

What exactly does sexual orientation have to do with war?

Nothing, really, except that it does lend itself to some amusing innuendoes. (Insert your favorite rocket launcher and/or "Lick Bush" joke here.)

Seriously, though, it stands to reason that the gay rights movement has crossed paths with the peace movement. Both are concerned with achieving justice for all, whether you're a queer student killed in a Midwest hate crime or an Iraqi mother killed in a Mideast war crime.

According to a nationwide survey conducted in February, only 31 percent of sexual minority adults have confidence that the White House will "make the right decisions" regarding the use of U.S. troops in Iraq. (Hetero support was twice that amount.) More than two-thirds of queer respondents believe President Bush prefers a war rather than trying to achieve his main goals without a military attack. (Barely half of the straight folks felt the same way.)

Last month the American Friends Service Committee and National Youth Advocacy Coalition released the issue brief "Is Opposing the War an LGBT Issue?" The publication examines the side effects of the U.S. response to terrorism—racial profiling, a crackdown on immigration, loss of privacy rights—and concludes that "if ever there were a time for LGBT organizations to understand, speak out against and resist the violence of law enforcement and militarization, that time is now."

Locally, several queer groups have taken official stances against the war: Basic Rights Oregon, Pride at Work Oregon, Love Makes



PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS

WAR AND PEACE

Sexual minorities community reacts to the conflict in Iraq

by Jim Radosta

a Family and the Lesbian Community Project. National organizations such as the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and Soulforce also are lending their voices to the push for peace.

Although these nonprofits might be straying from their mission statements by publicly opposing the war, they are part of a growing trend in the gay rights movement to work in "coalition" (not *that* coalition—the good kind)

involved in Veterans for Human Rights, a non-profit formed in 1992 to promote equality for active, reserve and veteran members of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Dixon supported BRO's decision because of the "radical nature" of President Bush's insistence on ignoring the U.N. inspection process and launching a preemptive strike on a nation. He says this type of foreign policy runs counter to U.S. military tradition.

"That was a close call," he admits. "But this was, in my mind, a dramatic turning point in the country and potentially has ramifications for years for the gay and lesbian community.... You can't morally justify war in that manner, and I think over the long run it's a very dangerous place for the United States to be in terms of foreign policy and its relationship with the rest of the world.... Who knows what's next. There's Korea...Iraq, Iran. Where is it gonna end?"

Dixon says the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks created an atmosphere that allowed opportunistic politicians to exploit the fears of U.S. citizens. Now that the war is under way, he predicts people will be pressured to remain silent.

"There is a strong tendency on the part of Americans to just sort of circle the wagons



Frank Dixon

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Frank Dixon serves as co-chairman of the Basic Rights Oregon board, which voted Feb. 26 to join the Win Without War coalition. The gay man—who spent 20 years in the U.S. Army Reserve, retiring as a major—also is