

Why gay men must vote for abortion rights

by W.C. McRae

"Gay men may not think about it," says Jerry Weller, "but a woman's control over her body and the rights to abortion involve the same issues as gay rights." Weller, working to defeat Ballot Measure 6, which would bar state payments for abortions, says that the right to abortion is, for him "as much a bottom line issue as gay rights."

Ballot Measure 6 would bar state payment for abortion except for cases where the mother's life is endangered by continued pregnancy. Low income women would be primarily impacted by passage of the initiative, which would not allow state-funded abortion even for rape or incest victims. Additionally, passage of the anti-abortion measure could prevent state employees from using state insurance money to pay for abortions. In Colorado where a similar initiative became law, the courts ruled that state insurance funds constituted state money and could therefore not be used to fund abortions.

Weller says that "Gay men may not think about it, but the abortion issue forms a natural political alliance for gay rights activism." Both issues involve a person's "right to privacy" and control over one's body. Also, the same people who want to deny a woman's right to abortion are the same people who deny civil rights to gay people. State Senator Tony Meeker, a

Republican, is spearheading the Ballot Measure 6 effort, according to Weller. Meeker, no friend to the gay community, is also running against incumbent Les AuCoin in Congressional District 1.

The Oregonian, on September 16, reported that a poll showed a close vote on Ballot Measure 6. A strong gay vote against the initiative could insure the continued right of women to make their own reproductive decisions.

Recently back from Chicago, Weller's chance to work with NARAL came up just as he began "looking for ways to get involved." Weller claims that most of the members of the coalition that make up Oregon Tax-Payers for Choice actively support gay rights.

Briefly Noted

by W.C. McRae

Missouri court upholds sexual misconduct law

The Missouri Supreme Court has upheld that state's sexual misconduct law which outlaws sexual activities between consenting adults of the same sex. The majority opinion specifically cited the US Supreme Court's recent ruling which allows states to criminalize gay sexuality.

The 5-2 decision upheld a state law which bans homosexual activities, thereby "implementing and promoting public morality." The state also argued that forbidding homosexual behavior would inhibit the spread of com-

municable diseases and AIDS.

Missouri is the first state to reaffirm the criminality of gay sexuality in light of the June 30 anti-sodomy decision of the Supreme Court.

On a more enlightened note from the "Show-Me State," the Missouri Court of Appeals struck down a St. Louis ordinance which made it a misdemeanor to appear "in any public place in a state of nudity or in a dress not belonging to his/her sex or in indecent or lewd dress."

The ordinance, enacted in 1870, was used to bring charges of "lewd and indecent" behavior against two men, one a female impersonator, the other a transsexual. The appellate court found the language of the ordinance to be "unconstitutionally vague."

Beaverton company to work on AIDS test

Epitope, a Beaverton clinical testing company, is developing a new AIDS test, according to the Portland Business Journal. While present tests for AIDS screen only for antibodies to the HIV virus, Epitope's test would indicate the presence of the virus itself.

Epitope's test utilizes a synthetic, dyed antibody, which attaches only to the AIDS virus, thus marking and rendering it identifiable. While conventional tests are quite reliable, especially when used in tandem, false positives and false negatives are still possible. Also, not all people with antibodies to HIV go on to develop AIDS.

A test proving presence of the virus would represent an improvement in the technology of keeping the blood supply safe, and better indicate those people in danger of developing frank AIDS.

There is a considerable market for improved tests due to what one analyst called "intense" fear of contamination of the nation's blood supply. "Even a marginally better test would be likely to be marketable."

AIDS treatment announced

Late last month, federal health officials announced that an experimental drug has prolonged the life of certain AIDS patients. The drug, called AZT, was first developed in the 1960s as a cancer treatment, for which it proved unsuccessful. Preliminary tests with AIDS patients showed that, in patients given AZT, numbers of T4 helper cells actually increased and fevers decreased.

In later federal tests, only one of 145 patients given AZT since February have died, while 16 in a control group of 137 AIDS patients have died. (The federal tests were

hailed after controversy emerged concerning the ethics of giving placebos to AIDS patients.)

AZT works by interfering with the processes by which the AIDS virus takes over cells. When AZT enters a cell, an enzyme is produced that inhibits the virus' RNA from reproducing DNA copies of itself, effectively preventing reproduction of the virus.

AZT is not a cure for AIDS, and it has been proved effective only in patients with *pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia. Furthermore, the drug will be made available, at least initially, only to those patients whose first incidence of *pneumocystis* has occurred in the previous 90 days, and who are not participating in other drug treatments. AZT, manufactured by Burroughs Wellcome, will be supplied free to those deemed eligible by health institutes.

The story on AZT made the front page of the Vancouver (B.C.) Sun, San Francisco Chronicle, New York Times, among many others. The Oregonian, which enjoys comparing itself to the Times, found room for the story on page A15.

Gay Rights 1, Oregonian 0

An Oregon state legislative committee which sets employment policies for legislative employees voted not to adopt a rule granting protection against discrimination to gays under its administration. Debate on the matter elicited the following from L.B. Day (R. Salem): "I'm not one who believes homosexuals have rights." (Oregonian, 9/13/86)

Two days later, the Oregon State Bar Association passed a resolution supporting lesbian and gay civil rights. The Oregonian chose not to mention the Bar Association's support for gays and lesbians, but did find the space to report on several other resolutions which were passed at the same meeting.

I find it difficult to imagine criteria (except a homophobic agenda in the Oregonian editorial department) which could argue that a vote against gay and lesbian rights is newsworthy while a vote in support doesn't merit mention.

While no news in this case was good news, at least at the Oregonian, the daily gives extremely spotty coverage to positive gay news. The Oregonian has been timorous at best when covering the annual Gay and Lesbian Pride celebrations; but ignoring the recent ParentsFLAG convention here is beyond measure.

Apparently, even after the Oregonian's much ballyhooed format changes to attract a "Yuppie" readership (Oregonian Lite?), it will continue not to offer positive news and events of interest to gay people.

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