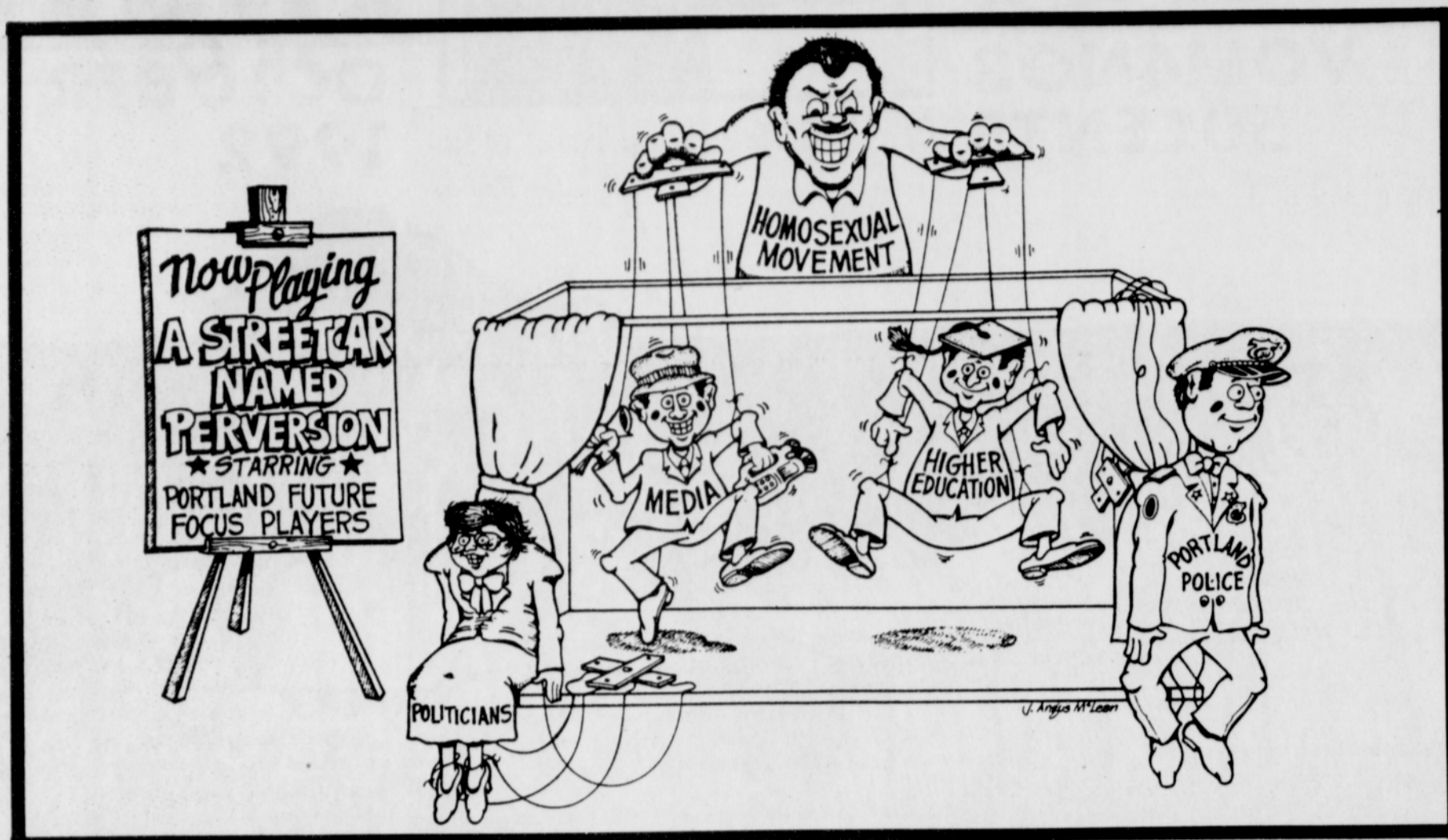


# BIGOTS, BIBLES & BALLOTS



J. ANGUS McLEAN, FOR OCA

BY SCOT NAKAGAWA

The issues of equal protection under the law and democratic participation for all groups in our society has become the single most divisive and loudly debated political issue of our times. Rightwingers ranging from white supremacist groups such as the Aryan Nations and the Ku Klux Klan, to more mainstream religious right-wing groups such as Concerned Women for America and the Christian Coalition, all formed as a part of a societywide backlash against the gains of the civil rights movement, have been involved in organizing opposition to those most fundamental principles of democracy — equal protection, equal participation, and self-determination.

A generation after the civil rights movement, rightwing forces are organizing another movement with fundamentally opposed values. A central theme of this movement against equality and participatory democracy is that in post-civil rights movement America, minorities are claiming "special rights," signalling a need to return to "traditional values." At a time when the cry "Forward together — backward never!" has inspired a generation of post-civil rights era progressives to face fear and move forward to the creation of a new and more equitable society, the bigots of the Right are exploiting fear to mobilize popular sentiment and direct it backward to "traditional values" — traditional values like bigotry and reactionary scapegoating.

David Duke put forward the white supremacist movement's best strategy when, during a campaign full of subtle claims that blacks are promoting drug abuse, he provoked pre-civil rights nostalgia among his white constituents by raising the banner of "traditional family values" and then asking, "remember when the only dope in town was the dumb guy down the block?" Judging from the response of his constituency, he may as well have given a Nazi salute while shouting "Backward together — forward never!" All this in the midst of a campaign run under the slogan "Equal Rights for All — Special Privileges for None."

The themes of returning to "traditional values" and fighting against "special rights" currently being adopted by the white supremacist movement were originally crafted by the new Christian Right. Through nationally-based think tanks and community-based social and political groups, the leadership of the new Christian Right has popularized a new/old way of understanding democracy, citizenship, and liberation which serves one of the common needs of both white supremacy and the new Right: the promotion of strategies which divide and conquer progressive pro-democratic coalitions formed to uphold human rights.

In Oregon, as throughout the country, much of the debate over democratic participation and equal protection has centered on the issue of gay and lesbian rights. White supremacist groups such as Tom Metzger's White Aryan Resistance have advocated quarantines for gays on the ground that gays are spreading AIDS, and promote anti-gay violence. The new Christian Right has pursued the issue with the mainstream political system, and is taking an electoral approach to popularizing a wide array of solutions to

the "gay problem," ranging from establishing quarantines to targeting homosexuals for constitutional exclusion.

The gay rights controversy has become the "wedge" issue of reactionary forces on all levels of society. Using this "wedge" as a point of entry, rightwing groups have infiltrated major institutions, recruited constituents, raised money, and disrupted progressive activity throughout the United States, all to serve much broader political agendas which include dismantling many or all gains of the civil rights movement.

The group which has taken leadership in legitimizing and mainstreaming anti-gay sentiment in our state is the Christian Right group, Oregon Citizens Alliance (OCA). On the foundation of their success at rescinding a governor's executive order banning discrimination against gays in public employment in 1988, the OCA has built a statewide constituency which they hope to mobilize on a wide array of issues such as reproductive choice, free speech, U.S. foreign policy, equal opportunity employment policies, public school policy, social welfare, and others.

That the OCA's success has been built on the notion that they are a conservative Christian organization is not unusual. Instead, it is indicative of a national movement among new Rightists to use a fundamentalist and super-authoritarian interpretation of Christianity to legitimize their anti-democratic agendas. Under the guise of Christian morality, the national new Right movement has used clever and manipulative tactics to mobilize millions of politically committed, ideologically trained Christian rightwing activists based almost entirely in white communities.

Using a practice called spiritual warfare, rightwing Christian leaders encourage constituents to pray for political as opposed to purely spiritual issues, to promote a form of religious warfare against the deterioration of the economic base and social life of American society. For these radical rightwing Christians, the source of the national economic crisis, the changing structure of the American family, the proliferation of drug trade and abuse, social violence,

and AIDS can be traced to liberals, third world immigration, homosexuals, feminists, the poor, people of color, and communists. These groups, rightwing Christians say, want "special rights," and the demands they feel are made on this basis are seeding the destruction of society.

The ultimate aim of the Christian Right is to destroy progressive coalitions, split society along racial, gender and religious lines, and infiltrate all political, social, and economic institutions. They are laying the groundwork for popularizing an exclusive Christian Right controlled interpretation of citizenship and human rights. Simply put, their goal is to return constitutional law, as the Oregon Citizens Alliance states among its principles, to the "original construction and intent of the founders." It is significant to note that some of the founding fathers owned slaves, and according to the original construction and intent of the constitution, only white males enjoyed full rights of citizenship, and women and people of color were not considered fully human.

The following background report is an attempt to offer information regarding the OCA, both to create a fuller picture of what they are, and to demonstrate the function of new Right reactionary politicking by example.

The Oregon Citizens Alliance grew out of Joe Lutz's 1986 GOP senatorial campaign in which Lutz lost in the primary to Bob Packwood after garnering 42% of the Republican vote. Lutz, with his campaign aides Lon Mabon, Dick Younts and T. J. Bailey, founded the OCA in 1987 in Klamath Falls, Oregon. T. J. Bailey was then the chair of the Oregon Republican Party. The original mission of the OCA was to act as a group which could support the candidacies of Christian Right activists.

At its inception, the OCA was a significant force in the Oregon Republican Party, but by no means a major force in the state. OCA activists controlled the selection of delegates to the Republican National Convention in 1988. Since that time their base within the Oregon Republican Party has diminished significantly, while their efforts outside the party have grown greatly.

On May 1, 1988, the OCA moved its headquarters from Klamath Falls, where they were based in the home of Lon and Bonnie Mabon, to Wilsonville, where it was felt they would be strategically located between Salem (the state capitol) and Portland.

Since its founding, the OCA has been involved in a number of different organizing efforts. For example, in the 1987 legislature the OCA opposed a state-aided pre-kindergarten program on the grounds that it interfered with the family; they opposed state divestment from corporations active in South Africa on the grounds that divestment would hurt minorities; and they opposed parental leave as anti-business. All these measures passed in spite of OCA opposition.

In 1988, the OCA introduced a campaign through the initiative process to rescind then-Oregon Governor Neil Goldschmidt's executive order banning discrimination based on sexual orientation in public employment. After several delays, the OCA initiated their drive to collect

