

national briefs

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Part of President Bush's conservative Christian coalition is pressuring him to attack homosexuality as part of a broader effort to place Republicans on the side of "traditional family values" in the 1992 campaign. Some Christian coalition members, feel the issue of homosexuality is more important to them than the issue of abortion. They expressed outrage when Bush, in response to Barbara Walters's question about hiring homosexuals, said "We have no litmus test on that question here, and there aren't going to be any." Their "sense of betrayal" was not assuaged by Bush's reiteration of his support for a ban on homosexuals in the military. Bush has also told *The New York Times* that gay and lesbian parents are "not...normal" and "to glamorize lifestyles that are in my view not the normal lifestyles, I don't approve of that."

The National Commission on AIDS, a bipartisan panel appointed jointly by Congress and the White House, criticized the Bush administration for having failed the nation by its poor leadership in combating the AIDS epidemic. "President Bush and the Department of Health and Human Services have failed to meet fully their responsibilities in leading the national response to the monumental human suffering and economic loss from the HIV/AIDS epidemic," the statement noted.

The General Accounting Office, an independent investigating office of the U.S. Congress, has published a 78-page report, followed by a 68-page statistical index, that indicates that the Department of Defense has spent millions—\$27 million in 1990 alone—in order to enforce its ban of gays and lesbians in the military. Between 1980 and 1990, 16,919 service members were dismissed from the military for homosexuality, at a cost of \$493,195,968 to replace them.

CALIFORNIA

Southern California Women for Understanding, founded 16 years ago to gather lesbians to educate and promote social change, has changed its name and gone national. Now called the National Association of Women for Understanding, the group is the largest of its kind in the world, with chapters throughout southern California, as well as a national chapter in Delaware. NAWU encourages networking with and support for other groups and organizations. For more information,

contact Beverly Taylor, National Coordinator, at 1-800-OK WOMEN.

Amnesty International has released a report accusing Los Angeles police officers and sheriff's deputies of using excessive force that sometimes amounts to torture. Former Chief Daryl Gates dismissed the criticism as coming from "knucklehead liberals." The 62-page report listed numerous cases of people, often blacks and Hispanics, being shot, beaten, shocked with stun guns and attacked by police dogs, although they posed little or no threat to arresting officers or deputies.

A Navy board unanimously recommended discharging a sailor who revealed his homosexuality on national news. Petty Officer Keith Meinhold, 30, said, "I was aware the first time I opened my mouth that there was a probability of sacrificing my career." Timing his announcement with the introduction of a bill in Congress to end the military ban on homosexuality, Meinhold, who has received high performance evaluations throughout his 12-year career, said he intends to file a civil suit against the Navy asserting that it violated his constitutional right to equal protection under the law.

FLORIDA

Conservative attacks on pro-gay ordinances in four Florida cities appear to be organized right-wing assault on anti-bias protections. Spearheaded by the Tupelo, Miss.-based American Family Association, the campaign has succeeded in persuading the Gainesville City Commission to pass a resolution condemning gay-rights guarantees, convinced a Tampa judge to submit that city's ban on anti-gay discrimination to a referendum on the general election ballot, limited the area covered by an anti-gay bias ban in Hillsborough County and attempted to block the use of a Tallahassee public library room by the Tallahassee Lesbian and Gay Film Festival.

ILLINOIS

The Chicago Tribune has joined the list of mainstream papers outing Assistant Secretary of Defense Pete Williams, the Pentagon's closeted chief spokesman, by reporting on *The Advocate's* 1992 "Sissy Awards," the magazine's annual send-up of homophobes. Williams, whom *The Advocate* exposed last year as being gay, supports the military ban on gays and lesbians in the armed services.

MASSACHUSETTS

U.S. Customs officials in the past three months seized two separate shipments of literature en route to Boston's Glad Day bookshop, a gay and lesbian bookseller. Following the first seizure of materials in its 13-year history, Glad Day reported that customs officials said the literature, including a gay guide to Spain, was in violation of an obscenity provision in the U.S. code.

MICHIGAN

A man ended his long and bitter dispute with the lesbian couple who lived next door by shooting the women to death in their own driveway. Susan Pittman and Christine Puckett were killed May 5 as they were building a fence along the driveway. A 65-year-old man, James Brooks, was arrested and charged with the crime, which reportedly stemmed from a quarter-century of sour relations between the neighbors over property lines, pets and the women's open displays of affection. According to Susan's niece, "He was always complaining about something. He was always threatening to shoot my aunt." She said the women had often complained to police in the past, but "they would always say there was nothing they could do until he did something. Well, he did something."

The Detroit News

MONTANA

Montana activists are attempting to repeal the state's "sexual deviate misconduct" law which bars sexual contact or sexual intercourse between two persons of the same sex and carries a sentence of 10 years and/or a fine of \$50,000. Activists are encouraged to send statements opposing the law and donations in support of the effort to: Montana Women's Lobby, 101 E Broadway, #601, Missoula, MT 59802, phone: (406) 549-4466.

NEW YORK

The publishing industry has recognized the economic potential of books by and about gay men and lesbians. Once restricted to specialty bookshops and presses, now virtually every major publisher offers at least one overtly gay or lesbian title in its catalogues, and book clubs offer lesbian and gay titles as featured selections. Booksellers and publishers have noted that the gay and lesbian literary market has grown. Marketing techniques have also spurred growth, with publishers promoting the lesbian and gay theme of books, rather than trying to hide it.

New York City Mayor David Dinkins an-

nounced the creation of the Stonewall History Project, a collaborative effort of the Brooklyn Historical Society, the Museum of the City of New York, the New York Historical Society, the New York Public Library and the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies of the City University of New York. Said Dinkins: "The Stonewall riots represent a watershed event in the gay and lesbian struggle to attain their long overdue civil and human rights. The riots will serve as a point of entry into the larger history of lesbians and gays in New York." Materials ranging as early as the colonial period will be included. For information about donating materials, call Project Director Fred Wasserman, (718) 624-0890.

Four members of ACT UP invited themselves to a Park Avenue "icebreaker" to heckle Oregon's 57-member delegation to the Democratic convention in New York. A spokesperson from ACT UP told Associated Press that they were targeting 12 states for protest during the convention because of their poor records on gay rights.

Specifically, the gay protestors were critical of the Oregon Citizen Alliance's proposed "abnormal behaviors" amendment to the state constitution and Oregon's new plan to experiment with health-care rationing. The gay protestors asserted that the health-care plan would treat people with AIDS, women and children unfairly.

Members of the delegation did not say anything in defense of the conservative OCA or their anti-gay ballot measure. However, the delegates met later with protestors to clarify specifics about the Oregon health plan. Proponents believe the plan will extend basic coverage to those who presently have no health care at all, instead of offering unlimited care to only a portion of the population.

WASHINGTON STATE

Seattle has adopted an anti-bigotry campaign, "Summer of Reconciliation and Rededication," in response to the Los Angeles riots. The centerpiece of the campaign is a 60-second TV spot that flashes bigoted epithets across the screen, followed by the message: "Hatred thrives where bigotry is tolerated." Nearly 100 representatives of diverse minority groups reviewed the ad, which was produced by Cole and Weber Advertising for free. Seattle Police Chief Patrick Fitzsimmons and City Attorney Mark Sidran said hate crimes will be vigorously pursued and prosecuted.

Compiled by Jim Hunger

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