



In Defense of Democracy & Civil Rights

COALITION FOR HUMAN DIGNITY

P. O. BOX 21266 • SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98111-3266 • (206) 233-9775

BELLINGHAM (360) 756-0914 • E-MAIL: chdpdx@aol.com

NORTHWEST UPDATE

August 1, 1999

1. AMERICAN HERITAGE PARTY MEETING IN ASTORIA, OREGON: Hoping to get their party on the ballot in Oregon, the American Heritage Party presented their party's platform at a meeting in Astoria on July 16th. The Astoria meeting was convened by Bob Eckstrom of Scappoose. Eckstrom is a former leader of the GOP in Columbia County and a supporter of the Oregon Citizen Alliance and their measures to label homosexuality as "abnormal and perverse." Eckstrom and 115 others are working in Oregon to collect the 16,697 signatures necessary to get their party on the ballot.

The American Heritage Party platform calls upon the government to protect "human life from conception until natural death," and "oppose child adoption by homosexuals." The party also opposes "Government sponsored promotion of multiculturalism... [and] bilingual ballots, citizenship exams, and ceremonies," and believes that "the Voting Rights Act should be repealed." The American Heritage Party is an affiliate of the US Taxpayers Party. (For a more complete listing of the points in the American Heritage Party Platform, please see the *Dignity Report*, Spring 1999, page 15). (*Daily Astorian*, July 7)

2. CENTER FOR NEW COMMUNITY LEADS JOURNEY AGAINST HATE: In the wake of the murders committed by white supremacist Benjamin Smith, the Center for New Community planned the Journey Against Hate to follow the murderous route taken by Smith. "Smith is a logical outcome of the hatred espoused by the World Church of the Creator, and they have to take full responsibility for his actions," said the Rev. David Ostendorf, director of the Center for New Community. "On a broader scale, our Center is tracking 272 hate groups in a nine-state region in the Midwest. That reflects the breadth and depth of this problem," Ostendorf said. The Journey, which took place on July 22 through 24, ended with a prayer vigil in front of Matthew Hale's house. Hale is the 28-year-old leader of the World Church of the Creator. (*Peoria Journal Star*, July 21)

3. ARYAN NATIONS HIRES NEW LAWYER: Edgar J. Steele of Sagle, Idaho is now the attorney representing the Aryan Nations and its founder Richard Butler in the case being brought against them by the Southern Poverty Law Center. Steele replaces current Aryan Nations attorney Everett Hofmeister who is retiring in January. With the advent of Steele, the Aryan Nations has now established a Legal Defense Fund. The Fund is using the same post office box that was used last year by Steele and the Bonner County Taxpayer Coalition located in Sagle. Steele was the secretary-treasurer for that group. (*Spokesman Review*, July 23)

4. SENATE PASSES HATE CRIMES LEGISLATION: The US Senate voted on July 23 and approved legislation adding sexual orientation, disability and gender to categories of people protected under federal hate-crimes law. Currently, the law only covers race, color, religion or national origin. A similar bill died in Congress last year, but momentum has grown after a spate of incidents. These include the dragging death of a Black man, James Bird, in Texas, the fatal beating of a gay college student, Matthew Shepherd, in Wyoming and this month's shooting spree in Illinois and Indiana by white supremacist Benjamin Smith.

Jerry Falwell was one of the more vocal opponents of the Senate's action. Prior to the vote he sent this message to his supporters urging them to call their Senators to oppose the bill. "This... is very dangerous legislation for all Americans who believe the Bible teaches that homosexuality is a sin. I do not believe our nation needs the federal government to determine what we can and should believe." The bill now goes to the House of Representatives where it faces considerable opposition. (*Associated Press*, July 22)

The Northwest Update is a publication of the Coalition for Human Dignity

© 1999. All Rights Reserved. Material herein may not be reproduced without permission of the Coalition for Human Dignity.

5. HATE CRIMES AGAINST LATINOS ON THE RISE: The National Council of La Raza reported that hate crimes against Latinos are on the rise, underscoring a troubling pattern of harassment by law enforcement and extremists. La Raza leaders declared, "Private citizens and law enforcement officials feel they can harass or attack Hispanic Americans with almost complete impunity." In 1993, the first year federal hate crime statistics were reported, there were 472 anti-Hispanic incidents reported. The numbers increased to 516 in 1995 and 564 in 1996. In 1997, the last year reported, anti-Latino hate crimes exceeded 600 incidents. (Associated Press, July 26)

6. ORGANIZATIONS OF COLOR PROTEST SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS IN SALEM, OREGON: In the Salem-Keizer School District, students of color face a disproportionately high level of suspensions a report has found. Forty-eight percent of African American students, 41 percent of Latino students and 38 percent of Native American students will be suspended at some time between ninth and twelfth grade. Only 16 percent of white students will be suspended during their high school years. Over ninety people representing the community groups 100 Good People, Mano a Mano, NAACP and the YWCA addressed the Salem-Keizer School Board on July 13 to protest these findings. Students and parents recounted their stories of racial harassment at the school. (*Statesman Journal*, July 10, 14)

7. ANTI-IMMIGRANT GROUPS AWKWARD ATTEMPTS TO WOO PEOPLE OF COLOR: Anti-immigrant groups are trying to make a pitch to African American leaders on the topic of immigration. The Center for Immigration Studies in its June *Background* tries to paint the restrictionist positions of African American union leader A. Philip Randolph as a potential model. A thorough reading of the article however, shows that Randolph was primarily opposed to turn-of-the-century European immigrants taking jobs from Black American workers and farmers and lowering the pay scale. The clumsiest outreach strategy is used by The Greater Bay Area Coalition for Immigration Reform. In its July/August *Immigration News* the Coalition provides space for an African American activist from Los Angeles to call for English-only education. But on the next page, the Coalition denounces diversity and multiculturalism and prints a racist song about "wetbacks swarming day and night."

8. ANTI-SEMITE AND HOMOPHOBIC FRED PHELPS IN CANADA: Fred Phelps of the Westboro Baptist Church in Kansas, infamous for his "God Hates Fags" web page and protest at Matthew Shepherd's funeral, is on his way to Ottawa. Phelps is scheduling a protest for August 2 against the Canadian Supreme Court's recent ruling that the definition of common-law marriage must include homosexual couples. Phelps's church does not target gays only. Citing biblical verse, its web page condemns Jews for not being Christian. "This is not your garden-variety homophobe," said Regional Councilor Alex Munter. "He's not just attacking gays, he's attacking Canadian values," said Mr. Munter, who plans to be among many flag-wavers at the noon-hour vigil to protest the anti-gay crusade. "In the face of such raw hatred, we have a choice to stand by or take a stand." (*Ottawa Citizen*, July 27)

9. SECRETARY OF STATE ALBRIGHT DENOUNCES RACISM SURROUNDING MAKAH WHALING: Speaking on July 14, Secretary of State Madeline Albright spoke out against racism directed at the Makah Nation. "Last year I noted this Department's support in the International Whaling Commission for the Makah Tribe's efforts to revive a practice central to its cultural identity. This year, at long last, those controversial whale hunts took place. But a terrible phenomenon took place alongside them. Zealots expressed their opposition through acts of violence and cowardice, such as bomb threats against the Makah Reservation's elementary school, of all places. My friends, that is simply not acceptable. Opponents like that have to ask whether they truly are expressing love for whales — or hostility toward Indians." Ms. Albright was speaking at the State Department's Fourth Annual Meeting with American Indians and Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians and Other Indigenous Americans. (Associated Press, July 15)

••• The CHD Research Department prefers incident reports, newspaper clippings, event write-ups, questions and comments to be e-mailed to chdpdx@aol.com. Alternatively you can mail such items to the address below or call us either in Bellingham or Seattle at the numbers listed below. CHD Research staff rely upon such information to fill out much of the [Northwest Update](#) and we appreciate your contributions. •••