

## Legislative report

### Lawmakers, by omission, give nod to fagbashing; omnibus gay rights bill introduced in Senate

BY FRED NEAL and RICK KELSO

The success of Ballot Measure 8 last November has created a dismal atmosphere in the legislative assembly for even the most basic proposals to protect sexual minorities, let alone to guarantee gays and lesbians equal treatment. A classic example was the public hearing on February 8 before the



## LEGISLATIVE REPORT

Criminal Law Subcommittee of the House Judiciary Committee. Reps. Bill Dwyer (D-Springfield) and Dave McTeague (D-Milwaukie) testified in favor of their proposal (HB 2432) to add murder based on

racial hatred to the aggravated murder statute. When Rep. Kevin Mannix (D-Salem) asked Dwyer (endorsed by the Right to Privacy PAC) if he would object to adding murder based on the sexual orientation of the victim, Dwyer said "Yes," he would object because he wants the bill to become law and it wouldn't have the votes to pass if it included sexual orientation. His response was met with agreeing laughter from several of the Committee members. Dave McTeague quickly responded that he, for one, would welcome the addition of murder based on sexual orientation to the aggravated murder bill. No one on the Committee seemed to share McTeague's courage, however. Nice to know.

Unfortunately, the next bill before the Committee, House Bill 2364, fared little better. Introduced at the request of Multnomah County District Attorney Michael Schunk, the measure would make it a crime to victimize persons based on their sexual orientation. Schunk cited a number of examples of "fag-bashing" which have occurred in every part of Multnomah County and urged the Committee members to condemn such activity, stating that such action would mark a civilized society.

"No citizen should have to fear walking down the street," he said.

The intimidation statute was threatened with a veto by then-Governor Vic Atiyeh when it was first enacted in 1981 if gays and lesbians were to be protected. Faced with that threat the Legislature confined protection from destruction of property and physical harm to racial, religious and national origin purposes. It appears that many people still think that sexual minorities are fair game. One criminal, when arrested and

prosecuted for assault, told the court, "I didn't think it was a crime to beat up faggots."

Now, several Judiciary members are politically afraid to say it's a crime to beat up gays. Led by Rep. Manix, they are looking for some generic term to condemn intimidation based on any form of "hatred prejudice." This, in spite of the fact that blacks, Jews and gays are the obvious and constant victims of harassment and violence, not Republicans, Skinheads or Christian bigots. Unless these legislators can be persuaded that doing double-flip somersaults away from the problem of "fag-bashing" is simply condoning the hatred and violence of such activity, the intimidation law will be amended to the point of meaningless whitewash.

Committee action is expected soon on the bill and it is most important that every one of us who has been accosted, threatened, robbed, beat up, harassed, nearly run over or received any other form of assault because of our perceived sexual orientation let every House of Representatives member know about it. Tell them they must not stand by in silence and let bigotry and violence reign freely. There will be no Weimar Republic in Oregon.

Speaking of Nazis, everyone should know that Lon Mabon and the Oregon Citizens Alliance are down in Salem in full force this session. They have a full-time lobbyist, Craig Demo, who represents the Oregon Association of Evangelicals. The gay and lesbian community does not have a counterpart. That's why it is so critical for each of us to speak out and let

our elected officials know what we want. If you ever felt like writing a letter, now is the time.

The Subcommittee on Crime and Corrections members are: Chair Tim Mason, and Reps. Ray Baum, Judy Bauman, Tom Brian, Ted Calouri, Peter Courtney, Kevin Manix, and Randy Miller. Write or phone them in Salem, Now!

On the Senate side, the Senate Judiciary Committee has introduced an omnibus gay rights bill, 631, at the request of the Oregon Lesbian and Gay Alliance (OLGA). Committee Chairperson Joyce Cohen assures Lucy that a hearing will be held. Stay tuned.

Next month: AIDS tests for everyone, and their mothers? Direct any inquiries to: Right to Privacy PAC, P.O. Box 8325, Portland, Oregon 97207.

## Material sought for lesbian lists book

Do you have a favorite bit of lesbian trivia? An idea for a list that would be of special interest to lesbians? Dell Richards is collecting material for *Lesbian Lists*, a book to be issued this fall by Alyson Publications, and would welcome ideas, information, and lists for inclusion. Correspondence may be sent to her at P.O. Box 163120, Sacramento, Calif. 95816.

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## QUESTION:

As a prisoner of conscience at Oregon State Hospital, I'd like to know:

*Why can't there be 1 ward in the hospital that is devoted to health?*

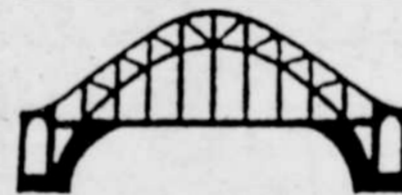
No smoking, no constant temptations to eat junk foods & no life of idleness which mandates that a person then become a career ward of the state.

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