

just news

Gay and lesbian votes count

Candidates Clark, Lindberg and Gold comment on the significance of the primary

BY HAROLD MOORE

The results of the May 17 primary election in Portland emphasized the importance of getting out the vote. Mayor Bud Clark failed, by about 300 votes, in his attempt to gain a majority and avoid a November runoff.

Clark said, "It is really a heartbreaker to lose by about 300 votes an election in which 120,000 votes were cast. The good news is that one out of every two voters voted for me. The bad news is that I needed 300 more to win, and because of that I must continue to campaign in order to be re-elected."

"Unfortunately, the fact that I received 49.4 percent of the votes cast on May 17, rather than 50 percent plus one vote, means that we must all continue the fight. The Right to Privacy PAC was one of the largest contributors to my primary-election campaign, as well as a strong source of strategic advice and volunteer resources. I ask you all to recommit to my candidacy for the general election. I need your help to keep Portland moving forward as we go into the 1990s."

"There's a lot at stake in November. Former police chief Still and I are very different people and have significantly different management styles. As *Willamette Week* said in its May 5 endorsement of my re-election, "Still would attempt to run the city in an authoritarian, top-down style that we cannot accept."

Portland city commissioner Mike Lindberg was re-elected, garnering a margin of 80 percent. A longtime supporter of lesbian and gay rights, Lindberg stated, "The significance of the election for the gay and lesbian population

of Portland is very positive. The candidates supported by the Right to Privacy PAC have done well. On City Council especially, this means that there is a solid majority on the council to support any upcoming ordinance that would outlaw discrimination against gays and lesbians in public accommodations, housing and public employment."

About the strength of the lesbian and gay vote, Lindberg continued, "During the past five years, the power of the gay and lesbian constituency has increased at least tenfold in the city of Portland and at least several times in the state of Oregon. Today there is more accountability to support from the gay community and it has been made very clear that support from this community means supporting the issues of gays and lesbians."

After a nightlong vigil where every few minutes friends would report a roller-coaster return pattern, Gold took a few minutes to reflect on her strong support in the gay and lesbian community. "I'm proud to have had the support and advocacy and the volunteers and the donations. I like to use the word *clout*. In this campaign the gay and lesbian voters have used their clout. And I think it is excellent that this entire process has been out in the open, no *ifs*, *ands* or *buts*. I see it as a civil rights fight. Just as I have championed the civil rights of other groups in the past, I am proud to be associated with the fight to gain complete freedom and access to gays and lesbians."

Gold's victory over incumbent Rod Monroe is significant because Monroe had supported a move in the Legislature for gay rights during an election campaign, then withheld his support

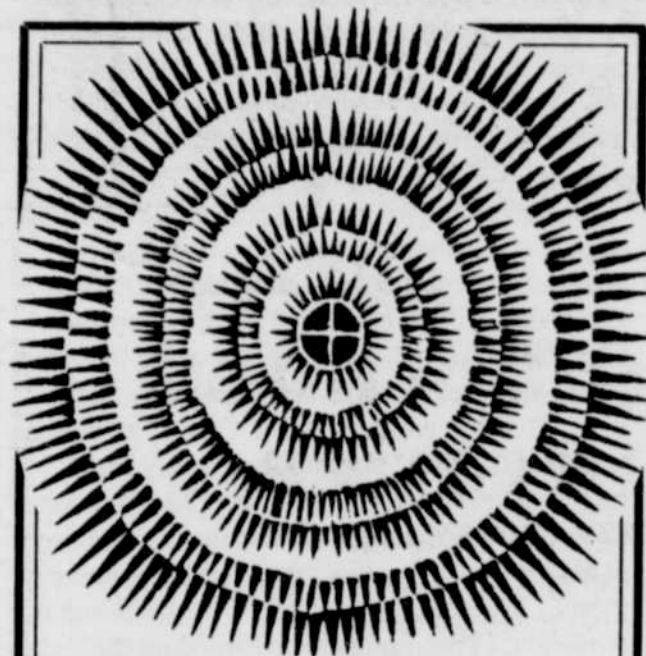
when it came to a vote. The election of Gold represents what some politicians refer to as the 16th vote, or the needed majority in the state Senate to pass a bill protecting the civil rights of Oregon's gay and lesbian citizens.

The May 17 election illustrates just how

significant Portland's gay and lesbian vote is. The issue coming out of this election seems to be *clout*, and how and where it should be used. Elected officials take this constituency seriously. Every one of our votes count. Just ask Mayor Bud Clark.

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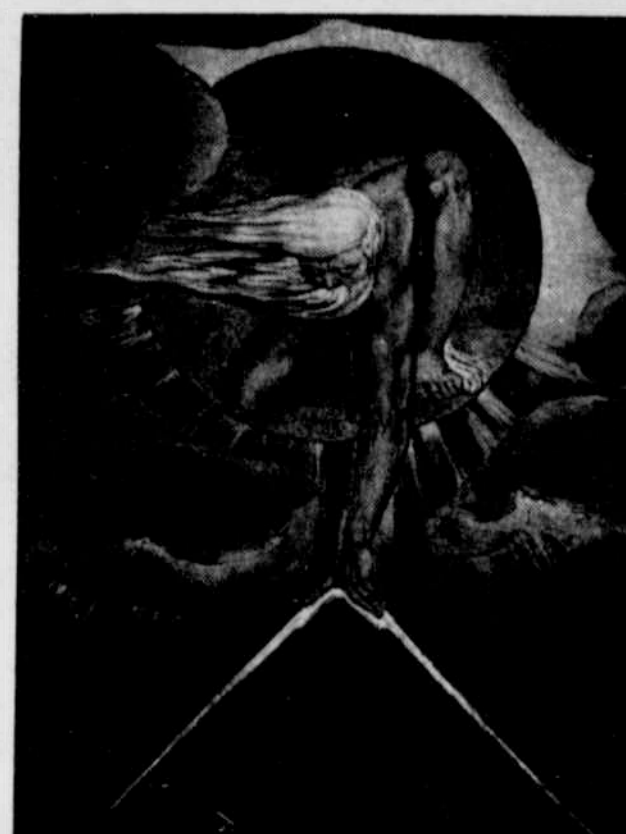
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Lesbian legislator visits Portland

Karen Clark urges lesbians and gays to get involved, to take some power, to be visible

BY KAMILA AL-NAJJAR

Minnesota state representative Karen Clark paid a visit to Portland during the Jesse Jackson campaign. Clark is the only open lesbian in the country to hold an elected position of such status; she is also one of the three chairpersons for the Jackson campaign in Minnesota.

Clark has been in office since 1980, running on a broad platform of economic and social issues and winning 74 percent of the vote in the last election. Clark said, "I'm open as a lesbian and always have been. It's a part of my life that I'm pleased to have. It has always been a campaign issue, but I continue to be elected. I've been elected four times."

The district Clark represents is in the heart of inner-city Minneapolis and is the lowest-income district in the state. Clark's district is home to a large number of senior citizens living on fixed incomes, a large concentration of urban American Indians, and a growing population of blacks and Asian refugees.

Clark is also a member of the Lavender Stripe, a gay and lesbian organization that is part of Jackson's Rainbow Coalition.

"The Lavender Stripe has been a part of the Jackson campaign for as long as I have been involved. Our Lavender Stripe members have provided countless person-hours, have done fund-raising for the Jackson campaign and have been an integral part of it. In the process they have done a lot of educating in Minnesota about gay and lesbian issues."

"We are probably no different than here, in the sense that we have a wide range of people who support Jackson. Many of them, however, have just not been aware of the particular needs of lesbians and gays," explained Clark.

"Jesse Jackson from the very beginning has made a priority of outreach to gay and lesbian people. I think it's been a very good investment both for his campaign and for us. He is a good investment in terms of a candidate who is concerned about our issues. He has taken a great deal of time and energy to educate and inform himself about our issues. He was the only presidential candidate to come to the National March on Washington, and he has been out front with his issues."

Clark urges lesbians and gays to become involved in the political process on all levels.

"I would really like to challenge your readership to get involved, to take some power, to be visible," Clark said.

"One of the reasons it is important for gay people to realize it's a mistake not to become involved is that we are in a real crucial time. Our community is being scapegoated because of the AIDS crisis. We will see increasing measures of repression coming down as economic times get harder, and I think they will. People look around for someone to blame. In Germany it was the Jews and the gays. Something similar will happen here. The only way to stop that, much less make progress, is for people to really get involved."

"One of the things I'd like to say to gays and lesbians is that there is nobody who is going to fight for us like we do for ourselves."

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