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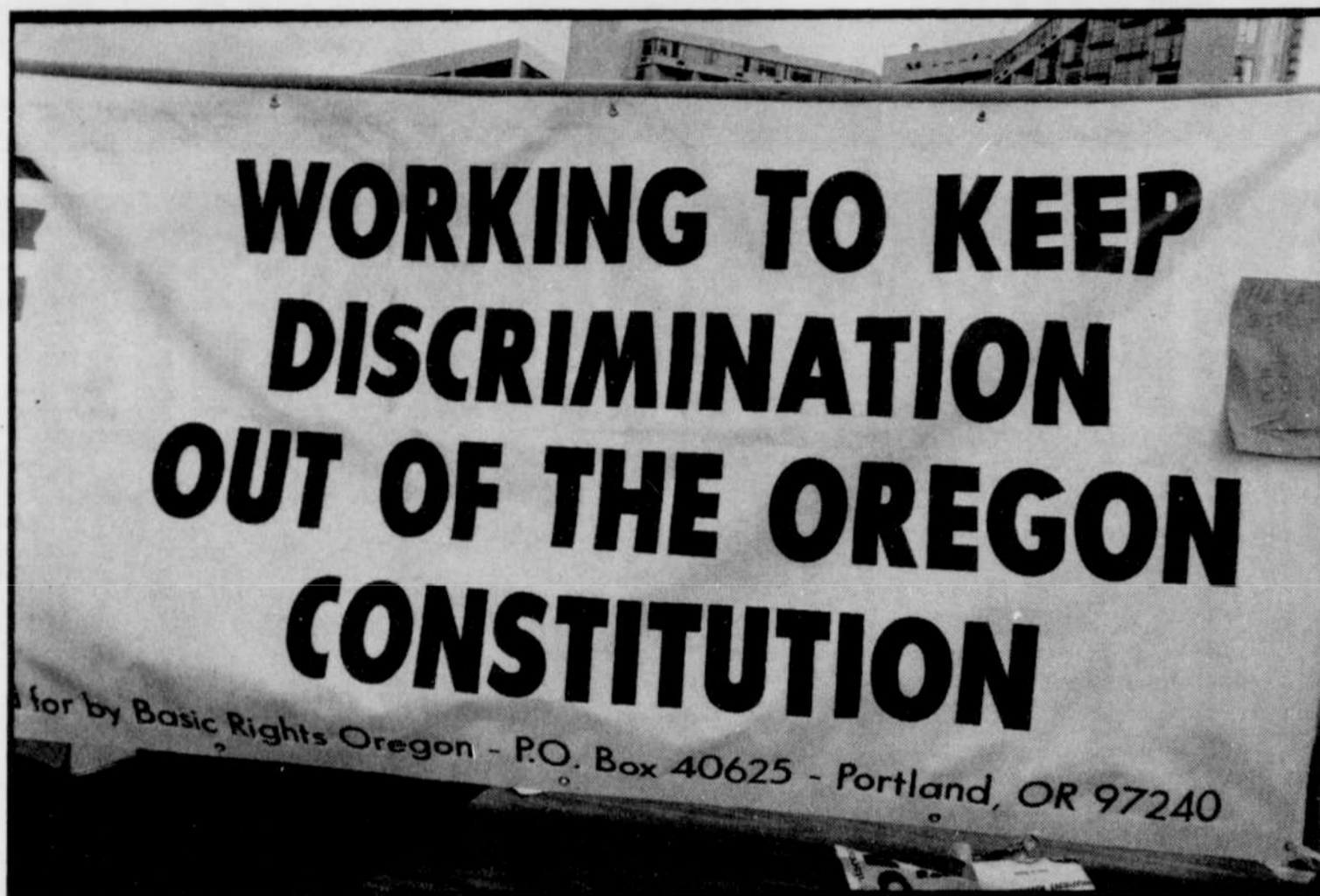


PHOTO BY LINDA KLEWER

editorial

Lazy days of summer

Spend the day at a county fair helping prevent OCA-backed initiatives from reaching the November 1996 ballot

by Renée LaChance

It's hot, it's sunny, it hasn't rained in days. Weather like this inspires us all to be outside playing, gardening, swimming, hiking, biking—doing all the active things we can do here that make Oregon a great place to live. It's not easy to think about what makes Oregon a difficult place to live—the Oregon Citizens Alliance.

I'm not trying to bring you down from your sunshine high, really. I just want to remind you that those lovely folks who brought us ballot measures 9 and 13 are out this month at the county fairs gathering signatures for their divisive initiatives. We have until the end of June 1996 to keep the OCA from getting enough signatures to put its hate-filled initiatives on the November 1996 ballot. The OCA gets a large number of signatures and support for its anti-sexual minority fervor at the county fairs.

The OCA spouts rhetoric about family values because this is where emotions can be easily exploited to successfully legislate against gay men and lesbians. The fairs are a great place for the OCA to bend the ears of Oregon families who may have misperceptions about sexual minorities. We need to be a visible presence at the fairs telling the truth about lesbians and gay men—countering the lies, myths and misinformation that will be readily available there.

The Rural Organizing Project is spearheading a campaign utilizing informational postcards that encourage people to think before they sign initiative petitions. The postcards point out the problem of neighbor-against-neighbor ballot measures and instruct people to decline to sign initiatives unless they really support them and unless the initiatives address real problems. These postcards should be handed out near the OCA's booths at the state and county fairs to encourage people not to sign the initiatives. (Call ROP at 543-3978 for information on how to

get the postcards.)

Beyond the Closet is sponsoring speakers and performers in a series of events this fall to educate the people living in Bend about issues of human rights, racism and homophobia. It would be ideal for BTC to have a booth at the Deschutes County Fair with information on their group and educational materials about homophobia.

Basic Rights Oregon is launching an aggressive house meeting strategy where participants can learn more about the OCA's tactics and pledge not to vote for OCA-backed initiatives. According to executive director Julie Davis, 2,000 pledge cards have been sent out thus far, and the group hopes to connect with 200,000 voters during the next several months. Basic Rights Oregon should be at as many fairs as possible this month with its pledge cards gathering support against the OCA.

Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays is doing outreach to schools in Oregon through school counselors with a packet of materials geared to gay youth and parents of gay youth. It would be great if P-FLAG could be at the fairs with its brochures and pamphlets.

These are just a few of the many human rights organizations in every county of Oregon that are doing outreach and educational work to stem the efforts of the OCA and its seemingly endless stream of initiatives. Each of these groups has printed material ready to disseminate that counters the misinformation of the OCA and may help keep these divisive initiatives off Oregon's ballot.

Now what is needed are brave souls to take this information out to the throngs of happy fairgoers. Spend a day at the fair countering the OCA. Take the time now, so you won't have to work so hard in the fall of '96.

contents

VOL. 12 NO. 19 AUGUST 4, 1995

FEATURE

No end to the grieving

Research has uncovered another devastating effect of the AIDS pandemic—the toll it takes on survivors

(pp. 17-19)

DEPARTMENTS

World news

Finland bans sexual orientation discrimination; ILGA's Ukraine conference: there was no "there" there
(p. 4)

National news

Ryan White passes the Senate; an NGLTF survey shows hate legislation on the upswing
(pp. 5-9)

Local news

Oregon women will attend the U.N. conference in Beijing—but lesbians may be turned away
(pp. 11-15)

COLUMNS

Spirituality

Unity churches affirm support for diversity
(p. 10)

Queer thing

Howard begins a new chapter
(p. 29)

Amazon trail

A brush with serious illness teaches about courage
(p. 30)

ARTS

Theater

OSF's Daedalus Project is quite a gala; the queers that brought you Dolly; Emma Goldman: still dangerous after all these years
(pp. 24-26)

Books

After years in the wings, the author of Better Angel comes out
(p. 27)

Media

Newsweek discovers bisexuals; Keanu comes clean
(p. 28)