



In Defense of Democracy & Civil Rights

COALITION FOR HUMAN DIGNITY

P. O. BOX 21266 • SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98111-3266
(360) 756-0914 PHONE (360) 738-3034 FAX • E-MAIL: chdpx@aol.com

NORTHWEST UPDATE

September 1, 1999

1. CHRISTIAN COALITION FIGHTS PUBLIC TELEVISION IN IDAHO: The Idaho Christian Coalition is gathering signatures in the hopes of derailing the showing of "It's Elementary" on Idaho Public Television. "It's Elementary" takes viewers into classrooms of second through eighth grade to see how teachers are dealing with issues around homosexuality. The documentary is scheduled to air at 10pm on September 7th. Matt Roetter, who is organizing the petition drive for the Christian Coalition in north Idaho said it would be sent to the governor or a legislative committee who "would be interested to know how their constituents feel about the program." Human rights leaders question if the petition is anything more than a fundraising list that the Christian Coalition will use for future donations. Idaho Christian Coalition Executive Director, Nancy Bloomer, claims that "It's Elementary" is a "'how to' video showing adult homosexuals coaching young school children on how to regard the homosexual lifestyle."

Across the state in eastern Idaho, businessman Frank VanderSloot is raising cash for billboards challenging the showing of "It's Elementary." Vandersloot is the president of Melaleuca Inc, in Idaho Falls. He declined to identify others who are funding the billboard campaign. VanderSloot hopes to get Idahoans questioning why tax dollars that fund public television are going towards the showing of "It's Elementary." When asked about the campaign, Vandersloot seemed more concerned with homosexuality than with tax dollars. He said, "I am really concerned that if this isn't stopped, a lot of little kids will watch this program and create questions they've never had..." (*Post-Register*, August 15, *Spokesman Review*, August 6)

2. ANTI-SEMITIC VIOLENCE FOLLOWS LOS ANGELES SHOOTINGS: Police are investigating incidents of vandalism, arson, and assault in the wake of the shooting at the North Valley Jewish Community Center in Granada Hills, California. Buford Furrow, a former security guard at the Aryan Nations compound in Hayden Lake, Idaho, allegedly committed his crime as "A wake up call to start killing Jews." Police are now concerned that some are listening to Furrow's message.

On August 13th two elderly Jewish men were beaten outside a synagogue in Toronto, Canada. The two men ages 66 and 79, the elder man a Holocaust survivor, were beaten with a lead pipe. Each man was treated at local hospitals and released. Their two assailants, who were described as white with short hair, took nothing and were silent during the attack. On August 14th, congregants at a Hollywood, California temple arrived for weekend services to see a swastika and "Jews die" spray-painted on a wall. Police reported that they also found a letter in the mailbox at the synagogue that appeared to be "anti-British." On August 15th, an arsonist targeted the Temple Beth Chai synagogue on Long Island at about three o'clock in the morning. Police said that someone smashed an office window and poured a flammable liquid inside, then lit the substance. Police are investigating the incident as a bias crime. (*Associated Press*, August 15, *Reuters*, August 16, *APB News*, August 17)

3. CHD ILLUMINATES DEBATE ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND HOMOPHOBIA: CHD Research Director Robert Crawford recently took conservative religious leader Jim Craswell to task for his actions on behalf of anti-gay organizations. Craswell is a member of the Kitsap County Council on Human Rights, and the author of numerous Religious Freedom Alerts. In these alerts Craswell has accused his critics of denigrating "the faith community" because they challenge groups such as Focus on the Family. But Crawford points out that there is a difference between faith based evangelical organizations and groups such as Focus on the Family and the Family Research Council. Most evangelicals work on religious issues inside their communities, according to Crawford. But

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Focus on the Family and the Family Research Council have moved beyond religious work in the hopes of creating national and state policies that undermine civil rights for lesbians and gays. "Because they play in the political arena they should be held accountable," says Crawford. Crawford also points out that Craswell has defended other organizations whose leaders have made comments promoting violence against homosexuals and abortion providers. (For more information please see the *Dignity Report*, Spring 1999 and an insightful article written by Kari Thorene that appeared in the *Seattle Weekly*, August 12, 1999.)

4. CHURCH VANDALIZED AFTER PASTOR SPEAKS OUT AGAINST WHITE SUPREMACY: The phrase "Jew Lover" and the word "Skins" were spray painted on a van belonging to Tacoma's Bethlehem Lutheran Church after Pastor Jerry Walters spoke out against racist groups in the northwest. Walters, formerly a pastor in Roundup, Montana, is familiar with racists after dealing with the Freemen. In a previous incident at Bethlehem Lutheran, an article about Walters's opposition to the Montana Freemen was tacked to the door of the church the next day with the warning: "Don't preach this Jewish communist doctrine." Walters called the press to report this latest incident; something he acknowledges might be criticized for giving publicity to the vandals. But according to Walters, silence in the face of white supremacy is the wrong course of action. He said, "Silence allows these types of movements to grow. Silence allows these types of movements to spread without a word against them. So silence is not acceptable." (*The News Tribune*, August 11)

5. THIS NEO-NAZI NO FRIEND OF WASPS: Spokane Police apprehended Michael G. Holsten, 29, of Coeur d'Alene after a car chase through the city which ended after Holsten hid himself in a wasp filled compost heap. Holsten, who marched in the July 10 Aryan Nations parade and drives a black station wagon covered with racist stickers and a confederate flag, was charged with aggravated assault and numerous traffic violations. He eluded police by backing into a police car after he was initially stopped. This tactic set off the airbags in the police cruiser and shut off the flow of fuel. Holsten got away but was later apprehended after hiding in a compost pile where he was forced out by angry wasps. (*Spokesman Review*, August 11)

6. ARYAN NATIONS CANCELS SEPTEMBER 4th PARADE: Aryan Nations leader Richard Butler has cancelled a planned march in the wake of the shootings at the Jewish Community Center in Los Angeles. Butler told the press that it would be "unseemly to host a march at this time." Butler made additional comments when he cancelled the march that seemed to contradict his earlier statements that praised his former security guard Buford Furrow. Right after the incident in Los Angeles Butler reportedly called Furrow a "good soldier." In this latest press release he called the shooting in Los Angeles, "a tragedy of the first order." (*Spokesman Review*, August 18)

7. RALLY SAYS "NO ROOM FOR HATRED" IN EUGENE, OREGON: 200 people lined the streets in a rally organized by Youth for Justice and Communities Against Hate on August 20. The event was set up to protest the shootings at the Jewish Community Center in California and to draw attention to the growing number of hard core white supremacists who live in the Eugene area according to Michele Lefkowitz of Communities Against Hate. A television crew from MTV was also on hand to film the event and interview youths on ways to fight hate crimes.

••• 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 Portland 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. •••