

(GAY VOTE, continued from page 7)

President Reagan, while in the same breath acknowledging that their vote may contribute to further repression of our personal liberties.

The same syndrome is evident in races for the House and Senate. In Texas, where the issue of gay civil rights provided some of the most emotional (and disturbing) rhetoric in the campaign between Democrat Lloyd Doggett and Republican Phil Gramm, precinct returns from Dallas and Houston indicate that, while a majority of gays voted for Lloyd Doggett, who supported gay civil rights, an alarming number of us voted for Phil Gramm, who campaigned as being openly homophobic.

Gay people should be proud of the fact that our involvement in all spectrums of life, including politics, reflects the diversity of opinion, thought and preference of a community as eclectic as ours. Therefore, the fact that no one political party can take our allegiance for granted is a very positive one. But partisanship aside, it is a frightening fact that gays cannot be expected to band together in support of a candidate--of either party--who has espoused a commitment to protecting our rights to live, work, and express ourselves free from the threat of legal or social discrimination.

Less than three weeks into this new year, a devastating defeat was suffered by the gay community in Houston. This defeat was, in large part, self-induced. A Jan. 19 referendum on two anti-discrimination measures passed last year by the Houston City Council say the defeat of those measures by a margin of 82% to 18% -- more than 4 to 1.

Where was the gay community? The estimated number of lesbian and gay men who are registered to vote in that city is 120,000. Yet in 10 predominantly gay precincts, less than 6,000 votes were cast in support city-wide. In a campaign which was painted by our detractors as a virtual referendum on our civil rights, fewer than one-third of the gay community even bothered to vote.

The same phenomenon has been taking place all over the country for the past several years. And while not all of the votes were on referenda, many of them involved the election of politicians openly opposed to any sort of gay civil rights protections. The gay communities involved either failed to recognize the threats facing them or were simply too apathetic to respond.

The result has been a growing opinion by right-wing anti-gay groups that the gay community is an easy target. They believe we're unwilling to do more than just roll over and play dead when our rights are at stake--we'll even go so far as to vote for candidates who vehemently oppose gay civil rights.

No one is advocating that the millions of gay voters in the U.S. should get up each election day and respond

to every judgment we're asked to make strictly as members of the gay community. We all have minds of our own. Yet as the efforts of the "Moral Majorities" of the world grow increasingly aggressive, sophisticated and successful, gay people must respond in kind.

Politicians who oppose our basic civil rights must learn that, in the privacy of the voting booth where we can all come out, their candidacies will feel the strength of our votes. And those politicians courageous enough to support us must know that we will reward their courage with our votes.

The issues of the 1980s grow increasingly complex. They are more than economic. They go beyond war and peace. They touch our very lives. The idea that civil rights battles have passed into history is false. The smug determination of the grown-up baby boom generation that all they need do as adults is share the spoils of the victories won by their parents threatens each and every one of us. Mainstream America does not care enough about human rights anymore to prevent groups like the Moral Majority from advancing their cause. Are we to accept having the same said about gay and lesbian America?

In the coming weeks and months, the Human Rights Campaign Fund will attempt to learn more about the national gay community to determine just what motivates each of us to vote as we do. Our hope is to gain a better understanding of the priorities each of us sets for ourselves. We await the results of that effort with some trepidation. The numbers may reveal that our priorities as gay individuals are self-destructive inasmuch as they ignore the very protection of our freedom to pursue those priorities.

This is a proposition with which we as a community must deal now.

-Vic Basile

Human Rights Campaign Fund

♻️ A COUNTRY JOURNAL ♻️ FOR GAY MEN EVERYWHERE



RFD SPRING, SUMMER, FALL, & WINTER
\$4.25 SAMPLE COPY LATEST ISSUE
12.00 REGULAR SUBSCRIPTION (1YR)
18.00 WITH FIRST CLASS MAILING
♻️ Route 1, Box 127-E ♻️ Bakersville, NC. ♻️ 28705 ♻️