

letters

Alarmed and watchful

To the Editor:

In the editorial ["New Trouble," *Just Out*, Aug. 19, 1994] Ariel Waterwoman writes that the anti-abortion movement is "moving on to bigger and better causes," and shifting to anti-gay activities. She is justified in her concern that anti-gay mobilization will escalate, but there are several misconceptions in the editorial which we'd like to address.

As pro-choice activists working inside clinics which provide abortion, we're not aware of any decrease in anti-abortion violence—in fact, quite the opposite. It is true that large, national anti-abortion groups such as Right to Life are attempting to distance themselves from the "justifiable homicide" activists who have now assassinated four people (Dr. David Gunn, Dr. John Bayard Britton, escort James Barrett, and Dr. Wayne Patterson) and attempted to kill two others (Dr. George Tiller and escort June Barrett). However, the rhetoric of violence runs thick through the movement as a whole, and the contingent which believes murder of providers is justifiable and sanctioned by God is growing, not dying out.

Waterwoman suggests that "these murders may

prove to be the last gasp for the anti-abortion movement." We disagree. Federal law enforcement has notified us that Oregon is a growing "epicenter of anti-abortion violence." Portland-based Advocates for Life has harassed area clinics since 1985 and publishes *Life Advocate*, a national magazine for anti-choice extremists. In August, a new national organization, the American Coalition of Life Activists, was launched from Portland by some of the most powerful and frightening leaders of the anti-abortion movement. While the "mainstream" national anti-abortion groups' talk may officially oppose the strategy of murdering abortion providers, the extreme end of the movement is drawing support, membership and money into its fold.

As a result, our clinics are *still* devoting valuable staff time and energy to security strategies to keep ourselves and our clients safe. In fact, with several attempted and successful clinic bombings, arsons, and death threats following closely on the heels of the Pensacola murders, we're convinced that the most dangerous elements of the anti-choice movement are on the rise. At our clinics, we're alarmed and very, very watchful.

One of the biggest—and strangest—presumptions in Waterwoman's editorial is that "the abor-

tion protesters are now going to pool their resources and join with other hate groups to try to destroy our queer communities." She asks if anti-abortion activists can "make the switch to a new target group." Guess what? They don't need to link to other groups, or switch focus—these are the same people! Before the OCA targeted Springfield for anti-gay organizing, their primary issue was pushing anti-abortion legislation. It shouldn't be news to any pro-choice or gay-rights activist that the folks on the other side of these issues are the same people, involved in the same organizations.

It is worth noting that the religious right has been successful at organizing and fund-raising simultaneously around both anti-gay and anti-abortion issues. Both are sensationalized to an extreme degree by the religious right, and they are linked continuously. More importantly, both issues are part of a larger platform: Christianizing the United States government and codifying into law a morality which not even all Christians agree on. If you have any doubts, watch the immensely popular *700 Club*; its goal of a right-wing Christian takeover of our national government is blatant.

We urge both the gay community and the pro-

choice community to understand the depth of the changes sought by the religious right. This powerful and well-funded movement doesn't simply want to eliminate abortion, or eliminate basic rights for gays and lesbians. These are merely particular issues in a much larger agenda for social transformation which includes a return to strictly defined nuclear families as the only viable option in our society, complete support for sexism and heterosexism, the utter subjugation of women to men, and, of course, right-wing Christian values as the basis for all local, state and federal governance.

Watch out. Though we disagree that the anti-abortion movement has had the wind knocked out of it, we do agree with Waterwoman that the radical right is mobilizing against the gay community. Everyone who values freedom and diversity in our society needs to band together to fight the religious right.

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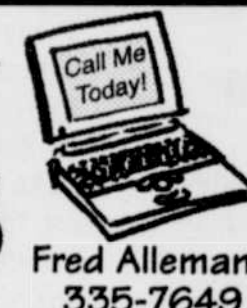
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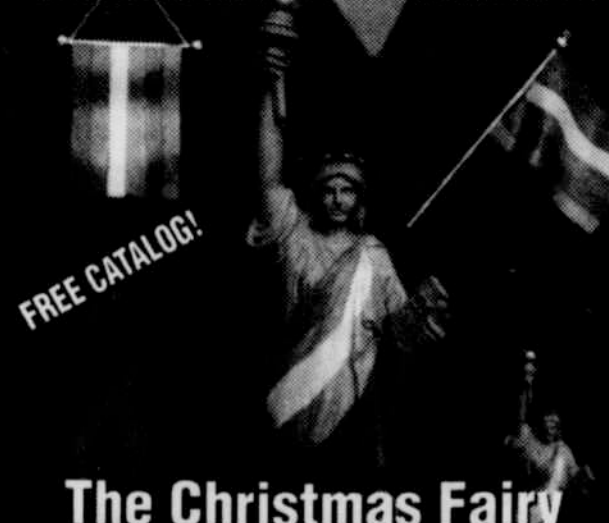
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