

## lesbian notions

### Groups need class work

by Paula Martinac  
Special to Q-Notes

A recent survey of the budgets of the largest national gay organizations raises concern about the growth of our movement and suggests that lesbian and gay fundraisers should be paying greater attention to class issues.

The survey, which was coordinated by the *Washington Blade*, found that the annual budgets of our national organizations have ballooned since 1997, but the number of people making contributions to them has stayed pretty much the same. This standstill in donor numbers, the *Blade* speculates, may be due in part to the proliferation of queer organizations over the last few years.

Certainly, people who aren't giving money to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) or Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund (LLDEF) may in fact be digging into their pockets for newer organizations or for local queer groups, like community centers and health projects.

But competition for the same gay bucks can't be the complete answer, given the stats on nonprofit giving in general. Kim Klein, the author of *Fundraising for Social Change* and a guru in the field, has found that about 70 percent of the population regularly gives to nonprofit groups and most of those donors support between five and 11 organizations, not just one.

Here's an even more astonishing fact: About 85 percent of all the money given away in this country comes from middle-class, working-class and poor households — not from liquor and beer companies or from the David Geffens and Michael Huffingtons among us.

Yet, despite that, an enormous amount of gay and lesbian fundraising time is spent tracking down money from corporations and rich people, or planning lavish receptions and dinners for the well-to-do. It's frustrating that most

of our community's national organizations have weighted their fundraising efforts so heavily toward the middle- and upper-middle classes and failed to cultivate the mass of queer people in the lower-middle and working classes.

Take annual memberships, for example — the bread-and-butter of nonprofit groups. At NGLTF, LLDEF, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) and the Latino/Lesbian and Gay Organization (LLEGO), annual memberships start at \$35 or \$40. That won't seem like a large sum if it's what you laid out for lunch yesterday or dinner on Saturday night, but it can be intimidating if it's a big chunk of your weekly grocery budget.

For those with limited donation dollars, gay organizations often provide a place on their pledge forms where you can check off "other" donations or, worse yet, "low-income membership." Maybe this is meant as a throwback to the sliding-scale donations of a former era, but it's really just a biased and humiliating designation that sets some people off as different.

LLEGO claims it "will not deny any individual membership due to lack of funds." But the catch is you must "submit a written request for a waiver" — a sort of "charity case" concession that once again lets certain members of the community know they're not quite like everyone else.

Although the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) actually introduced the high-price gala into gay fundraising, they maintain a seemingly more class-conscious membership policy than many other groups, starting at \$20. It's probably not a coincidence that HRC has 300,000-plus contributors — more than 10 times that of LLDEF and 30 times that of GLAAD.

In addition, HRC has a "partner" plan that lets people donate in monthly installments of \$10. That reminds me of the \$2-a-week envelope my parents tossed into the collection basket at our church when I was growing up. My working-class parents couldn't afford to write a check for a flat-sum donation of \$104, but they never gave a second thought to parting with a couple of dollars every Sunday.

The Christian right, of course, knows about these church-giving patterns and about the substantial financial contributions made over time by working-class people to causes they believe

in. Not surprisingly, almost all the right-wing religious groups offer memberships starting in the \$15-\$20 range or have programs that encourage installment giving.

In fact, the largest and most influential of these groups will count any size donation toward membership. In my travels through the web sites of a host of religious right groups, I couldn't find even one that had created a "low-income" designation for membership. It's little wonder, then, that the six largest religious right groups have combined budgets over 10 times greater than the combined budgets of 16 national gay organizations.

More than any of our other national organizations, HRC has studied the Christian right's success with membership appeals. Other lesbian and gay organizations could in turn take some lessons from HRC. Until more people of different classes are encouraged to support our movement in whatever way they can, the economic and political footing of that movement will be on shaky ground. ▼

[Paula Martinac can be reached care of this publication or at LNcolumn@aol.com.]

### Scott Lawn & Landscaping

Design & Installation  
Commercial • Residential

704-292-7724



## Looking to sculpt a relationship?

**NOW! You can charge it!**  
Respond to a Personals ad using your credit card...forget 900 blocks!

Call 1-800-457-8017

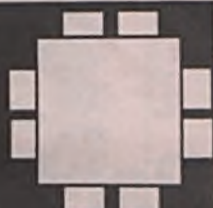
Use your Visa/MC/Amex  
Call from any phone, anywhere, anytime.  
\$1.50/min. 18+

Q-Notes Personals

## BELLSOUTH Mobility



We're the largest  
BellSouth DCS Retailer  
in the Carolinas!



### Pagers

"We offer top of the line  
Pager Service!"

- \$7.95/mo Local Service
- \$9.95/mo Statewide Service
- **NO** Yearly Contracts
- **NO** Late Fees, and
- **NO** Reconnect Fees for Late Payments

#### Additional Services

Voice Mail	\$3.00
Additional State	\$6.00
Local Alpha Service	\$29.99
1-800 w/PIN Alpha	\$34.95
1-800 w/out PIN Alpha	\$39.99
2nd Number	\$2.00
Voice Mail Service	\$5.00

Activate Your Own Pager  
Only \$19.99  
(Includes first month's airtime)

**FREE PAGERS**  
with  
Airtime  
and  
Activation

**No Contract or Annual Payment**

**Advance Annually Payment \$6.95/mo.**



## BellSouth DCS

FREE Unlimited Local Incoming Calls!

Unlimited Weekends Only \$9.95/mo.!

Phones as low as \$49.95!

11-month contract is required for these specials  
Expires 6-30-2000

#### MONTHLY CALLING PLANS

\$15 per month with FREE 15 Minutes
\$20 per month with FREE 100 Minutes
\$30 per month with FREE 250 Minutes
\$40 per month with FREE 400 Minutes
\$50 per month with FREE 600 Minutes
\$70 per month with FREE 900 Minutes
\$100 per month with FREE 1400 Minutes

#### DCS All-In-One RATE

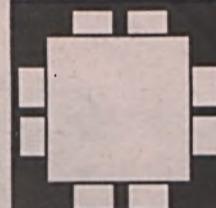
\$79.95 per month with 600 Minutes
\$109.95 per month with 1000 Minutes
.25 each add'l minute

**JUST ONE RATE ACROSS THE COUNTRY!**

We also offer PREPAID Phone Service

J & W Cellular & Paging  
Midtown Square Mall  
401 S. Independence  
Phone (704) 373-2600  
Fax (704) 373-2601

Digital Phone Service  
for as little as  
\$15/month



### ISP Service

Short on Time?

We Will Come To Your Office

Call for Details

Unlimited Internet Access  
\$9.95 per Month

- Local Access Numbers (Major U. S. Cities)
- 5MB Personal Web Site Hosting
- Up to 3 E-Mail Addresses
- Pay with Credit Card or Check



Open 7 Days a Week  
Mon - Fri 9am to 9pm  
Sat 10am to 9pm  
Sun 12:30pm to 5:30pm