

D'Amato's Gay Conversion

BY ANDY HUMM

While conservative religious groups are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on ads to sell gay people on heterosexuality, Senator Alfonse D'Amato has been trying to hawk himself to the Human Rights Campaign, the national gay lobby group, as a born-again supporter of lesbian and gay rights. And though few in New York trust the sincerity of his conversion, the Washington-based HRC appears poised to give D'Amato its Gay Housekeeping (or, perhaps, Senate-keeping) Seal of Approval.

After saying initially that an HRC endorsement in the Senate race was imminent, Winnie Stachelberg, HRC's political director, backtracked, telling the *Voice* that HRC won't make any announcement until after the September primary. But she added that D'Amato now has a 75 percent rating on gay and AIDS issues. "There's a disconnect between those

votes in Washington and translating that to the voters of New York State," she said. "We will work with him to bridge that gap."

And Michael Aronowitz, New York State chair of the gay Log Cabin Republicans, says that HRC "has no other choice but to endorse D'Amato." He cites the senator's sponsorship of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, a gay rights bill, and his support for lifting the ban on gays in the military.

"He is the individual most responsible for getting [openly gay] Fred Hochberg's nomination [to a post in the Small Business Administration] through the Senate," said Aronowitz, who also cited D'Amato's blast at his own party for blocking gay philanthropist James Hormel's nomination as ambassador to Luxembourg. The national Log Cabin club demanded in 1997 that HRC endorse D'Amato.

But most gay activists say that D'Amato has much to atone for. In his slash-and-burn maiden campaign for Senate in 1980, he said that his opponent, Elizabeth Holtzman, was "part of the ultraleft, gay rights conspiracy that is out to destroy the middle class." In the 1980s, as the AIDS crisis intensified, he consistently voted for antigay amendments to AIDS bills introduced by Jesse Helms.



With friends like these: D'Amato with Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott

D'Amato runs with the endorsement of the Conservative and Right-to-Life parties. In the 1990s, his HRC ratings have hovered in the 40th percentile while his ratings from right-wing groups like the NRA, National Right to Life Committee, and the Christian Coalition were 100 percent.

Indeed, HRC's own New York steering committee is divided over endorsing D'Amato. Tim Smith, the New York group's cochair, says that D'Amato "has clearly delivered for us over the last few years and made an outright effort to court our endorsement," but that the senator's "character really concerns us and we've expressed that to the board." Smith remembers that in 1992, after an ACT UP demonstration against the Bush-Quayle campaign launch on Liberty Island, he and other activists were herded onto a ferry "with D'Amato swearing at us," his face contorted in anger.

Other longtime activists are even angrier. "I saw him bubble up from the slime of the Nassau County Republican machine," says Steve Ault, the New York-based organizer of two gay marches on Washington. Ault says that he would "march to [HRC] headquarters" if they give D'Amato the nod. "It's a nightmare," Ault said. "Is HRC in the business of trying to consolidate the power of Jesse Helms and Trent Lott?"

Others point out that D'Amato's Democratic opponents—Charles Schumer, Geraldine Ferraro, and Mark Green—have longer records of support in the gay community. State assem-

blymember Deborah Glick says that D'Amato, on the other hand, is "only a moderate in the context of a viciously antigay Republican party." Glick says she has had "tense" conversations with HRC executive director Elizabeth Birch over the D'Amato issue.

And Democratic congressman Barney Frank argues that "the antigay agenda is advanced when Republicans win." Frank adds that right-wing crusader Gary Bauer "understands that party is an important issue." HRC, Frank says, is acting more like "a business-interest PAC that supports incumbents who support them."

But those who support a D'Amato endorsement say that realpolitik must guide HRC's deliberations. Hunter College political scientist Kenneth Sherrill, an out gay man who has no love for D'Amato, says that "HRC has no choice but to endorse D'Amato if they are going to stay in business," he said. "As long as there is Republican control of Congress, he provides a point of leverage."

Besides, notes HRC's Stachelberg, Chuck Schumer, like D'Amato, voted for the antigay Defense of Marriage Act in 1996. Geraldine Ferraro said she would have voted for it, and Mark Green, who spoke out against DOMA, is nonetheless an opponent of same-sex marriage.

Still, the majority of gay and lesbian activists in New York remain unconvinced. The Empire State Pride Agenda, the state gay lobby, assisted by HRC, conducted an all-out campaign this year for D'Amato's help in getting the state lesbian and gay rights bill onto the floor of the state senate. The senate is controlled by antigay Republican Joseph Bruno, D'Amato's hand-picked majority leader.

Matt Foreman, ESPA's executive director, said "we hoped that D'Amato would do for our community what he's done for a host of other issues in Albany from breast cancer to rent control." But Foreman said that while D'Amato called Bruno, "there was no arm-twisting," and the bill was not even considered by the Senate's Republican conference.

"I'm convinced that if Ralph Marino were still majority leader, the [gay rights bill] would have passed," Foreman said. ESPA was "looking for something tangible" from D'Amato, and he did not deliver. □

Candidate urges return to government by the Constitution

SUMMARY: A Spokane businessman running as the American Heritage Party candidate for the 5th Congressional District said America needs to return to its founding roots.

By **SETH TRUSCOTT**
Of the Union-Bulletin

If American Heritage Party congressional candidate John Beal were elected to represent Eastern Washington, he would work to end welfare, ban all abortions and return American government, he said, to its "biblical presumptions."

Calling himself a "recovering Republican," Beal, a 54-year-old remodeling contractor from Spokane, is challenging incumbent Rep. George Nethercutt, R-Spokane, and Democrat Brad Lyons, an Odessa alfalfa farmer, for the 5th District seat.

Beal was the guest speaker Monday evening at a barbecue in Walla Walla's Pioneer Park sponsored by the American Heritage Party. The

party's Walla Walla County chairman, Lorne Blackman, and Beal spoke to about 90 people, many wearing T-shirts printed with "A Godless nation cannot remain free."

Blackman said Beal is challenging Nethercutt on moral issues. "The fundamental issue is: Whose philosophy of government are we going to be governed by?" Blackman said. "Nethercutt and most of Congress do not govern by the Constitution."

Beal said he used to support the Republican party for most of his life, but said that Republicans, such as Nethercutt, have betrayed their conservative constituents and not kept promises.

"George (Nethercutt) serves the government as apostate," Beal said. "All government policy and law begin in God. For George, government and law begin and end in man."

He said modern-day politics hold "little or no understanding or reverence for the Constitu-

tion. The goal of the American Heritage Party is to restore America to her biblical presumptions and her constitutional boundaries."

Returning to the original republic of the United States, he said, "is not only feasible, it's legal."

"It's a commitment on the part of 'We the People' to restore the principles" of the early republic, he said.

Accomplishing that will require a fundamental re-education of the American people, as well as a return of primary responsibility to the family, and as much localization of government as possible, he said.

Beal opposes all welfare. Welfare today, he said, is for "people who abuse the system, people who use the system for selfish interests and personal gain."

Beal said he opposes all abortion. "We are the only pro-life option," he said of his party. "We are pro-life from conception to natural death."

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Third-party candidate makes no apologies

■ Beal sees a place for God in the work of Congress

By **MICHAEL R. WICKLINE**
OF THE TRIBUNE

A third-party candidate challenging Republican Rep. George Nethercutt of Washington pitched his party's brand of biblical and constitutional principles in Clarkston Monday night.

"Our goal is to re-create the entire dialectic of American politics away from humanistic, socialist materialism and back toward biblical and constitutional liberty," John Beal told about two dozen people during the first meeting of the American Heritage Party in Asotin County.

A newly born child has an average federal debt of more than \$20,000, Beal said.

"That is taxation without representation if I have ever heard of it."

The 54-year-old Spokane independent contractor is vying with Nethercutt and Odessa Democrat Brad Lyons as a member of the new American Heritage Party. Unsuccessful GOP gubernatorial candidate Ellen Craswell helped form the party earlier this year as an affiliate of the U.S. Taxpayers Party.

Beal said he was surprised to be drafted to run for Congress during the party's state convention in late June in Wenatchee. Craswell's



John Beal

husband, Bruce, was drafted to challenge GOP U.S. Rep. Rick White of Washington.

A Colville man advised him to avoid religious references last week because he was worried about what happened to Ellen Craswell two years ago and how the media would treat him.

"I make no apology," Beal said.

He said he views a congressman as a representative accountable to God as the ultimate authority.

"If you know what my faith is, you'll know how I'll govern," Beal said. "We should not be on the defensive about biblical principles in civil government."

About 1.5 million babies are executed each year, he said. They total about 37 million since the U.S. Supreme Court made abortion legal in its Roe vs. Wade ruling.

Both political parties promised change and failed to deliver by making a God of pragmatism, Beal said.

The Republicans controlling Congress still are funding Planned Parenthood, pro-homosexual AIDS subsidies, the radical Legal Services Corp., the Mexican bailout and the National Endowment for the Arts, he said.

House Speaker Newt Gingrich didn't support a proposal for the Republican National Committee to no longer provide financial support to candidates who back so-called partial birth abortions, Beal said. Gingrich contends the pro-life community is a special interest group, he said.

U.S. Rep. Henry Hyde of Illinois didn't support the proposal because he wanted to stay in the majority in the House, he said.

"I call that capitulating to pragmatism over principle," he said. "My first obligation is to God and my father," he said, and there isn't a reference to a majority in the Bible.

Lorne Blackman, chairman of American Heritage Party in Walla Walla County, said 11 county affiliates have been formed in Washington state during the past five months.

"If we are faithful to God, we can open doors that we don't foresee," he said. "If we are faithful, anything can happen as the two party system breaks down."

Beal said he'll use Nethercutt's voting record to show Nethercutt is committed to "big government" as their debates approach.