two amendments clarifying what the recently-passed gay rights bill, known as Intro. 2, can and cannot do. One amendment does not require public or private schools to teach the nature of homosexuality. Another amendment would explain that the bill does not require or permit affirmative action goals or timetables for hiring gays and lesbians.

Attacks against Intro 2 have come from many quarters, including an attempt at a referendum which, according to New York City Corporation Counsel F.A.O. Schwartz Jr. maintains that referendums can only be held on amendments to the city charter.

In Washington state, Initiative 490, "The Dobbs Initiative" would prohibit employment of gays and lesbians in positions which deal directly or indirectly with children, the elderly, and disabled persons.

A petition for judicial review of the anti-gay Initiative 490 has been filed in Thurston County Court. The suit questions whether the wording of the initiative is neutral or prejudicial in its contents. The initiative reads: "Shall knowingly employ, in certain jobs, persons who have preferences for or orientation toward conduct defined as sexually deviant, be prohibited."

Say, what?

LCP to host homophobia workshop

The Lesbian Community Project is pleased to announce two related workshops for lesbians on internalized homophobia and building a lesbian community, presented by Suzanne Pharr, a national organizer from the Arkansas Women's Project.

The first workshop will explore the ways

internalized homophobia affects our lives and the connection between homophobia and the control of women. The second will focus on developing strategies for the Portland lesbian community to use to combat homophobia, organize politically and improve the quality of lesbian lives.

To maximize both the number of women able to participate and the quality of interaction, the workshop on internalized homophobia will be limited to 20 participants and offered two times. Participants from both sessions of the workshop will come together for the second strategizing workshop.

The workshops are scheduled for May 15-17 at the Central Northeast Neighborhood Center at 5540 NE Sandy in Portland. The Internalized Homophobia Workshop will be offered from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. on Thursday and Friday, May 15 and May 16. The Community Building Workshop (strategizing session) will be 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, May 17. Remember, the Internalized Homophobia Workshop is repeated, choose only one of the days to attend.

Registration is open to any Portland lesbian and will operate on a first-come-first-served basis. To register call 233-9079.

Although Ms. Pharr's work has been funded on a grant we request a \$2-\$3 donation to cover printing and rental space. No woman will be refused because of inability to pay. Childcare will be provided with advanced notice, please contact us by May 12 to reserve space.

Portland's lesbian community faces many challenges in the coming years — attacks from the Right, a backlash from the AIDS crisis, diminished human services designed to assist women. Now is the time to come together, to better our lives and to work for our safe future. We look forward to diverse participation in this event.