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EDITORIALS

Community building blocs

North Carolina's recent elections culminated in an historic event for the gay community — an openly gay candidate was elected mayor in one city and a high-profile mayoral write-in campaign was organized for another.

Mike Nelson stumped in Carrboro as an openly gay man, but he didn't run on a "gay platform." He presented himself as a qualified candidate who happened to be gay — and voters were able to see beyond the rhetoric of the Radical Right.

Sue Henry entered the race in Charlotte a mere three weeks before the elections, but still made a very respectable showing. The gay community mobilized itself to support her and in a matter of days, bumper stickers, voter cards and yard placards could be found throughout the Queen City.

We have long felt that the maturation of the LGBT community in this state would be evident when its participation in the electoral process was significant. This year, we saw the synergy between candidate and community come together. There were good, solid LGBT candidates competing for public office and community support for them was overwhelming.

There is a larger message for us in this — if we encourage appropriate candidates for state public offices and then exercise our bloc voting power in support of them, we can totally shake-up the political landscape in this state.

The enemies of us all are complacency and disillusionment. We must not accept things as

they are simply because "they have always been that way." Our responsibility to ourselves is to create a better society than the one which we inherited from the generation before us.

We can't succumb to the feeling that our electoral participation is futile — because our inaction will give our power away. For example, in Charlotte's elections, approximately 20 thousand people who voted declined to vote for any of the mayoral candidates. We assume that this was done because those voters weren't happy with any of the choices. Unfortunately, their decision to abstain only caused them to be handed a mayor — it didn't free them from being under his influence for the next four years.

There are over 11 million people in this state; if 10 percent of them are homosexual — as we are told — that translates to a voting bloc of at least 1.1 million North Carolinians. There is not a candidate or issue in this state that our community couldn't directly effect if we put our common strength to it. Our challenge is to organize ourselves at the grassroots level.

The foundation for this evolution has already been laid in two statewide organizations: North Carolina Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCCGLE) and North Carolina Pride PAC. Both of these groups are uniquely positioned to take a leading role in the development of the state's LGBT community — but they have to have our full financial and volunteer support.

**Deadline For Next Issue: December 18**

Remembering Nuremburg

Much was made in the media last month concerning the 50th anniversary of the Nuremburg Trials, the trials by the Allies of Nazi leaders. The moment ought not pass without some careful consideration on our part as well.

The Trials — a series of 13 trials held in the German city of Nuremburg from November 1945 to October 1949 — were unique in that, for the first time, leaders of an aggressive nation were charged and convicted not only of breaches of international law, but of starting a war. Furthermore, the trials, again for the first time, established a legal concept of individual responsibility. At the first trial the defendants were 22 top Nazi officials — including Herman Goering, Rudolph Hess, Joachim von Ribbentrop, and Martin Borman. In response to charges of murder, enslavement and other wartime atrocities against soldiers and civilians, the defendants pleaded not guilty, using as their defense that they were merely following orders from those in higher command. Remarkably, the Allied Tribunal judges did not accept this defense and instead insisted that each defendant, being a member of the top echelon of the Nazi war machine, was culpable for his own actions. All but 3 of these men were convicted. In 12 additional trials, people of lesser rank were charged, including military and industrial leaders, Nazi judges and doctors at prison camps. Most of them were convicted as well.

The irony of the Nuremburg Trials was that they were held in the same city which was used by the Nazis to hold their annual celebrations. Furthermore, it was in Nuremburg in 1935 that the Reichstag passed the infamous "Nuremburg Laws" which, among other things, denied citizenship to Jews, homosexuals and other, and went so far as to make homosexual thoughts illegal.

Which brings us to the point. While the Nuremburg Trials may have established the

well-known Nazi atrocities as violations of international law during wartime, they did nothing to question the validity of the Nuremburg Laws themselves. The important fact to keep in mind is that while the National Socialist Party was in power, all of the horrors committed against gays, Jews, gypsies and other "undesirables" — all of the torture, mutilation, forced labor, and murder — were perfectly legal under German law.

A chilling thought considering the recent, and sometimes successful, attempts by the Far Right to incorporate their prejudices against gays and lesbians into state and federal law. The distance between Colorado's Amendment 2's denying gays access to participation in government and the Nazi's denying them the rights of citizenship is as narrow as a penstroke.

If the US Supreme Court decides that Colorado has the right to enact Amendment 2, the Right will have won a victory that will surely propel them like V-1 rockets to other states and municipalities. The citizens of this country will be bombarded by a blitzkrieg of anti-gay propaganda unlike anything we've seen to date, and an American public — already sedated by the droning of media soundbites, unhappy with a falling standard of living and hungry for a scapegoat on which to blame the declining stature of the US in the world — might easily succumb to Right Wing gay bashing disguised as family and cultural protection.

For us, the lesson of the Nuremburg Trials is this: laws passed by a country that are so discriminatory as to allow the genocide of entire segments of its own citizenry will be tolerated by the international community so long as that country does not declare war against another nation and lose. It's a lesson we would do well to remember as we chose candidates for next fall's elections.

SPEAKING FOR MYSELF  
*A Personal Opinion*

Gay Republicans come out

[The following opinion/editorial is by Dr. John D'Emilio, director of the Policy Institute of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF).]

For weeks now, the media has been filled with stories about Senator Robert Dole's campaign for President and its relationship to Log Cabin Republicans, the gay Republican group. Dole returned their \$1000 campaign contribution, claiming he could not accept money from a group so at odds with his political philosophy. Log Cabin successfully countered with facts and documents demonstrating that the Dole campaign actively solicited its help and its money, with full knowledge of Log Cabin's stand on such issues as gays in the military and gay marriage. Dole has now changed his story again, blaming his staff for poor judgment in returning the contribution.

The whole controversy has been a publicity bonanza for gay Republicans and a public relations disaster for the Dole campaign. It also highlights the intense battle being waged for control of the Republican party as right-wing religious radicals capture control of the party machinery in more and more states, and moderate Republicans with political ambitions scramble to win extremist support. And it raises questions as well about where the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community should be putting our political energy, especially as we approach a presidential election year.

The Log Cabin Republicans articulately advance the position that, except for the extremist rhetoric of the radical right, the Republican party could be a welcoming home for gay and lesbian Americans. In this view, the fierce anti-gay rhetoric of the Republican's 1992 Houston convention was the aberration, whereas the Contract with America, silent on such "divisive" issues as abortion and gay rights, offers a sound basis for national policy.

The argument doesn't persuade me. First of all, Houston was about more than the hate-filled rhetoric of Pat Buchanan. The Republi-

can convention as a whole ratified a platform for the party, and it was fiercely anti-gay. "We believe," it said, "in traditional family values and in the Judeo-Christian heritage that informs our culture." It opposed efforts to include "sexual preference" in federal, state, and local civil rights statutes, and it came down against the legalization of same-sex marriage and against laws to permit gay men and lesbians to adopt children or provide foster care. In the area of AIDS prevention, it called for education that stressed abstinence and marital fidelity, and rejected condom distribution as a prevention measure. Taken together, these planks are pretty comprehensive in their homophobia.

Then there's the Republican agenda in Congress, expressed through the Contract with America. True, it doesn't pander to anti-gay extremists, but it is still hurtful to the gay community. The Republican version of budget balancing, for instance, is a disaster. Budgets can be balanced in all sorts of ways. In the Eisenhower era of the 1950s, the budget was balanced, but largely through a progressive tax structure with levies of up to 90 percent on the income of the very rich.

In this post-Cold War era, Gingrich's Congress proposes large military budgets, low taxes, and steep cuts in spending related to human and community needs. This kind of budget-balancing will adversely affect such things as services to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth, substance-abuse programs offered by gay community centers, and federal grants to gay artists and scholars.

Even when this Republican Congress seems to be with us, as in support for reauthorization of the Ryan White Care Act, it takes away with the other hand what it gives with one. Efforts to gut Medicaid will be a disaster for our community, since Medicaid provides four times as much money to care for people with AIDS as does Ryan White. And what about the Republican role in the scut-

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