

LETTERS

Inside view of CAP merger

To the Editor:

W.C. McRae's analysis of the recent merger between Cascade AIDS Project (CAP) and CHES, and the controversial Executive Director election was well written and contributed substantially to the printed record of local gay history. It also reflected Mr. McRae's typical, and generally admirable, bias in favor of any person identified as "victim." Unfortunately, this approach can easily lead to black and white images of the good guys vs. the bad guys. To the extent that the article implied that the majority who voted in favor of Tom Koberstein were politically motivated, or that they did so out of animosity toward Brown McDonald, or out of partisanship, the analysis falls short of historic reality and does a disservice to many who have labored long and at great personal sacrifice on behalf of the lesbian/gay community.

First of all, the assertion that the action amounted to a "Dismissal" is incorrect; the action was a straight-forward selection of the first permanent Executive Director of the newly merged Cascade AIDS Project, following an extensive search and careful review of more than 80 highly qualified candidates. Generally, failure to confirm an interim office holder into a functionally new position is not

viewed as disciplinary. On the contrary, nearly all of those voting in the majority honor Brown McDonald for his many important contributions during his year and a half as Executive Director of the original CAP, and his five months as Interim Executive Director of the expanded organization. His continued participation would have been most welcome, and the loss of his dedicated service is, indeed, a tragedy.

Secondly, this vote was the only one in six months of meetings where the vote could be considered as "old CHES" vs. "old CAP" partisan. Votes to merge, to appoint an Interim Executive Director, to conduct an open search for a permanent Executive Director, and the process for doing so, all had very broad support. More specifically, the missing director referred to by McRae was not associated with the "old CAP"; on the contrary, he was the *Co-chair* of the merging CHES board. Although the vote was by secret ballot, simple mathematics clearly shows that at least one member of the majority came from the "old CAP" board. To be even more specific, two board members were diagnosed persons who had no previous service with either merging board; they were appointed by the CHES board together with only six transitional members to ensure client input.

Thirdly, finances were not a critical issue in the merger decision. Both organizations, as well as the newly expanded CAP, have always been financially pressed. At the time of

merger, CHES had the more stable financial base and a quick review of the accounting records will reflect that fact. This measurement is of little consequence since it was generally agreed that both education and service efforts would be best served by financial consolidation.

Virtually anyone you talk to who is *currently involved* as a Board member, staffer, or volunteer for CAP will tell you that healing is rapidly taking place and that CAP is moving forward with a new dynamism, despite the personal pain of *everyone* closely involved in the election. This will become increasingly evident in the near future as the general public and your readers witness the impact of new programs and Mr. Koberstein's leadership. I hesitate, therefore, to draw attention to the past yet another time.

I do so only because Mr. McRae's article could too easily be read as an indictment of the majority, or of the Right to Privacy PAC/Rose Court/City Night's "good old boys," as being more interested in political position than in meeting the manifold challenges of an epidemic in our midst. All of these people have knocked themselves out on behalf of local AIDS efforts; they have shown again and again that they consider this matter to be well above and beyond any pre-existing historical or philosophical loyalty. These people have a right to be included; more importantly, doing otherwise would be a grave disservice to those who look to us for support and leader-

ship. All of the people who voted have served with distinction; none of them are political puppets. I can say with complete assurance that they voted based primarily on the merits of the candidates and in very conscientious service to persons most challenged and threatened by AIDS.

The AIDS effort is a burden which most or all of us will eventually *have to bear*. We can do so now — together, in a spirit of mutual support, pride, and even joy — or later — with reluctance and recrimination. The difference could mean either success or failure for all of us, and it will be measured in terms of human rights, dignity, pain, grief, and our very lives.

In point of fact, Portland is blessed with one of the most unified and dynamic community based AIDS organizations in the entire nation. I trust that neither you nor your readers will get so stuck in underdog journalism that they fail to judge the work of Cascade AIDS Project based on "merit, not politics."

Thank you for your countless special efforts in support of CAP, diagnosed persons, the worried well, and the lesbian/gay community. All of us engaged actively in the local AIDS effort hope to continually merit your support and that of your readers.

Yours in mutual struggle,
Steve Fulmer
CAP Board Member

Paulus defeat: women's loss

To the Editor:

The day Norma Paulus lost the governor's race was a sad day for the women of Oregon.

Norma Paulus, a qualified, experienced, feminist candidate, would have been Oregon's first woman governor (in 1976 she was the first woman elected as Oregon's Secretary of State).

Those familiar with her background know how many doors she has opened for women. As governor, she would have continued to do so in a way no man possibly could. Her mere presence would show that women's hopes for political careers are realistic, and she would have provided a tremendous role model for future generations. A role model women would greatly benefit from.

Although women are not excluded from the political arena, they are certainly kept at its perimeters. This is shown by the few execu-

tive level positions held by women in government. Because this government is an institution built by and for men, there are many roadblocks for women (as in any traditionally male carer). Those who do break through the barriers find little support or acceptance from their male peers.

In a recent Portland area poll, 15% of the respondents admitted they would not even *consider* voting in a woman as governor.

It is particularly distressing that many lesbians did not show their support or provide leadership on this issue.

These are just a few of the myriad of reasons why it is imperative that women work together, crossing party lines if necessary, realizing that all women are an important asset.

These courageous women deserve our support, as we deserve and need them to represent us.

If we won't support ourselves, who will?

Mitzi McMullen-Gray
Portland, Oregon

Thanks for LaRouche Initiative defeat

To the Editor:

Congratulations to California's lesbian and gay community for their work in smashing Proposition 64, the LaRouche Initiative that could have meant mandatory testing and quarantine of AIDS "suspects."

The campaign to defeat Prop 64 holds two lessons for the nation's lesbian and gay community.

First, in addition to being a medical reality, AIDS is also a political crisis. The Radical Right does not miss this point — our failure to do so would be tragic.

And second, as with the defeat of the anti-gay Briggs Initiative eight years ago, California's gay and lesbian community has demonstrated that only a high profile, grassroots, coalition effort can win and defend our rights. Accommodationism and de-

pending exclusively on our "liberal friends" have always been politically stupid approaches — now they are literally lethal.

As history reviews the gay movement the question may be asked of all of us, "What did you do during the epidemic and the witch-hunt that followed?" Thanks to the dedication and work of those who defeated Prop 64 in California, more of us are likely to be around to answer that question.

Again, congratulations and thank you to California's lesbian and gay community.

David Scondras
Boston City Council

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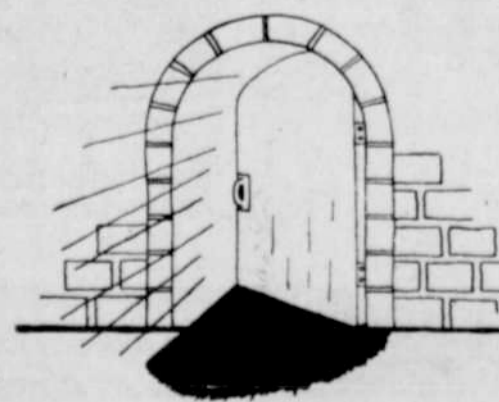
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