

STONEWALL BABY

Just say dough

Welcome to a world where advertisers appeal to your politics and your sexuality; where voting is done with your wallet

by Will O'Bryan

Buy for justice. Buy for peace. Just buy. This whole scheme of businesses vying for gay dollars is starting to make me a little bit cynical.

My first clue that things had gotten out of hand was the American Airlines strike. After Clinton ordered the pilots back to work and fares plummeted, I wondered whether I should take advantage of the cheap tickets.

Then I had to admit that crossing a forcibly dissolved picket line would be somewhat anti-labor. Then again, American was the official carrier to a lot of gay events lately.

But wait, wasn't American's pro-gay profile a feat of marketing in the wake of some reported anti-gay incidents on a couple of their planes headed to the March on Washington a few years back? I'm not sure.

Thinking about all this opened a socio-economic can of worms in my Catholic-reared, guilt-ridden psyche. I'm addicted to always want-

But judging by her string of bitter ex-girlfriends, I'm not convinced Martina's gay-friendly.

As the economy becomes globalized and gargantuan, I'm told people should vote with their dollars or pesos or dinar. Voter apathy will be counterbalanced by politically applied consumerism. Why do I need to vote if I've got the right long-distance company and credit card funneling profits to support my causes? All I have to do is spend.

How do I fight homophobia? Do I write letters, be out and proud, or do I boycott *Braveheart*? Pathetically, I chose the latter.

I'm not insisting that companies that advertise their products as queer-friendly and tout their freedom-fighting profits are taking anyone for a ride. I applaud them, actually. I just don't want to feel guilty because I can't afford every product lovingly designed for my lifestyle. Nor do I want to be lulled to a point of complacency where I think charging something makes a political statement stronger than "I love the free market."



ing to do the right (left, rather) thing. I feel guilty when I buy nonorganic produce. I feel guilty for not eating enough of any kind of produce. I don't see much difference between eating a hamburger and pounding the nails into some starving third world baby's coffin. Guilt creates its own logic.

Point being, I'm now harassed into buying gay-friendly items. Another category for me to question when spending my meager resources. Is it dolphin-friendly? Is it ozone-friendly? Can I recycle it? Will the profit somehow, somewhere, sometime and to some small degree be used to attack gay people?

I think my computer is gay-friendly. (Twenty years ago, no one would have known what that meant.) Some of my clothes are; some aren't. Some of the things I drink—beer, for example—may be very gay-friendly. But does my beer really approve of my sexuality or just my moolah?

Martina is used to market to gay consumers.

On the other hand, I do think it's appropriate to think twice about buying cigarettes from a company that might give financial support to a politician that hates you. (I'll hit you over the head with a brick, just in case: I mean Jesse Helms. I won't tell you which company, though.) If you're making a major purchase, it wouldn't hurt to look into a company's domestic partner benefits, or lack thereof. Maybe a competitor is committed to making the world a better place for you.

Ironically, these issues are the result of gay men and lesbians becoming mainstream. As our minority evolves socially and politically, we'll adopt the same trappings as everybody else. Today I can get checks printed with Bible psalms or pink triangles.

I do want those trappings, though. Bring on the bourgeois if it means I can get married and file my taxes with Mr. X.

But it's still a battle to get there. And while it's good to fund it, don't forget that fighting is better.



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