

A banner day

Snickers LaBarr will ride the bus after all

by Margaret Deirdre O'Hartigan

Don't be surprised if, during the next month, you find yourself under the scrutiny of Snickers LaBarr gazing at you from the back of a Tri-Met bus. Images of Portland's drag queen talk show hostess began appearing on 10 Tri-Met buses on Feb. 15, as part of a settlement reached between Jerry "Snickers LaBarr" Kallioinen, Tri-Met, and Obie Media Corporation.

In a compromise settlement reached earlier this month, Kallioinen agreed not to sue Tri-Met and Obie Media in exchange for 10 bus banners to be produced and run for 30 days at no expense to him. In addition, Kallioinen is receiving \$2,500.

The settlement stems from a dispute that arose in the summer of 1994, when Kallioinen submitted a proposed advertisement for his cable talk show to Obie Media, which handles all advertis-

perceived sexual orientation.

Negotiations, in which Kallioinen was represented by Portland attorney and state representative George Eighmey, began in early January and continued through the month. Kallioinen consistently insisted, through the course of negotiating, that any agreement could in no way preclude publicizing the terms of settlement. As a gay activist, Kallioinen saw this as an opportunity to demonstrate to sexual minorities how to challenge discriminatory practices.

Of greatest importance for Portland's queer community, Kallioinen believes, is the agreement's stipulation concerning modifications to Tri-Met's existing nondiscrimination policy. Kallioinen's representative, Eighmey, will be meeting with Tri-Met General Manager Tom Walsh for the purpose of amending Tri-Met policy



Snickers LaBarr

ing on the outside of Tri-Met buses. As recounted by Kallioinen in the Oct. 21, 1994, issue of *Just Out*, "Obie contacted us...stating that Tri-Met had decided to reject the advertising and the sign because it did not feel it reflected 'family values.'" Kallioinen later learned that the project was rejected before anyone at Tri-Met ever saw the proposed ad.

Brian Obie, of Obie Media, was vague concerning the reasons for his firm's rejection of the ad when contacted last October. "I didn't know who the host was—female or male impersonator," he stated. Despite Obie's claim that his firm was reconsidering the sign, no decision was forthcoming. Kallioinen filed a charge of discrimination with the State of Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries, which handles such complaints for the City of Portland.

In notarized statements filed with BOLI, Kallioinen alleged unlawful public accommodation discrimination on the basis of both sex and

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as it relates to non-discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Kallioinen is pleased with the agreement, for its impact upon the community as much as for himself personally. "It was a long haul but definitely worth it. I would do it all again just for the very fact it really helped the

progress of human rights and was a landmark event for the gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans community. I take pride in that."

He adds, "I'm hoping for the time when action like this won't even be necessary."

According to Kallioinen, the banners promoting the *Snickers LaBarr Show* mark the first gay advertising ever to appear on Tri-Met buses.

No wonder Snickers is smiling as she gazes down on you from the back of the bus.

The Snickers LaBarr Show can be seen on Multnomah County Television Channel 21, Cable Access Network Channel 11, and Tualatin Valley Cable Access Channel 59.

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