

Out in the Mountains  
Established in 1986

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Statement of Purpose

The purpose of *Out in the Mountains* is to serve as a voice for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgendered people, and our supporters in Vermont. We wish the newspaper to be a source of information, insight, and affirmation. We also see *OITM* as a vehicle for the celebration of the goodness and diversity of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered communities here in Vermont and elsewhere.

Editorial Policy

We will consider for publication any material which broadens our understanding of our lifestyles and of each other. Views and opinions appearing in the paper do not necessarily represent those of the staff. This paper cannot and will not endorse any candidates or actions of public officials on issues of importance to lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgendered persons.

We reserve the right not to publish any material deemed to be overtly racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, ageist, classist, xenophobic or homophobic.

Writers' guidelines are available on request. All materials submitted must include a name and contact number. However, within the pages of the newspaper, articles may appear anonymously upon request, and strict confidentiality will be observed.

Articles, letters, and artwork should be sent to us by the 15th of the month prior to the month of publication (i.e. February 15th for the March issue). We encourage and implore our readers to do what they can to make *OITM* a paper which truly represents the many voices of our communities.

Materials should be sent to:  
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Editorial

E Pluribus Homo: Gays and the Dollar

by Hugh Coyle

Whether it's queer currency, dyke dollars, bi bucks, or tranny transactions at the ATM — the amount of money g/l/b/t people have (and how they spend it) has recently raised the eyebrows of the radical right. Several reports have indicated that there's gold in them thar gay hills — and that if non-hets are hoarding vast portions of the country's coinage, then once again the fate of the nation is at hand.

The fact that many of these reports have been thoroughly discredited over the past few years is lost on our ultra-conservative counterparts. For starters, nearly every one of the reports looks exclusively at men, furthering the perception (and the shameful reality) that women have negligible economic impact in this country. By virtue of their design, the studies also look predominantly at men who are comfortable enough with their sexuality to identify themselves as gay or bi. In at least one instance, the researchers looked only at subscribers to a popular men's magazine. In so doing, the results favored men who already possess both social and financial security (let's face it — some of those subscriptions aren't cheap) and who can afford to be "out" in society. What often affords them this freedom is that they are, for the most part, urban, white, middle-to-upper-class, white-collar professionals.

For the moment, however, let's give these statisticians the benefit of the doubt. Let's assume that gay people really *are* wealthier than their heterosexual counterparts. This would suggest that the nation's current economic prosperity is due in large part, thank you very much, to us. It would also suggest that being gay is a *good* thing, since it leads to wealth and prestige in society. The corollary to such a theory is that being heterosexual and practicing "traditional family values" is not economically healthy, since it ties up too much capital in domestic expenses like child care and education — both known to be low priorities on the political right's shopping list. Even so, thank goodness for the generosity of those queer DINKs (Double-Income/No-Kids), who have plenty of spare change left at the end of the month to dole out to deserving charities like the church and the arts. Without gay people, our moral and cultural institutions would go belly-up in a heartbeat.

Obviously, it just ain't so. Our communities, both closeted and non-closeted, represent a wide diversity of race, age, spiritual affiliation, physical ability, ethnic origin, and class. For those who are "out," the highest realms of wealth and power remain out of reach owing to cultural and corporate homophobia. (Remember, Malcolm Forbes stayed in the company closet while amassing most of his millions.) Anyone who doubts that can just take a quick poll to see how the country would favor an outwardly gay or lesbian president. (Remember, even though Steve Forbes bankrolled his bid for the presidency with daddy's gay dollars, he wasn't an out gay man either.)

Ironically, many of the groups rallying against gay influence rely a great deal on homophobia and the fear of that influence to fill up their own coffers. From TV evangelists to Republican politicians, those who strike the "No-Homo" pose have proven its success as a fund-raising tool. Maybe that's one of the reasons they think we must be so wealthy: they've thrown so much money AT us, it only makes sense that we'd stoop over once in a while to pick it up.

Such was the case recently in Colorado, where voters recently learned that their own prejudice had a price. When the Supreme

Court overturned that state's anti-gay Amendment Two, it also ordered that the state (i.e. Colorado residents) pay for all legal fees associated with the case. With that single ruling, the courts sent both a moral and economic message to communities across the country: hatred and homophobia are costly commodities. Thanks to the pernicious plans of the religious right, Colorado taxpayers — gay and straight alike — will now have to shell out a few dollars for court costs come April 15.

Likewise, Uncle Sam's tax base is also being eaten up by homophobia. In 1996, the military spent about \$25 million to replace servicemembers discharged for their sexual orientation. It spent countless more millions for investigations and legal fees, according to the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network.

Money also figures prominently in the campaigns to establish domestic partnership (DP) benefits around the country, or so say DP's nay-sayers. Companies like United Airlines hem and haw, claiming a need to investigate the costs associated with implementing such plans. One wonders if their human resource people wring their hands in despair every time a new employee arrives with three or four kids to sign up on the company's health plan. If corporate America is so concerned with the dollar, you'd think they'd do one of two things: 1) limit the number of dependents ANY employee can claim on the company policy, or 2) show preference to gay and lesbian job applicants in hiring, since they're currently far cheaper to employ than heterosexual family folks.

The real bottom line is that the whole money argument is a smoke screen for homophobia. It's an excuse, not a reason, to avoid initiating fair and just policies in the workplace, in the court room, and in the government. Historically, it has proven to be an effective means of controlling the attitudes of the population. Hitler stands as the prime example of this, as he scapegoated the Jewish people (and then anyone else who didn't conform to the Aryan ideal) as the cause of his country's economic problems. In his excellent Berlin diaries, gay writer Christopher Isherwood both noted and feared how quickly the public rallied around Hitler's accusations, even in a time of relative cultural liberalism.

Then, as in America today, common people were desperate for reasons to explain why they were still struggling while others amassed great wealth. Those in control of the country's finances were and are cautious to keep the criticism directed away from them and back toward the general population. We hold Bill Gates up as a contemporary hero for amassing his vast empire, then criminalize welfare mothers who can barely keep their children alive. Townspeople target school teachers whenever they ask for raises, claiming that \$30-\$50,000 salaries are exorbitant; meanwhile, the Disney company prepares a multimillion dollar separation package for one of its top executives and the country responds with hushed acceptance.

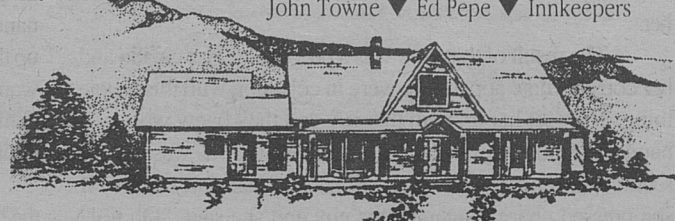
Somewhere, somehow, the signals are getting all mixed up on these money matters. One wonders how gay and lesbian groups, many of which (*OITM* included) operate on shoestring budgets and volunteer staffing, could possibly be considered an economic threat while religious right groups like the Christian Coalition, with their high-profile salaried spokesmen, continue to rake in the contributions.

Wake up and smell the irony, America. The targeting of gay and lesbian dollars is just the most recent example of the radical right's diversionary tactics. It's a capitalist con game, and if we're not careful about the facts, we'll all be victims of the sting. ▼

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