

(from page 3)

campaign contributions with impressive results in the last couple of elections. The least we can do is support those politicians courageous enough to support us, and at considerable risk to their careers in those districts outside the major cities where gay populations are concentrated. The HRCF also has the advantage of preserving the anonymity of donors who contribute \$50 or less.

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#### INVISIBILITY AS A POLITICAL ASSET

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As a matter of fact, our vulnerability as a generally despised minority group is partially counterbalanced by our relative invisibility. At the risk of sounding politically incorrect, I think we should make more use of this asset. "Sister Boom-Boom" clearly did us and the Democratic party incalculable harm by strutting her stuff on national television during the coverage of the national convention last summer in San Francisco. In retrospect, the decision to hold the convention in that city appears incredibly naive. The voyeurism of the media surely could be counted upon to exploit the most sensationalistic aspects of the largest and most public gay community in America.

I am sure it is political heresy to suggest that the passage of a gay rights bill in Congress should not be our top priority. Useful as these attempts are as a litmus test of our political support, I cannot help but think that making passage the cornerstone of our political programs weds us to the very sort of governmental legislative solutions to social problems which are absolutely anathema to the general population in our conservative age. Our inevitably futile efforts in this direction each year lend a sense of legitimacy to the propaganda of our opponents to the effect that we are trying to legislate a tolerance that they find morally repugnant.

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#### OUR GAY FRIENDS OF CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL PERSUASION OUGHT TO BE ENCOURAGED IN THEIR VERY IMPORTANT WORK

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I think the recent birth of a gay Republican interest group is a very promising development. The sooner gay rights loses its unfair stigma as a partisan cause beloved only of the lunatic fringe of the Democratic party, the better off we all shall be. Our gay friends of conservative political persuasion ought to be encouraged in their very important work. Those of us of more liberal temperament should exercise a little toleration ourselves and remember that their ways they go about their goals will necessarily be different from our own. Back in 1981, I remember reading a personal ad in the gay

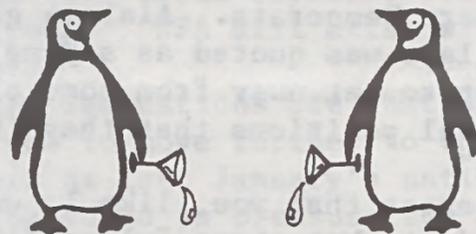
newspaper of the nation's capital, which read somewhat along these lines: "Gay Republican, coming to town to assume important position with the new administration, desires attractive, discreet GWF for social companion." Hypocrites aside, we must accept the fact that anyone who works for us is a friend, even that curious convert, ex-congressman Bob Bauman.

Somehow, the challenge posed by bible-thumping fundamentalist preachers has got to be met head on. The great irony, it seems to me, is that their view of the universe is absolutely devoid of intellectual respectability in modern times, yet goes unchallenged out of a curiously American deference for religious opinion (strange oriental cults excepted, of course). So the preachers are allowed to pander to the fears and bigotry of the uneducated and use the alleged menace posed by our existence as their number one lure for fundraising.

It is not clear to me how this can be done. I was impressed, however, with results of the head-on confrontation between the Jewish and fundamentalist leaders on the matter of whether "God hears the prayers of Jews." For the moment, some major fundamentalist leaders, such as the Reverend Billy Graham, are willing to admit that He just might, and in any case, an ugly strain of anti-semitism has been nipped in the bud. Dare we hope that the Reverend Jerry Falwell might, if pressed, admit that God hears the prayers of gays? We could use some help from our allies in the mainline churches on this one.

Finally, I think we've all got to stand tall as personal "witnesses" (to borrow a term beloved of fundamentalists) for toleration if not explicitly for gay rights. No "fag jokes" indulged, no racist remarks tolerated, no retrograde sexism left unchallenged. We must begin to make an aggressive challenge upon the notion that it is socially acceptable to denigrate gay people. After all, they are ourselves.

-T.R.



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