

Too grand

A Portland group seeks to mobilize at least 2,000 bisexuals by the millennium

by Inga Sorensen

Sven Bonnichsen wants to help usher bisexuals out of the closet and into Pioneer Courthouse Square.

Two thousand bisexuals, to be exact. "That's the goal—more would be even better," says the enthusiastic political director of the Portland Bisexual Alliance, a year-and-a-half old support and advocacy group for bisexuals.

On March 28, PBA will hold a planning meeting to discuss its vision—"Bi 2000"—a pun of sorts about gathering 2,000 bisexuals to celebrate and rally at the Rose City's most public spot sometime in the year 2000.

Bonnichsen, 25, acknowledges that the task of transforming this vision into reality will likely be laced with challenges.

At the same time, he may be the person to pull it off, given his desire and flair for theatrics. (During his graduation ceremony at Reed College last year, he wore a "tasteful" pink prom

meetings of the [Portland Police Bureau's] Sexual Minority Roundtable, the Rose Court, and Pride Northwest."

PBA has also launched "Bisexuality 101," a workshop designed to educate people about bisexuality. Phoenix Rising Foundation and Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays are among the organizations that have recently requested a "Bisexuality 101" session.

"There are still so many myths out there about bisexuality," says Bonnichsen, "like the belief that bisexuality doesn't exist. When you actually see and hear bisexual people, it's hard to say we're not for real."

PBA, which Bonnichsen says has an estimated 35 dues-paying members, is making a concerted effort to be heard.

The group is sponsoring ongoing public demonstrations against *Willamette Week's* personals ad policy. PBA is unhappy that the weekly newspaper's policy calls for bisexuals' personals



PHOTO BY LINDA KLEWER

Pioneer Courthouse Square, site of the proposed gathering

gown—not to mock women, but rather to make a point about sexist societal rules that dictate how the genders dress themselves. He also cops to being happiest when he has a picket sign in his hand.)

"The bi community is a relatively young one. It seems that we haven't had any long-term, big visions of where we want to go nationally or locally," he explains.

"I started thinking that at least locally we could hold a summer rally, then I thought perhaps we should make it an annual event, and then I thought, 'Why not aim for something really big?' That's how Bi 2000 came about," continues Bonnichsen. "I just think it would be incredible to have this kind of large-scale event. Just imagine a speakout of bisexual men and women. Maybe we could connect an international [bisexual] conference with it. That's all very exciting to me."

Among PBA's top concerns are violence against sexual minorities, the ostracism often experienced by bisexuals both within the gay and lesbian community and heterosexual society, and visibility issues.

"One of our primary missions is advocacy," says Bonnichsen. "We're making a real effort to establish a bi voice at various forums, like at

to be placed under the category "Other," regardless of where they would like their ads to run.

PBA held a protest during *Willamette Week's* "Cupid, Culture & Cocktails Bash" on Valentine's Day.

Eleven demonstrators handed out flyers, held up signs and spoke to people attending the [heterosexual-oriented] dance. Members of the Lesbian Avengers and Bradley-Angle House Bi Women's Caucus showed up to support PBA's cause. A similar demonstration occurred during a same-sex event sponsored by *Willamette Week* on March 3.

"We'll keep doing this until they change their policy," vows Bonnichsen, adding it's simply part of PBA's goal to work toward equity and fairness for bisexuals.

The Portland Bisexual Alliance is sponsoring a March 21 discussion entitled "Men and Bisexuality." It will be held at 7 pm at Laughing Horse Books, 3625 SE Division in Portland. The first Bi 2000 planning meeting is slated for March 28 at 7 pm at Common Grounds Coffee House, 4321 SE Hawthorne Blvd., in Portland. For further information, contact PBA at 232-9275.

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