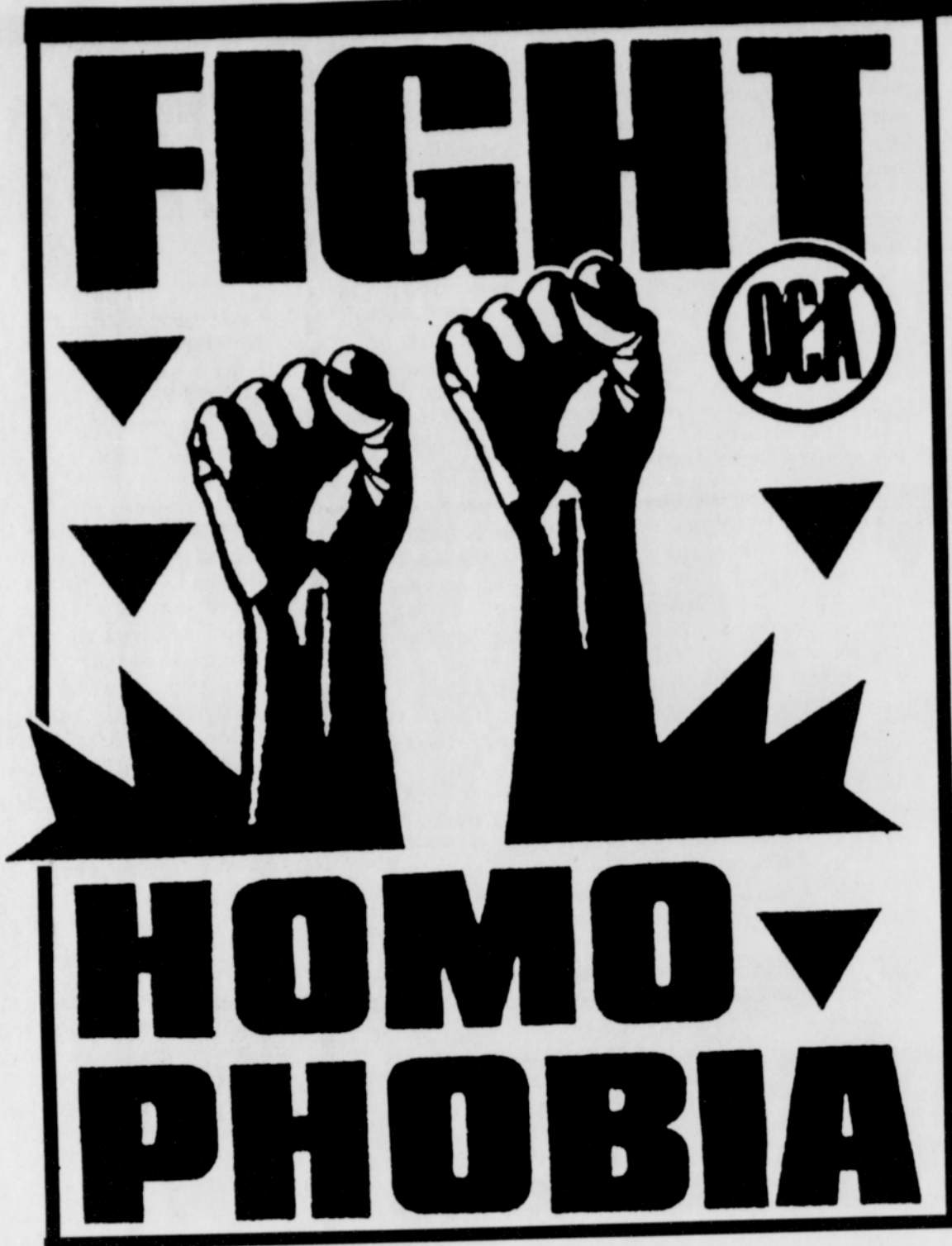




COALITION FOR HUMAN DIGNITY

FROM PAGE 3

In the area of infiltrating public institutions, the religious right activist and OCA state coalition coordinator, Loretta Neet, was appointed to the Springfield Human Rights Commission by the mayor, causing the resignation of Werner Mayer, and the eventual dissolution of the commission.

On May 21, 1991, the OCA publicly announced the Abnormal Behaviors Initiative. The initiative demands a constitutional change which would label homosexuals abnormal and perverse, and equate homosexuality with child molestation. The initiative will appear on the November ballot in Oregon as Measure 9. The total impact of Measure 9 is not yet known. The OCA released a video entitled "Gay Pride?" last November as part of the Abnormal Behaviors Initiative campaign. The video includes footage from the 1991 San Francisco Gay Pride march and rally, and the March on Washington for Gay and Lesbian Rights. Through distorted use of video footage, the OCA attempts to imply that gay men and lesbians are attempting to promote child molestation and spread disease. Hundreds of copies of the video have been shown in private meetings, at a Rotary Club, and on cable television stations statewide. The video is also reported to have been circulated nationally to promote the reactionary agendas of other Christian Right groups.

Additionally, the OCA is a sponsor of the No On Hate Initiative. Through the No On Hate Initiative the OCA seeks to change existing Oregon state hate crimes laws. Currently, hate crime laws increase the penalties for assaults and acts of intimidation directed against people because of prejudice based on race, national origin, religion, and sexual orientation. The OCA hopes to change hate crime laws to add political groups to existing social categories receiving protection, and to change the category sexual orientation to "abnormal and perverse behaviors such as homosexuality, pedophilia,

sadism, and masochism." Significantly, the changes the OCA has proposed in the initiative would provide protections for pedophiles.

The OCA has also launched campaigns to amend city charters in Corvallis and Springfield to have gays and lesbians in those communities declared abnormal and perverse, and launched one failed initiative to rescind a city civil rights ordinance in Portland which extended anti-discrimination codes at the city level to include the category sexual orientation, and the category, source of income. The OCA failed to gather enough signatures to support a measure on the primary election ballot in Portland, but was successful at including measures in local primaries in Corvallis and Springfield, with an OCA loss at the ballot in Corvallis and an OCA win in Springfield.

Based on our research on the Christian Right nationally and the OCA locally, there are a number of conclusions we can draw about these efforts, and Measure 9 in particular. In the most immediate sense, this campaign seems to be an attempt to discredit efforts on the part of the gay and lesbian community to build ties to progressive groups and coalitions, and strengthen the overall effort to claim comprehensive human rights and democratic forms. More generally, we believe these initiatives are one step on the road towards permanent institutional change in Oregon across issues as diverse as separation of church and state, distribution and access to publicly controlled resources, Affirmative Action, immigration, and of course control over women's bodies.

The OCA seeks to bring about this institutional change in addition by capitalizing on their success with Ballot Measure 8 in 1988, and use this latest initiative, Ballot Measure 9, to consolidate their constituency, building an organized voting bloc. This bloc may represent a minority of voters, but it can be used strategically to affect

outcomes that will give the OCA more power than the actual size its constituency may merit.

The independent gubernatorial candidacy of Al Mobley demonstrates this tactic. The OCA ran Mobley to punish the GOP candidate Frohn-mayer for not taking anti-choice and anti-gay positions. Mobley took 13% of the vote in that race, giving the election to Barbara Roberts, who won the battle but lost the war, with the majority of votes going to more conservative candidates. Using tactics like these, the OCA and the Christian Right movement have built a grassroots base that is moving institutions and affecting political outcomes on a wide array of issues.

The many fronts on which the OCA has been active are representative of the multi-issue approach of the Christian Right movement nationally. The success of this movement has had a significant impact on the ability of progressives to preserve and promote civil rights legislation and freedom of choice at the federal level, and will continue to affect major institutions throughout the U.S. Additionally, it has strengthened the larger rightwing movement which includes those like David Duke who, having witnessed the success of the Christian Right, are co-opting and adapting the slogans and strategies of the Christian Right movement to push forward racist and fascist agendas. As society grows increasingly more reactionary, and as economic conditions continue to worsen, the efforts of the Christian Right lay the foundation for more extreme and violent reactionary movements.

Significantly, the Christian Right movement and other aspects of the broader rightwing have had particular success among white youth. The contest against the rightwing in the electoral arena among those of voting age and older still holds some hope. However, for growing numbers of young whites radicalized by the Reagan administration, and robbed of hope by the economic crisis we now face, the rightwing has a special appeal. In high schools, colleges and universities across the country, the most significant and fastest growing movements are against, rather than for, democratic reform and a forward looking vision of social improvement.

All of this points to the need for us to look critically at groups like the OCA, and to begin to broaden our own vision as we make choices about whether or not to support them, and how to go about opposing them. Here in Oregon what is fundamentally at question in regard to the OCA is not whether Oregonians approve of homosexuality, but instead whether meaningful democratic participation will continue to be a special right reserved for those who fit the interpretation of citizenship described in the version of the constitution which complies with the "original construction and intent of the founding fathers" prior to the institutionalization of the Bill of Rights.

This question is one which those who oppose the OCA and other rightwing organizing efforts will have to put before the citizens of Oregon, and of the nation. The real threat posed by the OCA and the larger rightwing movement extends beyond the lesbian and gay community to the very foundation of freedom movements throughout the history of the U.S. — the threat to the dream of democracy, participation and self-determination for everyone.

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