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letters

Not sympathetic

To the Editor:
Congratulations and thanks to Ariel Waterwoman for coming forward and denouncing NAMBLA for the pedophiles they are [Just Out, July 1, 1994]. As the nephew of such a man, now deceased, I feel the gay community has an urgent need to come down on these people for the exploiters they are, and maybe help dispose of the myth concerning gay men and children. These men are not gay, they are simply different from what society accepts and, thus, have found the gay community sympathetic to their "struggle." I will not identify with this group simply due to their being different.

Maybe at times in history, society has accepted exploitation of children, whether sexual, as labor, or what have you. Even if this was true in the past, this does not make it acceptable for today's society. What is needed is an unemotional (right) discussion of the true age of consent. How a 22-year-old having sex with a 17-year-old is different from a 40-year-old purchasing a 15-year-old for sex.

Simply, there is no moral, relevant argument for letting a 40-year-old use a 10-year-old for his sexual pleasure.

Richard Knittle Jr.
Portland

Ringling bells

To the Editor:
For a brief moment I thought that the editorial in the July 1 issue was written by an OCA member. Unfortunately, I was wrong. I agree with Ariel Waterwoman that sex with children is exploitation and evil and illegal. I also agree that NAMBLA is an organization that is not part of my militant agenda for liberation. However, to say that, and I quote, "I don't recall that pedophiles have any right to civil liberties," is wrong and dangerous. Civil liberties are nonnegotiable fundamental rights and not contingent on behavior. Does any of this ring a bell?

Linda Shirley
Portland

Editor's note: The editorial in question was referring to convicted pedophiles in prison. This wasn't made clear. Incarcerated individuals do have restricted civil liberties.

In defense of NAMBLA

To the Editor:
I am writing about your editorial on NAMBLA. I disagree totally with what you say and doubt your facts stated in this tirade. Pedophiles do have rights even though they are criminals. For you to state that civil liberties do not cover someone is totally off-base. You need to get a good education about pedophiles and what they do. They are not exclu-

sively male, their behavior is not for sexual gratification generally, but for power trips. Protection from abuse is one thing, punishing and name-calling for those searching out their sexual identities and activities with consenting, knowledgeable others, without hanging up on the age difference, is something else. I do not know your sexual history, but I knew I was gay by the third grade and am thankful for the older gentlemen who taught me not only the facts of life, but about life itself.

The age of consent has differed throughout time. Marriages were common between pre-teens and teen-agers, don't you remember Romeo and Juliet? To believe that someone becomes an "adult" at a certain age is stupid. I know some who were adults at 10 and others who never made it and are in their 60s.

For you to jump on the Christian paranoid bandwagon is to defeat our fight for civil rights. Splitting up into little groups destroys our ability to fight the true battle. The only one who can say "I am ready for sex" is the person himself. Telling that person it has to be after a certain age, and only with an "acceptable" partner, is discriminatory. The only re-examination that needs to be done is your own bias and lack of knowledge. Have you not young gays and lesbians to talk to? Did you wait until 21 to have a relationship? Come on, please do a better job of investigating your facts and rewrite your editorial.

I hope that you do re-evaluate your position and see that you are doing no one except the religious right any good with editorials like this one.

James Dean Poyner
Eugene

Pride is for everyone

To the Editor:
I missed working at Lesbian and Gay Pride this year. I really wanted to do sound for our community again on this special day, as I have for the last eight years. In fact, I had been hired by Pride Northwest to do so, but they reneged on my contract at the last minute.

The organizers chose to take a last-minute offer from someone to do sound for free. They didn't even approach me about the possibility of my doing sound for free this year, to help them out.

This, after they were already obligated to me, and two weeks out from the event, making it impossible for me to find substitute employment, thus putting a huge hole in my summer income. To make matters worse, Pride Northwest, Inc., flip-flopped—I was hired, I wasn't hired, I was hired, I wasn't hired. It was clear they didn't have a clue what they were doing.

Secondly, it disappointed me greatly. Doing sound for our community, and for this event in particular, is the highlight of my year, making all the sore muscles, and sweaty work for others, somehow bearable. I love my work and am good at it. What I am not good at is being treated unfairly or dishonestly.

I am saddened and angered about the treatment

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