

Candace Gingrich

continued from page 11

approval rating from the general public. And I've become aware that polls have shown, for instance, when it comes to AIDS funding, 70-plus percent feel that it should stay at the same level, if not be increased. And I believe over 78 percent of the people polled in an exit poll believe that discrimination against gays and lesbians in the workplace is wrong, and there needs to be something done about it.

Even if they're not going to come up with another contract, since they take so much interest in what the majority of America thinks, then it would be a good idea if they actually did pay attention to the things that Americans are saying to them. So hopefully, if the social issues come up, they are going to respond to the people, as opposed to what their own agenda is.

FP: You haven't at this point talked with Newt about being gay. Do you think you ever will?

CG: I hope to. I'm not sure when, and if I do get the chance I probably won't tell anyone. If I have a date to talk with him, I probably won't tell anyone until long after because I'm sure that both of us would never get any sleep over it. But I do want to talk to him because I want to know where he's coming from. Is it because of what I said before, about his words being verbatim the

Christian Coalition's position? If it is, I know they're wrong. It would be nice to have the chance to speak to him one on one about why he's wrong.

FP: Assuming it's not your brother, who are the most supportive members of your family with regard to you're being out as a lesbian?

CG: They've all been. My sisters have been very, very supportive. One sister just recently got married, and I don't really know her husband yet, so I'm not sure how supportive he is, but my other sister's husband is very supportive. I think that they're proud of me for being able to talk as openly about the subject as I am. So pretty much my whole family, except for my dad, but he's pretty neutral in everything.

FP: In your hierarchy of personal priorities, where do politics fit?

CG: Well, I think they're pretty high up there. Personally, I feel like I have a lot of catching up to do because, for the most part, since I realized that I was a lesbian I really didn't pay attention to the issues and to what was going on. Now that I've gotten a broader education, I've started to realize how pervasive the discrimination really is. I'm kind of appalled that I've been so inactive.

Here I think maybe I have to define what I mean by politics, because I'm not much of a campaign follower. I mean, I vote in the primaries and I pay general attention to what's going on, but

I don't usually engage people on the bus about issues. Politics are very important to me, but when I say that, I mean politics in the sense of what is affecting me right now and what can I do to change it.

FP: Who do you admire politically?

CG: Ann Richards. She is somebody I really admire. It seems that throughout her whole governorship and her career outside of that, she is still Ann Richards. I really enjoy her colorful speech and her humanness.

And another woman I've gotten to meet in the past few months is Barbara Roberts, the former governor of Oregon. She is just incredible. She's really come a long way, and I'm hoping that someday she'll run again.

And that's about it right now. Being somebody who's only recently on the scene and paying attention to all the political aspects, my list is short.

FP: Yes or no, would you vote for your brother for president?

CG: Well, I have to say it would depend on who he's running against, but...No.

FP: Do you have plans beyond HRCF, or do you plan to stay at HRCF or in that sort of political activist venue for a long time?

CG: Well, right now, as the HRCF spokesperson and an intern, I'm contracted for six months. When that time's up, we'll review what's happened and we'll go from there.

It's very, very early. I've enjoyed what I'm doing so far. I think that what I'm doing is making a difference and if that's something I can continue doing, I will.

I'm not sure what's down the road, but being involved and being able to be a part of the movement is very important to me. So if that's an opportunity I have, I'll certainly stay with it.

FP: Found a rugby team in Washington yet?

CG: I think I have. One of the women who works at HRCF plays for the Furies and...I don't want to say has a claim on me, but there are some pretty heated rivalries in the area and she said since she spoke to me first, I have to play with

them. I haven't been to any practices or anything yet, but I hopefully will be joining the team. This summer I'm still going to travel back to Harrisburg and play Summer Sevens with my team, but then this fall...well, I don't know. We'll see what happens. The Furies might still have games this spring and I might get to participate.

FP: Do you have any sense of what your town meeting is going to be like tonight?

CG: I think it's all going to be pretty good. We've got a lot of pretty positive press so far. I don't really have any expectations because I know it's the first one, and I know we're going to be growing and learning from here on out, but I'm expecting a really good turn out. I'm expecting good things.

FP: Realistically, what do you expect will be the outcome of your speaking tour, and then, if this was an ideal world, what would the results be?

CG: In the current world, there are going to be people who come out as a result of the town meetings and what I say to them, and the result of that is they're going to become involved and active in helping to show their legislators what's going on in the country and why they need to change it.

In an ideal world, everybody will come out, everybody will be accepted, everybody will be able to live free of the fear of any repercussions, and those people in power will realize that we are discriminated against and change that.

Candace Gingrich will be the featured speaker at Human Rights Campaign Fund town meetings on Wednesday, May 10, at 7 p.m. at the RTP Holiday Inn, I-40 and Page Road in Research Triangle Park, NC; on Thursday, May 11, at 6:30 p.m. at the County Council Chambers, 301 University Ridge, Greenville, SC; and on Wednesday, May 17, at 7 p.m. at the Gay and Lesbian Business Guild in Columbia, SC. For more information, call HRCF (202)628-4160.

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