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It was a big load,
I was simply, pissed off
and I didn't know why,
but I was cool enough
not to just lay it on anybody
who showed up in front of my face.
But it was building up in me
and much as I knew
that it would likely be unfair,
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on the first fool who reached for it
and then, out of my moist dreams,
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Campaign for a Clean Congress

"There's good reason public confidence in public officials is so low. It ought to be, because of the dominance of special interests over the political process and especially over the campaign finance process. That's why I strongly support campaign finance reform."

President Bill Clinton

Congress has grown increasingly dependent on special interest money. The cost of winning a congressional campaign has skyrocketed in recent years. In 1990, it cost \$410,000 to win an average House seat, more than twice as much as it did in 1980. Winning Senate candidates average \$3.6 million, a three-fold increase from just eight years before.

As the cost of winning re-election has risen, members of Congress have grown more and more dependent upon corporate political action committees (PACs) to fuel their campaign coffers. For the 1990 elections, more than half the winning House candidates received more than 50 percent of their campaign funds from PACs. And PACs overwhelmingly favor incumbents, giving more than 90 percent of their funds to incumbents in the 1990 House races.

From tax loopholes for wealthy contributors, to polluted air and water; to overpriced weapons systems — it is the average taxpayers who foot the bill for Congress' dependence on special interest funds.

PACs see their contributions as investments in government decision making, where big money gets big favors. The formula is quite simple: Money = Access = Votes.

From tax loopholes for wealthy contributors, to polluted air and water, to

overpriced weapons systems — it is the average taxpayers who foot the bill for Congress' dependence on special interest funds. The cost of tax breaks, subsidies, bailouts, clean-ups and deregulation because of decisions distorted by the power of campaign dollars is said to top \$50 billion a year, more than 100 times the expense of providing full public funding of congressional elections.

The Solution

Comprehensive reform of the congressional election system includes four key elements: providing public resources; enacting spending limits, limiting special interest contributions and ending soft money loopholes.

Limits on Special Interest Money: We must dramatically reduce the amount of money that PACs and individuals can contribute to candidates, and place an overall limit on how much money a candidate can accept from PACs.

Public Funding: We need to drive special interest money out of politics and replace it with untainted alternative resources including grants, matching payments and free or reduced-cost TV and mailings. The funds for such a system would come from repealing the deductions for lobbying expenses.

Spending limits: We need spending limits to create level playing fields for candidates and to control exploding costs. Spending limits can only be imposed on candidates who agree to accept alternative public resources.

Soft Money: We must close the loophole that allows fat cats to get around the presidential campaign finance system by giving contributions of \$100,000 and up to political parties, who then use the money on re-election campaign activities.

Opponents of reform argue that the proposed changes would hurt chal-

lengers. But, in fact, the current congressional system of unlimited spending and no public campaign resources has produced unprecedented re-election rates for congressional incumbents. For example, from 1982 through 1990, in almost 2,000 House races in which incumbents were running, only 66 lost, a re-election exceeding 96 percent (1,934 won re-election).

Supporters of campaign reform include 70 national organizations and more than 400 state and local groups. Leaders of the reform effort include: Common Cause, Public Citizen, Citizen Action, the League of Women Voters and the Public Interest Research Groups (PIRGs), joined by religious, consumer, public health, elderly, labor and farm groups.

There is one person in America who can ensure the reform of the elections process — President Bill Clinton. PIRGs across the country are working to make sure that he sticks to his campaign promises and pushes for campaign finance reform in his first 100 days in office. Your active support is critical to that effort.

What you can do:

1. Call and write the White House urging President Clinton to support stronger campaign finance reform, and to make the issue a top priority of his first 100 days. (Address letters to: The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20500, or call (202) 456-1111)

2. Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper with the same message.

3. Get five friends to contact the White House.

For more information on either of these campaigns contact Pamela Peck at OSPIRG at (503) 231-418.

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The Worst is Yet To Come

by Carl Hanni

Post Election, 1992. Here in the normally great state of Oregon, the most singularly depressing thing about the 1992 election was realizing that, no matter how the votes tallied, we had at least a great deal. I am referring specifically to Ballot Measure 9, of course, the measure that would have amended the Oregon Constitution to declare homosexuality "abnormal, wrong, unnatural and perverse." After the self-titled Oregon Citizens Alliance (OCA) gathered enough signatures to place it on the November ballot, Measure 9 managed to land an ominous 40% of the state wide vote. Although this divisive measure failed to pass at the polls, it has cast a long shadow over both local and national politics. More pointedly, it is almost certainly a grim preview of social battles yet to come.

The forces that came together to put Measure 9 on the ballot in Oregon are the same forces that are already organizing nationally to fashion a political climate that will set the social background of the 1990s: the fight between ultra-conservative, right-wing Christian demagogues and the rest of the nation. If this sounds far-fetched or paranoid, examine the lessons of history, which is littered with examples of the roots of repression (and eventually totalitarianism) states that got their feet wet with a single, specific repression—such as a Measure 9.

Banded together under the moniker the Christian Coalition, Christian right have quickly organized into a highly effective political action committee already capable of making or breaking many political races. Although the country (and Oregon) rejected them on election day, the stage is clearly set for their next push towards power. Their influence is so pervasive in Oregon alone that the chairman of the Republican party is seriously considering forming a separate party, conceding that the OCA and their backers have enough clout to wrestle the party away from the moderates that now hold sway. The OCA & Co. are organized, well-funded, media savvy and like being in the spotlight. Their outlandish and distorted barrage of videos, flyers and personal attacks leave little choice but to respond: silence equals complicity when you're dealing with zealots.

This is an ugly, depressing scenario. We all have better things to do with the rest of the decade: work, play, create, raise kids, read, develop communities, fight AIDS and homelessness, make tea, watch basketball. But at stake are the fundamental issues of power, control, compassion, freedom of expression, diversity and, ultimately, democracy. This is a battle that couldn't, or wouldn't be fought in a country that didn't at least have the trappings of a democracy. Just as it's the right of the OCA and all of the other racist, neo-fascist, homophobic organizations that cloak themselves in a phony veneer of patriotism to attempt to promote their sad values onto us, it is our right to organize and put them to bed with a warm cup of milk and a bedtime story about tolerance. This is it, folks: a chance to see if there is really anything democratic about this overblown concept called democracy.

As always, artists will be called on to be at the forefront of what Pat Buchanan has called a "cultural war." If war is really what Buchanan wants, war is surely what he will get. Artists of all stripes—writers, filmmakers, visual artists, professional loud-mouths, and dreamers—are uniquely suited to take up this fight. Being creative individuals and groups, artists are able to fashion a multitude of ways to keep the forces of tyranny at bay. There are the conventional approaches: writing books and articles that confront it, making films, penning political cartoons, creating coalitions, running candidates, etc. There are unconventional ways and means: guerrilla theater, pranks, infiltration, cream-puff sabotage, and direct confrontation.

Some will simply want to leave the country, which basically equals forfeiture. Please, stay and fight, by whatever means you feel comfortable. The best way to deal with the bad is simply to create good around yourself and your community, however that may be. Keep in mind, as serious and grim as it is, it could even be fun. This could be a field day for creative confrontation. But, in the interest of responsibility (shudder) and the seriousness of the situation, consider a few sobering facts: There are lots of them, they're organized, and any extremist (pranks) action always wins them a few more converts from those wavering on the edge. Never let it be said that I'm urging restraint, however if you can fight the good fight and have some fun doing it, just ring me up and invite me along.

Like any true battle, the key to success is to not let the other side dictate the rules or set the playing field. Out-smarting the opposition,

anticipating their moves and keeping them on the defensive are all time-honored means of winning. This battle is going to take more than handbills, banana peels, cartoons, and public radio. Organization and education will ultimately decide the outcome: organization because it is absolutely essential to make a united stand against a movement that is quickly marshaling its disparate factions, and education because it's all for naught if young and old alike don't come to understand the basically venal nature of the opposition. Frameworks already exist, both locally and nationally, in Oregon an impressive number of already existing groups banded together to form the No on 9 Committee. This group was able to rally public opposition to Measure 9, work the media and promote an agenda of tolerance in the face of a genuinely frightening media blitz of lies, half-truths, and distortions.

The Christian right, neo-Nazis and various white supremacist factions are actually providing a great opportunity for Americans of all kinds—not just the left—to band together against a common threat: the hate sickness within our own country. This is an opportunity for active mobilization, participation and steering of public policy that hasn't presented itself since the end of the Vietnam war.

Artists can and should lead, both by example and by sharing their ability to communicate. We don't really have a choice in this matter. In a way, Measure 9 was a shot at artists here in Oregon. Take a swipe at the gay community and you take a swipe at the arts community. Beyond this, artists and those that speak out have always been the first to go when fascism rears its violent head. Not an artists, of course: Both Hitler and Mussolini had their pet painters and songwriters, and, indeed, the right wing of today is certainly sophisticated enough to use the various arts and the media as a propaganda tool. But the visionaries, iconoclasts, gadflies, trouble makers, and rule breakers will be singled out. This is a fight that is as old as history, as new as yesterday's newspaper. Between the battle over the NEA, the upswing in book burnings, legislation designed to censor audio recordings, repressive laws that discourage controversial artists from entering the country, and the public defamation of artists such as Magritte/Korpe, artists are already feeling the heat from coast to coast. Just because this is not Libya, Iran, or China doesn't mean we can relax. Although written into the U.S. Constitution, freedom of expression as a right we still have to fight for every day.

Artists have always been outspoken and controversial, and that should never change. What needs to change is the assumption that that which questions the status quo or doesn't limit itself to the mundane is somehow unpatriotic or bad for the "public good." What could be more unpatriotic and ultimately destructive to a country than dividing its people against each other, narrowing their selection of choices and trying to impose the will of a few on the whole? This is what is so glaring about this fight: we shouldn't have to fight it.

Unfortunately, the OCA is just the tip of the iceberg. Organizations of this type are (and will soon be) springing up in every state in the country. Candidates are going to be run, platforms are going to be drafted, school boards and local elected officials are going to be targeted. At it's worst, it will be a sort of fascist grass-roots movement: a coalition of right wing fundamentalists, white supremacists, neo-Nazis, KKK people, antigovernment & taxes survivalists, and renegade rednecks. A group like this, if they choose to organize nationally, could have a huge appeal to poor whites who feel left out of the system, as well as to a distressing number of young people who were out-adult during twelve years of a Reagan/Bush hands-off domestic/social agenda. People who are down, who don't see any American dream in their future, are ripe for messages of hate that ally their fears with easily identifiable enemies: queers, artists, the media, government, the Jews, Jews, those who are educated, anyone not white. These groups have all been scapegoats before, and all could be again.

It was Al Mobley himself who declared the election results a victory. There is an element of reality to his position: getting 40% of those who went to the polls to vote for a measure that would have actually taken away civil rights is certainly a kind of victory for the forces of oppression. And this is in a state that is known as being politically "progressive." Consider how a measure like this could fare in other states that are more overtly conservative, and then consider that watered down versions of Measure 9 did pass in Colorado and Tampa.

We will all be called on to take part in this battle, although how to respond is an individual choice. Certainly not everybody—especially artists, a notoriously independent lot—is up for joining organizations, manning phone banks, or marching in rallies. Many will fight by just keeping on: painting the paintings, making the films, writing the books, articles, and poems, speaking out in ways that are both personal and public. But when the heat is on, things could get tense: The last thing the right-wing wants is a bunch of artists running around expressing themselves. Which is all the more reason to take it to them directly, stand our ground, and look them right in the eye when we say "NO."

Bring a coat, a helmet, some food, and a few friends: this is going to be a long, ugly fight.

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STOP THE OCA!

Join with the Oregon Hate-Free Association Political Action Committee (OHFA-PAC) in stopping the OCA's attempt to legalize discrimination and hate in Oregon's cities, counties and statewide.

OHFA-PAC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

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