

letters

RTP stands by its endorsement criteria

To the Editor:

Anne Ross' letter to the editor [*Just Out*, April 5, 1996] concerning RTP PAC's early endorsements of Bob Duehmig, Frank Dixon and Gail Shibley raises important concerns about becoming "insular and single-issue focused." Unfortunately, her comments about the work of RTP PAC, and these endorsements in particular, are not only misdirected but offensive.

Right to Privacy PAC took an early look at races where an openly gay or lesbian candidate was running for an important open seat. After interviewing all candidates who responded to our questionnaire, we found three candidates perfectly matched to represent their districts. Frank Dixon's neighborhood activism; coalition-building experience; and clear, calm and decisive leadership style clearly make him the best candidate for Senate District 6. Gail Shibley's pioneering politics helped establish her early on as a highly regarded, highly respected legislator. Her support for women's health and wellness, the quality of the environment, and funding for education are critical components of her future work on the City Council. Bob Duehmig's support for worker's rights, women's health concerns, and environmental preservation are well matched to his district. In addition, his broad experience as Legislative Specialist for the Oregon Federation of Teachers, Education and Health Professionals has shown his extensive legislative knowledge, tenacity, skill and political savvy—all qualities House District 12 has enjoyed in its previous legislators and needs in its next State Representative.

Oh, and yes, they are all openly gay. And yes, that does matter. Anyone who thinks the gay and lesbian community is playing on a level field is sadly mistaken. If the playing field were level, we'd have already passed a civil rights bill; we would not face an OCA-sponsored anti-gay ballot measure every two years; we would not have to worry whether our jobs or our very lives were at risk if we came out in the workplace. Openly gay, lesbian and bisexual legislators have made a huge impact on their colleagues in Salem, moving the conservative legislature closer to supporting gay rights. We cannot let that impact decline. If anything, we must increase it.

However, in the past, Right to Privacy PAC has neither endorsed exclusively nor instantly openly gay or lesbian persons over supportive straight candidates for public office. In 1992, we made a dual endorsement for both Fred Neal and Earl Blumenauer for the City Council—a recognition of Earl Blumenauer's support of the gay community. We made a dual endorsement for Jeanne Atkins and Chuck Carpenter; for Tom Mason (who was supportive at the time) and Jerry Keene. When Kate Brown first ran for the House of Representatives as an openly bisexual woman, we endorsed her opponent, Judy Bauman—a woman who was instrumental in getting Gail Shibley appointed to the House of Representatives and who had tirelessly supported gay and lesbian civil rights.

As Ross points out, our community is gaining more legislative authority and experience. We've learned expert skills in defeating anti-gay ballot measures. But we must keep working. We need effective, intelligent, competent leaders in public

office. If they are also openly gay or lesbian, our work is made a little easier. But to suggest that being gay is the only reason RTP endorsed Bob Duehmig, Frank Dixon and Gail Shibley is offensive. We endorsed the best candidates. Period.

Barry Pack, Executive Director
Right to Privacy PAC

Hey, don't blame us

To the Editor:

In a recent issue [*Just Out*, March 15, 1996] there was a letter from Lani Schumaker, who was "shocked and concerned" when she spotted a former boyfriend in a picture of Brother to Brother Portland. While her feelings are valid, we feel compelled to respond.

First, Schumaker claims that her health and life were jeopardized by having a relationship with a bisexual man who was unfaithful. The issue is not sexual orientation, it's behavior, and Schumaker is ultimately responsible for hers—including having unprotected sex with anybody.

Second, Schumaker implies that bisexual men leave behind a "trail of innocent [female] victims...whose lives are endangered by [bisexual men's] irresponsible and selfish behavior." In addition to indicting all bisexual men, her statement suggests that bisexual men are incapable of having mature relationships with women and, we assume, men. Trust and communication are the cornerstones of healthy relationships, and one's ability to practice these skills is in no way related to sexual orientation.

It sounds like Schumaker had an unhealthy relationship with one African American bisexual man. We challenge Schumaker to refrain from judging all African American men, as well as our organization, based on this one, apparently dysfunctional, relationship.

Brother to Brother
Portland

Canada more friendly than its border guards

To the Editor:

As a Canadian who spends a great deal of time in Portland and has many U.S. friends who visit me in Vancouver, I was dismayed to read the letter from John Dutcher of Seattle [*Just Out*, March 15, 1996] about his mistreatment by Canadian Customs and Immigration. I have taken the liberty of copying the letter to my Member of Parliament, Dr. Hedy Fry, who I hope can make a difference in ensuring that this type of treatment to visitors does not occur again.

However, I must admit I do have my doubts, as this is the same organisation—Canadian Customs—which has consistently confiscated books and magazines destined for Little Sister's, a gay and lesbian bookstore in Vancouver.

With the countless number of visitors crossing into Canada from the United States every day, I hope Dutcher's letter does not dissuade anyone from visiting our wonderful country. Please do not judge us based on the ignorance of some insignificant border guards—we truly are a friendly, open, trusting and tolerant society.

Mark Robins
Vancouver, B.C.

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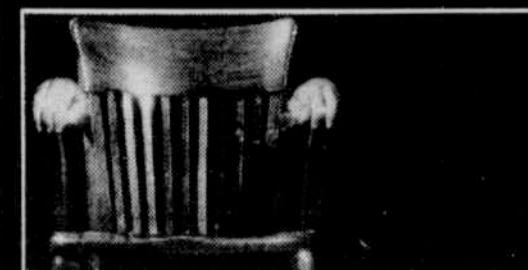
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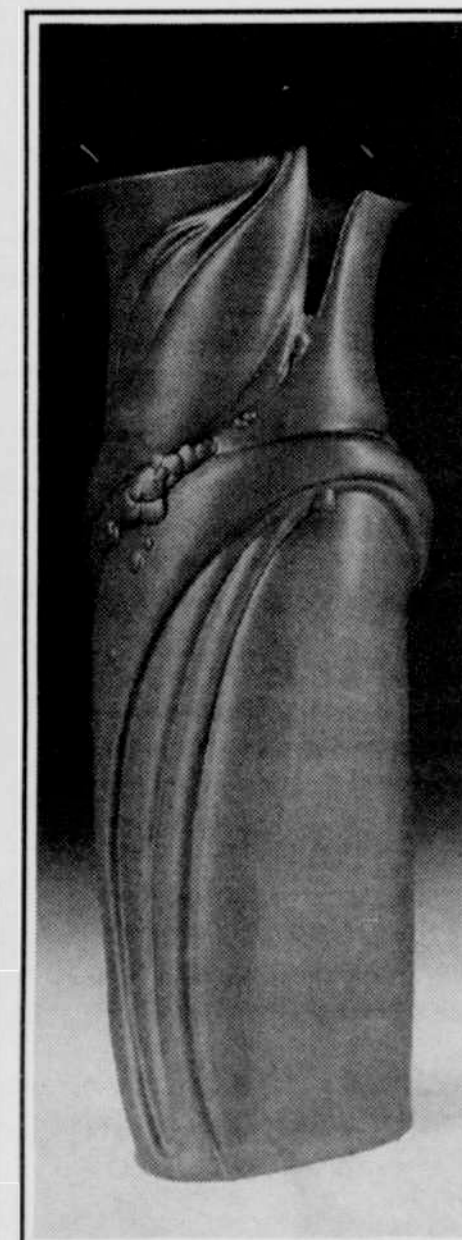
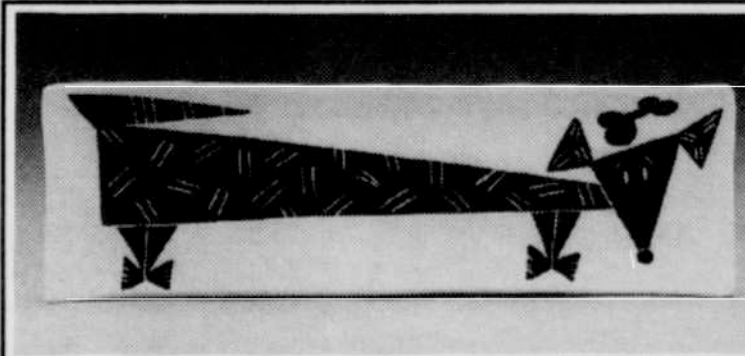


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