

TO THE PEOPLE OF OREGON

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November 1, 1992

Publication: Oregonian, The (Portland, OR)

Page: A01

Word Count: 266

Today, I am making a personal appeal to the people of Oregon: Ballot Measure 9 in Tuesday's election must be defeated. My appeal to you is unprecedented in the years that I have led The Oregonian as its president and publisher. I speak out now because Measure 9 is also unprecedented -- an assault on human rights and human dignity that should have no place in the Oregon Constitution.

I am deeply concerned that constitutional means are being sought to diminish the basic rights of a particular group of citizens.

Measure 9 would restrain homosexuals in ways that are so vaguely stated that the courts would have to decide what the measure means, if it passed. I firmly believe, however, that the measure's authors intend restraints on rights of free speech, free assembly and other freedoms readily available to all Americans now.

Anyone fearful of any erosion of our basic rights as Americans must ask, ``Where will this lead? What section of our citizenry will be singled out next?"

I do not and cannot endorse homosexual acts. But my longstanding religious and moral views as a conservative Roman Catholic are one thing and my lifelong commitment, both in peace and war, to defend and exult in the inalienable rights granted our citizens under the U.S. Constitution is another. This is what I stand for, and this is what The Oregonian stands for.

The New York Times stated it simply: ``Bigotry is on the ballot in Oregon."

I urge you to join me and Oregon's religious, political, educational, business and community leaders, and clear-thinking citizens throughout the state, in defeating Measure 9.