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Initiative Thirteen

Coming Together, Learning to Persuade

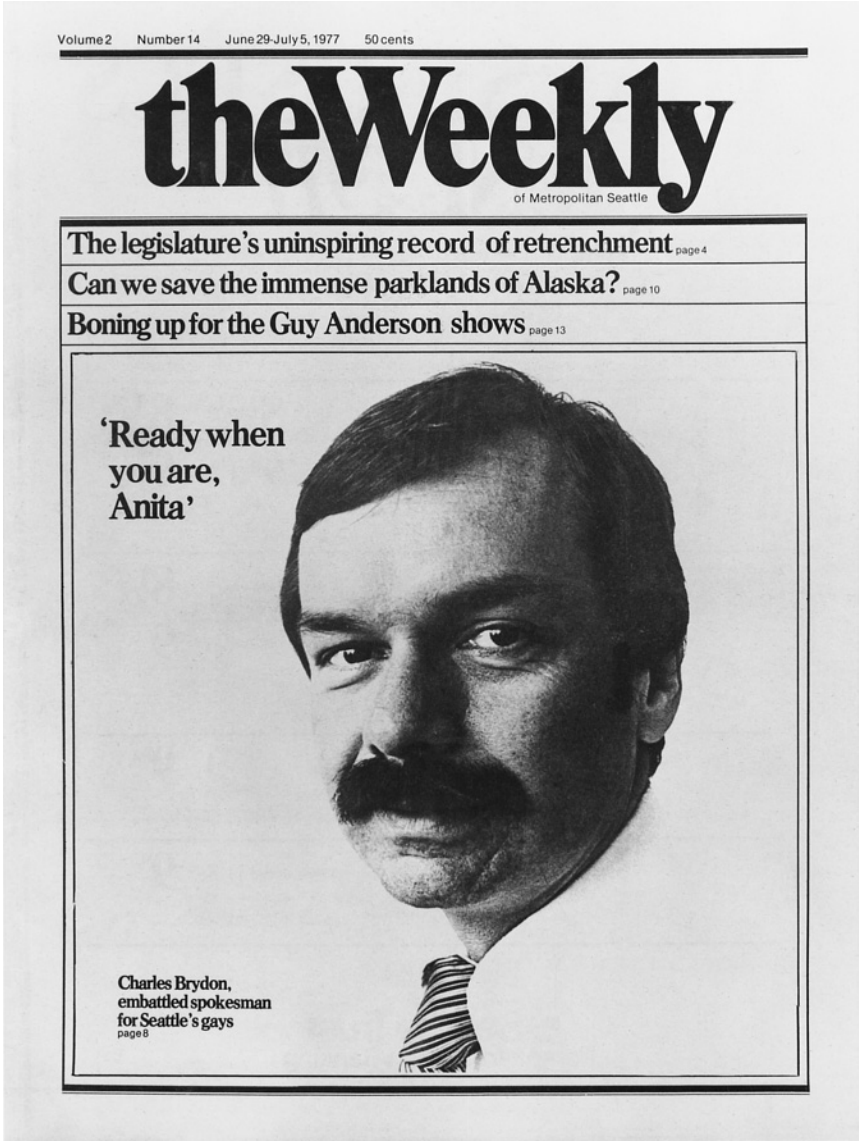
The news that David Estes could begin collecting signatures for the anti-gay initiative arrived the same night in February 1978 that Charlie Brydon's friends had planned a retirement dinner for him. The dinner was to be held at one of the bars that were carving a new gay territory away from the mudflat, Ken Decker's Brass Door located at Pike Street and Harvard Avenue, on Capitol Hill. Harassers had tossed a smoke bomb through the door just a few days earlier, but Decker continued to prepare for Brydon's reception. Pete Francis planned to be there, as did Doug Jewett, the prosecutor who had tried to win the payoff convictions and who had just been elected city attorney. Their presence would be evidence that the civic discourse with gays and lesbians was widening, and Brydon, of course, was getting the credit. Five Everett Community College students even came to thank Brydon for helping them win recognition from school officials for a new gay student alliance at the college.

That night, the dinner went as planned, the usual affair of congratulations, but the gossip among those attending focused as much on the uncertain future as on the achievements of the past. People nervously wondered whether the police officer was going to triumph as easily in Seattle as Anita Bryant had in Florida.

As the dinner ended, Brydon rose to reassure the audience. "This is not going to be a Dade County II," he proclaimed forcefully. "This is Seattle, not Miami."

Then came a surprise from the man who supposedly was retiring: a small group of gay leaders including himself, he told the audience, had already taken matters into hand and was meeting privately to shape a response to the initiative. Few had known about it before that moment.[1]

The crowd applauded. Brydon knew how to get things done. Quickly. Behind the scenes. With insider clout. Two weeks later, Brydon called a press conference to unveil the new organization, Citizens to Retain Fair Employment (CRFE). He was ready to enter the fray again, and he had recruited a steering committee for CRFE that was a testament to just how much support he had been able to build among heterosexuals in Seattle. Among its members were city council members Paul Kraabel, Phyllis Lamphere, and Jeanette Williams; state senators Pete Francis and Jim McDermott; state representatives Bill Burns, Jeff Douthwaite, and Gene Luz; U.W. professors Giovanni Costigan, Pepper Schwartz, and Jennifer James;



In 1977, after celebrity Anita Bryant helped overturn a gay civil rights ordinance in Miami, the *Seattle Weekly* personified a similar battle in Seattle as a struggle between Bryant and Charlie Brydon, who had become the city's best-known gay activist. *(Seattle Weekly, Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma)*

developer Paul Schell and longtime Seattle jeweler Herb Bridge; activist and Seattle writer Walt Crowley; Secretary of State Bruce Chapman; and a diverse range of gays and lesbians. Cherry Johnson, for example, had volunteered for the Lesbian Resource Center but mostly knew Brydon through her work as secretary for the Dorian Group in 1977. Similarly, William Etnyre had been the group's treasurer. There was a young aide named Cal Anderson working in city council member George Benson's office. He had mostly been active with the Democratic Party. Two men, Lee Trinka and Jerry Reese, represented the city's drag-queen organization. Greg Kucera was the young artist who had been featured in the KING-TV documentary about gays at the end of 1977.

Significantly, the important political committee that would decide campaign strategy was chaired not by a well-known gay activist but by Walt Crowley, who had helped create an underground newspaper, the *Helix,* during the anti-Vietnam years, but who was heterosexual and had played little role in gay politics. A city hall insider would assist him, a lesbian named Shelly Yapp who had earned an economics degree from the University of Washington and was becoming Mayor Royer's deputy director of policy planning. Other political committee members included Tim Hillard, who had been Uhlman's liaison to the gay community; Hugh Spitzer, who was replacing Hillard; Brydon himself; and Pepper Schwartz, the U.W. teacher.[2]

Pointedly missing from both the executive and political committees were the names of any of the most prominent gay activists on Capitol Hill or any of the more radical or socialist feminists—people like Dick Snedigar, Patrick Haggerty, Cindy Gipple, Laurie Morton, Betty Johanna, Jane Meyerding, Faygele benMiriam, or even Jim Arnold or Jim Tully, two supporters of the Gay Community Center who had become the owners of the major gay newspaper in town, the *Seattle Gay News.*

By 1978, there had been years of gay evangelizing and intellectualizing, years of entrepreneuring new groups, and years of small protests against specific troubles, but most communication had been of an "internal" sort, aimed at rallying a new sense of identity and pride among gays and lesbians themselves. It had aimed at making it possible for individuals to come out. Meanwhile, the "external" political persuasion of heterosexuals had primarily been directed at city or state politicians, or to small gatherings in classrooms or churches. When lesbians and gays had won political battles, it had been through the efforts of a few activists who had found heterosexual allies—the early Dorians working with Katagiri and Francis; the city's feminists gaining Jeanette Williams's support for a women's commission; and Brydon working with Uhlman. Gays and lesbians in Seattle had not yet faced the need to persuade a majority of voters to support them, and, as George Cotterill and Mark Matthews had shown at the beginning of the century, the initiative and referendum process could be a thin disguise for a majority telling a minority how to behave socially. What Brydon was about to attempt was a new step, and not everyone agreed Brydon should be the chief choreographer, nor did

everyone agree on the rhetoric he would choose. The challenge, then, was twofold: not only to persuade heterosexuals to give gays and lesbians the majority in a popular vote, but also to find a way to come together to do so.

Almost before the microphones were turned off at Brydon's press conference, Wayne Angevine, the city clerk, was being quoted in the *Seattle Gay News* as saying that "Charlie Brydon is putting together an organization to promote Charlie Brydon. He doesn't give a good goddamn about the gay rights movement, and come hell or high water, he's going to divide the gay community if necessary to make himself spokesman."[3]

Within two days, another new group called the Washington Coalition for Sexual Minority Rights held its own press conference. The coalition, discontent with the rhetoric issuing from the Dorian Group, had formed several months earlier as a replacement for the old Seattle Gay Alliance. It was joined at the conference by representatives of the Seattle Counseling Service, the Gay Community Center, NOW, the Feminist Coordinating Council, the Freedom Socialist Party, and Radical Women—all the activist dwellers of the hilltops rather than of the downtown knoll. The coalition first explicitly denounced the Estes initiative. Then it implicitly criticized Charlie Brydon by scheduling its own community meeting to discuss strategies for responding to Estes. Coalition members deliberately contrasted the grassroots way they intended to work against Brydon's intent to form a professional cadre. In March 1978, more than three hundred gay men and women gathered at the Metropolitan Community Church's site on Renton Hill.

By then, Estes had amended his original petition to overturn not just the city's job law protecting gays, but the housing ordinance as well. His initiative had also been assigned a number: thirteen.

At the coalition meeting, Brydon's old nemesis Dick Snedigar, the former director of the counseling service and member of the Freedom Socialist Party, initially urged the audience to remember solidarity. "Whatever views we hold individually or as groups, a united front must be formed," he said. But almost immediately, one of the questions raised was whether the entire campaign should be delegated to Brydon's new organization or whether a separate campaign should be run by the coalition. Overwhelmingly, the audience voted against unifying with Brydon's group.[4]

Before many more weeks had passed, the coalition spawned two political arms to combat Estes. Both would be collectively organized with committees and individual members determining strategy, rather than "leaders" and "campaign directors," the approach of Brydon's Citizens to Retain Fair Employment. One group, called Women Against Thirteen (WAT), would aim at mobilizing those feminists who wanted to work with other women to defeat the initiative rather than having to work with men. WAT's strategy would be to emphasize a little-publicized section of Initiative Thirteen that would strip the city Office of Women's Rights of its power to investigate complaints of discrimination against women. Estes

proposed to transfer those powers to the city Human Rights Department. WAT thought women's concerns would be diluted if that happened. The second collective to be formed included both men and women. It would be called the Seattle Committee against Thirteen, or SCAT—an acronym capable of multiple meanings. It too would have its own independent strategy, recruiting as many openly gay volunteers as possible and sending them into neighborhoods to directly challenge heterosexuals to support gay rights.

Brydon cringed. The acronym SCAT he thought "horrendous," and he did not believe that either WAT or SCAT had a message that heterosexual voters would identify with. His group, CRFE, had already commissioned a poll. "We could win," Brydon remembered in a later interview, "if we made [the argument] a right to privacy." Indeed, the survey showed that 95 percent of those polled agreed with the statement "everyone has a fundamental right to privacy." The trick, CRFE figured, was to fit gays' protections against job and housing discrimination into that rhetoric, not to try to make heterosexuals feel more comfortable about homosexuals themselves.[5]

The line between the downtown gays and the hill gays was drawn, and for the next several months, it would be difficult to determine whether the main plot in the fight against Initiative Thirteen was against Estes or against one another.

Seattle was not the sole battleground over gay civil rights in 1978. At the end of March, Anita Bryant's Southern Baptist pastor from Florida, F. William Chapman, arrived in Seattle, making a circuit from Wichita, Kansas, to St. Paul, Minnesota, and to other cities where Bryant's campaign was preparing strikes to repeal similar local ordinances. The Bryant strategy was to build what looked like an unstoppable momentum in cities and then win a statewide vote in California that would signal once and for all that gays should not be protected against discrimination. Eventually, the strategy suggested, even sodomy laws that had been repealed by legislatures could be reinstated by popular vote. That was the ultimate target.[6]

St. Paul would vote April 25; Wichita, May 9; Eugene, May 23. If Estes succeeded in his petition drive, the Seattle vote would come November 7. That would be the same day Californians would consider a statewide initiative authorizing the dismissal of any teacher, gay or straight, who discussed homosexuality in a public setting, whether inside or outside the classroom. By the end of the year, Bryant and her allies calculated, the legal protections that had been slowly granted to gays in a handful of locations could be so soundly repudiated they would not be tried elsewhere.

In every locale, the rhetorical theme would be the same: a focus on religious symbols and on fear. Homosexuals, it would be repeatedly asserted, posed a moral threat to American families, in particular to children. Homosexuals recruited. They engaged in abominable sex acts too disgusting to mention—although they would

be etched in glaring detail during campaign speeches. Homosexuals dressed in inappropriate clothing. Homosexuals were unchristian.

In Seattle, most of Estes's supporters on the police force chose to remain in the background. One other officer who did join him in public was Dennis Falk, who also happened to be a member of the ultraconservative John Birch Society. The two police officers soon became codirectors of an organization they named Save Our Moral Ethics, SOME for short. At a press conference with Estes and Falk, the Reverend Chapman asserted that repealing antidiscrimination laws protecting homosexuals was not a matter of civil rights, but of morality. "Legitimate minorities," he said, citing Baptists and Mormons as examples, were groups that had long existed within history. When it came to a homosexual, he said, "history has never given him a place."[7] He ignored the obvious fact: that the two minorities he had cited had also coalesced at a certain point in history and then had had to struggle for their own rights to protection.

The Miami debacle—70 percent to repeal the antidiscrimination law, only 30 percent to uphold—had been laid to several factors, and in every city on the 1978 list, homosexuals and their allies tried desperately to change the narrative terrain. It was said that the campaign in Dade County had lasted only seven weeks, far too short a time to organize and educate the public. The appeals to emotions had not really been countered; experts on sexuality had jetted in to assure voters that homosexuals were not child molesters, but even that was a defensive and intellectual maneuver. To rely on academics to counter deeply metaphoric fears was death in a heated political struggle. It was also said that local gay organizers had not developed deep contacts with heterosexual community leaders. The widespread Cuban neighborhoods had been written off as too hostile and too Catholic. The archbishop had opposed the civil rights law. The media had not understood the civil rights argument.

As the Bryant campaign launched other ballot initiatives, gays and lesbians desperately sought different campaign strategies. "None of the arguments that were advanced by the pro–gay rights side were resonating with the general public," Brydon recalled later.[8] In St. Paul, gays thought the territory would shift. It was a Scandinavian town, much like Seattle, less given to campaigns waged on passion and fear—or so the reasoning went. The Catholic archbishop favored the city's law. Connections were made with heterosexual leaders. The mayor and three past mayors spoke against the repeal. Much of the ammunition Bryant's forces had in Miami appeared to be missing. Yet at the last minute came a barrage of ads featuring the usual themes of molestation and recruitment and once again voters gutted the law.

The public rhetoric of the gay movement simply was not working in places where civil rights could be put to a majority vote. Wichita came next. The result was the same: the majority voted to repeal the civil rights law. In all three cities, gays were able to win about one-third of the vote, but lost the other two-thirds.

Then Eugene. This vote would be of particular interest in Seattle, since it was in another Northwest city. Popular myth held that Oregon was a land of Northwestern tolerance. It had been one of the earliest states to repeal its sodomy law, and Portland had passed a job law protecting homosexuals in 1974, just a few months after Seattle did. The Oregon House of Representatives had come within one vote of adopting a similar statewide protection in 1975. Eugene, a university town, was an emerald magnet. Gay activists there figured a relatively low-key campaign with reasoned media ads about citizens' rights would work. Even the gay opponents seemed gentler in their attacks. But when the vote was counted, once again lesbians and gays lost two to one.

In Seattle, the mood began to turn very grim. "Dade County, St. Paul," Brydon said later, "they had all fallen like bowling pins."[9]

One of the first divisions to occur among Seattle's gays was over how aggressive the campaign should be, particularly while Estes was still gathering signatures during the summer of 1978 to put his initiative on the ballot. Conventional political wisdom held that it was often better not to draw the public's attention to an initiative you opposed. After the May defeat in Eugene, CRFE chose not to issue any news releases or call any press conferences because, Brydon said, he did not want to call unnecessary attention in Seattle to the vote. Then in early June 1978, CRFE issued a position statement saying it believed that "if public awareness of the initiative and the gay-rights issue can be minimized, there is a chance the initiative will fail to qualify for the ballot." In a separate *Seattle Gay News* article written for CRFE's political committee, Walt Crowley likened the anti-gay initiatives to a "strange and insidious social cancer," and said that the "problem in Seattle is to find or generate enough 'antibodies' to destroy the malignancy before it poisons the entire city." Gays and lesbians, he wrote, could be one source of the "antibodies," but to win, more would have to be found among heterosexuals. For the moment, he argued, CRFE's posture was "to avoid inadvertently contributing any momentum to the petition drive by our own actions." Even Brydon's critic Wayne Angevine agreed. He would tell a reporter, "We have to keep a low profile. No billboards, no TV. Don't flaunt the lifestyle. The minute you start smearing it in people's faces, people react negatively."[10]

SCAT and WAT, on the other hand, thought that was a grievously wrong approach. One of the young activists with SCAT was Dennis Raymond, who had moved to Seattle in 1977 after being raised in Detroit and joining the Gay Liberation Front at Wayne State University. Raymond, who would become director of the Gay Community Center, recalled that SCAT used tactics that "only a nimble organization could." "We would send out hordes of people when we found out that the pro-Thirteeners were gathering signatures. You would call people and say, 'It's happening now. Get out to Northgate,' and people would just descend there." While the SCAT and WAT activists could not block individuals from signing the petitions, they could try to dissuade. At times, they were more subver-

sive. Raymond recalled that one activist, Cookie Hunt, often took her two young children, hand in hand, and then pretended to be interested in signing the petitions herself. "She'd act like a dumb housewife [saying] 'Really, I didn't know that. Tell me more.' And [those gathering signatures] were such zealots they would spend all their time trying to convince her"—all the while missing other potential signers.[11]

On June 13, two lesbian activists, Betty Johanna and Jane Meyerding, acted even more aggressively. Imitating a tactic used by anti-Vietnam War protesters, they invaded the SOME office and poured vials of their own blood onto the initiative petitions. The letter they left said: "We are lesbians. We are the people whose lives you want to take away and replace with lives which you have chosen for us. With our blood, we are telling you today that we cannot live without our lives." Both SCAT and CRFE quickly distanced themselves from the blood-pouring, SCAT saying the tactic was not an appropriate way to educate the city, and CRFE adding that acts of violence could not be condoned. Johanna and Meyerding spent eighteen days in jail, charged with destruction of property—but they used the time to order a copy of Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon's book *Lesbian/Woman* from the public library and then passed it on to other women in the jail.[12]

As the late June time for the 1978 gay pride parade in Seattle drew near, unity between the factions of the gay community seemed an unattainable goal. Coming together was not working.

Across the nation, activists had already been debating whether the public parades in honor of the Stonewall riot were doing the gay cause more harm than good since they blended communication themes in ways not often understood by the general public. On the one hand, the parades were political, in the tradition of the civil rights marches of the 1960s. Yet the gay parades were also celebrations of being visible, and as such were carnivals of fun and drag costuming, which made them a mélange of St. Patrick's Day parades mingled with civil rights protests, with a bit of Mardi Gras drag added for vaudeville's sake. The media never could quite explain what the seemingly disjointed images were all about.

In Seattle, a few activists suggested that 1978 would be a good year to skip the march altogether, what with the need to find a political strategy pleasing to heterosexuals. Pictures of parading drag queens just would not help. Two weeks after the vote in Eugene, both the Dorian Group and CRFE dropped from the parade, CRFE declaring that "we believe a gay rights parade in the present political climate involves serious risks." "A parade," the group said, "will be viewed as a provocative gesture by too many otherwise indifferent voters." CRFE members also persuaded the NOW chapter to withdraw its endorsement, and CRFE's campaign manager, feminist Sandra Kraus, defended the decision by saying that CRFE was a "political group" rather than a "gay group." Acting on CRFE's cue, Mayor Royer—whose wife had also become a member of the steering committee—then announced a break with Uhlman's decision of the previous year. The new mayor would not

declare a Gay Pride Week. His press office explained, "Such a proclamation in the current atmosphere will damage chances that the city's human rights law will remain intact."

For his part, Brydon suggested a compromise, proposing that the timing of the march be changed. "Would a parade in August"—after the deadline for Estes's petitions had passed—"be a better idea?" he asked. Outraged, the Coalition for Sexual Minority Rights, which had organized the march in 1977, quickly announced it would not appease Estes's anti-gay forces and would, as planned, go ahead on July 1.

At the *Seattle Gay News,* owners Arnold and Tully urged a massive turnout. "No one can free slaves but slaves themselves," they editorialized, "and we, as gays, must be ready to pay our dues for freedom, as members of other minorities have done and continue to do. . . . Let the faint-hearted among us return to the closet and whisper through the keyhole. Let the rest of us march down First Avenue and attack, attack, attack."[13]

The day of the march, about three thousand joined the "attack"—more than ever had before. If nothing else, Estes's moral campaign had mobilized the city's gays and lesbians to be more visible than ever. The question was, in the face of a resolute common foe, had one gay flank deserted while the other had sallied foolishly into the hands of the enemy?

In August, a month after the parade, David Estes dressed in a casual open-necked shirt instead of his Seattle police uniform. Dennis Falk chose a suit and tie rather than his regulation blues. Together, they headed for the city clerk's office where Angevine waited for them. SOME had requested that the city comptroller, E. L. Kidd, also accompany the homosexual city clerk. The organization had gathered more than 27,000 signatures in favor of repealing the ordinance that protected Angevine's job. Only about 17,626 were needed. The *Seattle Times* reported, "As SOME leaders approached the counter, the area was bathed in light from the television cameras and reporters pressed close to hear Angevine's comments. 'What have we here?' Angevine, feigning surprise, said to Falk."

Falk spoke into the microphones that the city's press thrust in front of him. "Initiative Thirteen," he said, "perfects Seattle's human rights laws." Only "legitimate" racial and religious minorities would be protected once the law was stripped of its reference to sexual orientation.[14]

Angevine and Kidd, accompanied by Falk and Estes, then walked the boxes of petitions across the street to the county elections department. There was no doubt the initiative would qualify for the ballot. Estes had easily hurdled his first obstacle.

Outside, gay and lesbian pickets carried signs saying "Save whose moral ethics?" and "Gay rights are equal rights." They delivered a mock counter-initiative, this one from DOME, Demand Obedience to Moral Ethics—pronounced "dumb," the counter-organizers said. Its text said that "No heterosexual male shall be deemed

protected by any city ordinance preventing discrimination." The purpose, the organizers explained, was to show what could happen "when one group's religion, philosophy or morals are imposed by law upon the rest of us."[15]

Images are revealing. In political campaigns, entire philosophies have to compress to a single visual kernel, an eye-bite. Among the images that gays and lesbians in Seattle developed for their first major attempt at political persuasion were these:

SCAT adopted a triangle with equal-length sides, poised in tension with its point down and its wide base in the air. SCAT said the symbol echoed the pink triangles that the Nazis once assigned homosexuals to wear inside concentration camps. Inside the triangle, a dark, androgynous figure pressed its right elbow and hand against the walls while its left hand smashed through the imprisoning lines. "It represents liberation," SCAT said. In addition to gays and lesbians, the symbol was meant to appeal to those who might identify with the metaphor of struggle against oppression, be they feminists, labor union workers, or racial and ethnic minorities.[16]

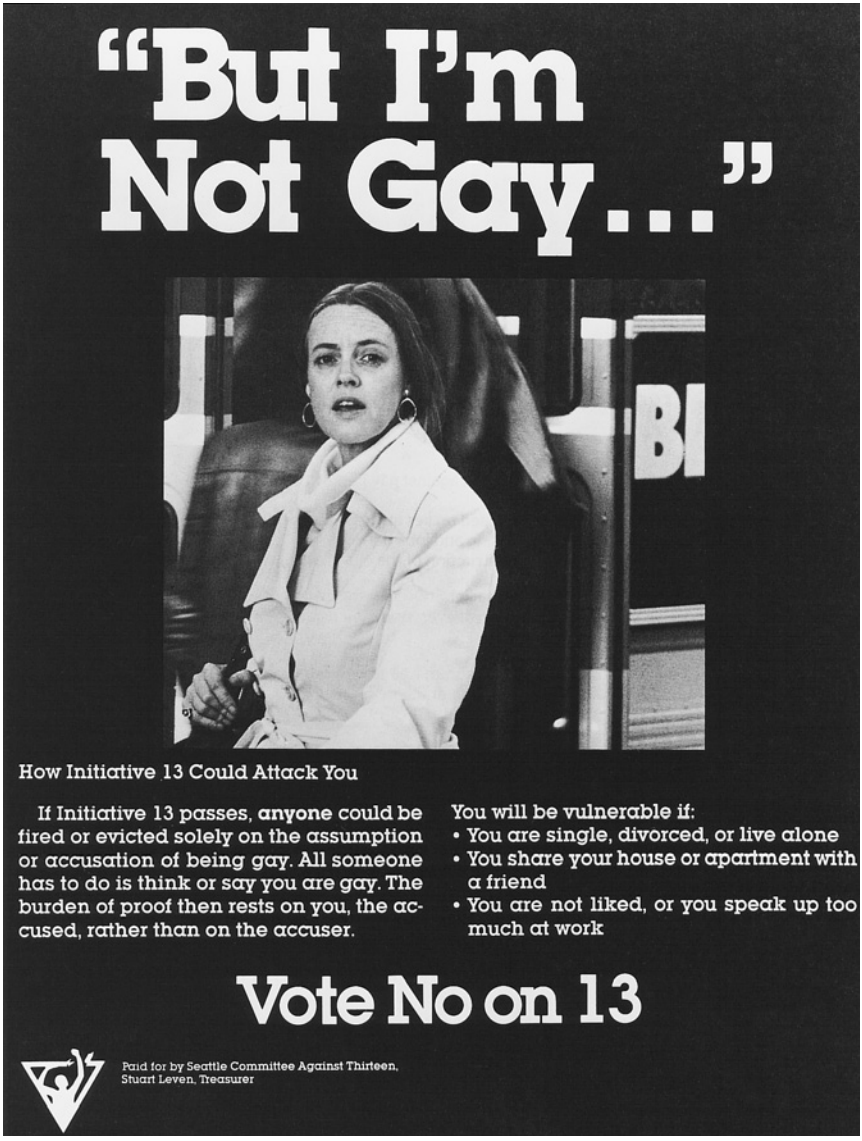
WAT, the women's group, chose the symbol for the female, a circle sitting atop a cross. Inside the circle, the number thirteen carried a slash through it. Of all the logos, it was the most literal rendering of any organization's name, Women Against Thirteen. It was calculated to appeal to feminists.

Brydon's CRFE adopted an outlined keyhole with shadowy figures dressed as spies looking through the hole. CRFE's emphasis was not about struggle or feminism, but about anxiety and privacy. If the forces arrayed against gays were using fear as their chief weapon, then CRFE would employ fear of a different type, warning heterosexuals that the law they were being asked to remove also protected them. "Your privacy is at stake," the CRFE ads said, and sometimes they showed cameras leering into an otherwise peaceful family setting.

By the end of August, it was clear that Seattle's gays and lesbians would present no single unified image or message. Common wisdom suggested disaster.

To win, Estes's group, SOME, counted on carrying voters in North Seattle in heavy numbers. It was in those mostly white suburbs that the evangelical, fundamentalist, and Mormon churches had their strongest bases, and gays, their weakest influence. West Seattle offered a second possible SOME base. It was mostly white and working class and somewhat isolated from the rest of the city. For gays and lesbians, the best hope for voter support would come from the center of the city—the University District, Capitol Hill, Pioneer Square, downtown. Just how much strength gays could count on there would likely be influenced by the position taken by the Catholic archbishop—Capitol Hill was heavily Catholic as well as gay—and by other religious leaders, especially in the African American and Asian American communities just south of the hill.

Feminists and gay socialists had built some connections to those racial and ethnic communities through their interest in combating multiple "isms" and con-



In their campaign against Initiative Thirteen in 1978, lesbian and gay activists disagreed over which would be the more effective rhetoric for mobilizing a favorable heterosexual vote. The Seattle Committee Against Thirteen, staffed by many who had been active in feminist and gay liberation groups, emphasized that the initiative was an attack on anyone who might be labeled homosexual. SCAT ads, left, used the word "gay" and showed

an icon of a human breaking out of the pink triangle that that Nazis had forced homosexual prisoners to wear during World War II. Charlie Brydon's Citizens to Retain Fair Employment avoided the term "gay" and instead more cautiously emphasized that everyone's "privacy" was at stake. *(Northwest Lesbian and Gay History Museum Project)*

structing coalitions. But despite the proliferation of gay clubs and nonprofit organizations that had occurred by 1978, only the white tip of homosexuality in Seattle had visibly emerged to any degree. There was a danger that the racial and ethnic neighborhoods in the Central District and the Rainier Valley crucial to gay victory might split on Initiative Thirteen, particularly if they were convinced homosexuals were not a "legitimate minority" as Falk had begun saying.

Only by holding those central neighborhoods and avoiding too severe a defeat in the northern and western suburbs could gays hope to defeat the initiative.

A small group had already been at work educating members of the Church Council of Greater Seattle, which included representatives of many of Seattle's mainline Protestant and Catholic churches. Three years earlier, in 1975, Robert Sirico's petition for MCC membership in the council had forced a debate on gay and lesbian concerns, especially over the question of civil rights for homosexuals versus the morality of homosexuality. It was resolved by a council insistence that accepting the MCC did not mean it was endorsing homosexuality. Rather, the council simply recognized that the gay group met its definition of being a church and had a right to exist. In the following years, the council had formed a task force to study gay and lesbian concerns and the stances taken by its various member denominations.

When Estes had announced his drive for signatures, adding that he would make a "saturation appeal to the area's churches" to assist by circulating the petitions, the council had already learned enough to respond. It issued a statement saying that although churches were divided over theological issues, such as whether gays could be ordained as clergy, that "should not prevent the church from upholding the basic civil rights of Seattle's gay citizens." The council countered Estes's appeal by instead asking its members to actually forbid the circulation of the petitions in churches.

"Let us not perpetuate the fear and hatred which this initiative invokes," it said.[17]

During the weeks of the campaign, the church council and its individual leaders spoke out repeatedly against the initiative. Two days before the vote, they joined a "pray-in" against the initiative that gathered two thousand people into Volunteer Park.

More surprisingly to gay activists, the evangelical Christian churches also remained lukewarm to Estes's appeal. Although the Seattle Association of Evangelicals explicitly rejected the church council's position that gays should not be discriminated against, the group issued a mild statement about Initiative Thirteen, calling on member churches to look to God in making their own decision rather than to the church council—or, for that matter, to Anita Bryant. "We will start with God," the association's president Ray Struthers said, "do our homework and then decide and act accordingly." He added, "For an evangelical, the first point of action is with his or her own shortcomings, not his neighbors'. Thus we need to ask ourselves: Have we abusively discriminated against gays?"[18]

That was far from the kind of attack rhetoric that had been heard in other cities.

Beyond religion, there was the law enforcement angle to be considered. Here too gays had particularly good fortune in Seattle. The reputation of the city police had not yet been fully repaired, and the spy rhetoric being deployed by CRFE tied neatly to yet another police scandal that reminded voters to be skeptical. After Police Chief Tielsch left, the city's newspapers had discovered in 1975 that the department's intelligence squad had built dossiers on prominent, law-abiding Seattle citizens. The intelligence squad had even spied on the U.S. attorney who had begun the federal investigation of the payoffs, Stan Pitkin, perhaps hoping to derail his cleanup—or so Pitkin thought. The *Seattle Times* had noted at the time that "police intelligence focused on the sex lives of prominent citizens and officials with police salting the information away in official files or in 'hip pocket' files kept by individual policemen." Police Chief Hanson had ordered the destruction of 730 files that he thought contained improper information that was, he said, "politically motivated or for intimidation."[19]

Although those particular revelations were old history by the time of Initiative Thirteen, as if on cue there were suddenly timely reminders of the police department's past wayward conduct. A civil lawsuit had been filed by a group calling itself the Coalition Against Government Spying, and during the spring and summer of 1978, the contents of some secret files that still existed began to be released and publicized as part of the discovery process. The *Seattle Times* reported in April that one of the best-known African American activists in the city, Larry Gossett, had been spied on; his file included details on a peaceful protest he had led in front of the newspaper offices. The police had also kept a file on Charlie Royer, the new mayor. Then in June came the news that a police lieutenant had shipped some of the files—thirty-seven hundred information cards with eighteen thousand names on them—to a law enforcement agency in California because he feared that Royer would have them seized or that information in them would be revealed because of the lawsuit. A judge ordered copies retained.[20]

The notion that government needed to be restrained from spying on its citizens fitted nicely with Charlie Brydon's theme of protecting privacy.

In the other cities that had voted, "morality" had always been an argument easily cornered by the anti-gay opponents. In Seattle, gays and lesbians would be able to create doubt about whether their opponents held any real corner on morality. The CRFE symbol of the keyhole captured that doubt.

On Tuesday, August 15, the King County Elections Department validated the number of signatures on Estes and Falk's petitions and sent them back to Angevine. The city council would now have to place the initiative on the November ballot. Four days later, on Saturday, August 19, the campaign took a tragic twist.

Falk was on patrol in the Rainier Valley, one of the ethnic neighborhoods south of Capitol Hill. Suddenly, his radio blurted information about a prowler and possible burglar, described as a twenty-five- to thirty-year-old black man. It was about

7 P.M., and the evening light still lingered when Falk arrived and spotted the suspect running from another officer. Falk sprang from his patrol car, chased the man into a backyard, and then yelled, "Stop or I'll shoot." He pulled his revolver.

Three years earlier, when Senator Pete Francis had relied on police support to reform the state's criminal code, he had left one part of the code undisturbed because the police chiefs had favored it: a state policy stipulating when officers could fire their weapons at suspects. The legislature had reenacted an old section that allowed officers to use deadly force to arrest suspects in many felony cases, such as burglaries, whether or not the officers themselves or other individuals were in any danger. That rule had already created serious frictions in Seattle. Mayor Royer disliked its broadness, so in spring 1978 he had convinced the city council to adopt a more restrictive rule for the city's police force. Officers could fire their guns only if a suspect was actually endangering someone's life or if they were in a "hot pursuit" immediately after the suspect had used a deadly weapon during a crime. The policy, although approved, was not to take effect until November 1. Just as Falk and Estes wanted to repeal the antidiscrimination ordinances, so the police guild, along with city council member Tim Hill, had placed a second initiative on the ballot: Initiative Fifteen, which sought a return to the previous regulation.

That created two flash points for minorities in Seattle: Initiative Thirteen for gays, lesbians, and feminist women worried about the transfer of powers from one city department to another, and Initiative Fifteen for African Americans worried about what sometimes appeared to be all-too-easy shootings of black citizens.

Dennis Falk was about to accidentally meld the two concerns into one.

Although Falk had no way of knowing it, John Alfred Rodney, the black man fleeing from him, was twenty-six years old and retarded. He had already spent five years in a state institution for the mentally retarded, as well as served jail time for burglary convictions. A sentencing report for one of those convictions had noted that Rodney had dropped out of school in the ninth grade and had the potential for only fourth grade skills.

Testimony at a later police inquest, presided over by Seattle District Court Judge Frank Sullivan, would establish that when Rodney entered people's houses that afternoon, he may have had no intention of robbing them. He may have simply not understood that he was supposed to knock before showing up in their hallways. He had apparently been roaming through yards and had entered two homes, then been asked to leave by the residents. One would testify that Rodney had asked to mow her lawn, then left after she said no. Another chased Rodney over a wall after finding him in a backyard. Police officer Ed Marcus had pursued Rodney for about a block on foot when Falk arrived.

After Falk called out, Rodney sprang up and perched momentarily on a board fence separating two backyards. Falk would say later that he warned Rodney four times to stop. He aimed his pistol and then fired. Hit in the heel, Rodney fell to the ground on the other side of the fence, then started running as best as he could.

Falk thought he had missed. He reached the board fence and fired through one of its openings. The second bullet struck Rodney in the back. It killed him.

Immediately, protests began. On the following Wednesday, August 23, sixty demonstrators marched on the police department's headquarters shouting "We want Falk! Put him in jail!" On September 1, the *Seattle Gay News* joined the critics, offering its condolences to the city's black community and then acidly writing in street rhyme, "Officer Falk, the leader of the Seattle bigots, 'kills with no pain like a dog on a chain.'"[21]

It was hardly an auspicious occurrence for one of the two major sponsors of Initiative Thirteen.

On September 9, by a four-to-two vote, the district court inquest jurors ruled that Falk believed a felony had been committed. He had the fleeing suspect in sight. All other reasonable means of apprehension—the requirement of the existing policy—seemed to have been exhausted. Falk had not done anything wrong.

African Americans were outraged. They picketed police headquarters and City Hall, shouting "Try Falk for Murder" and "Justice for John," while ministers, the most powerful leaders in Seattle's black community, denounced the shooting. The city's church council joined a group called Black United Clergy for Action in condemning the inquest decision as "morally unacceptable." Black clergymen demanded continuing courses in human rights for police officers and urged Falk's discharge. The police department announced it would pull him from patrol duty on the streets, a spokesman noting that there were concerns about the officer's personal safety.[22]

At the moment when the campaign was entering its final weeks, the city's gay and African American communities discovered a common ground that included not only theories about minority coalitions, but also a passion for them.

Meanwhile, signals on how the majority of Seattle's citizens might vote on Initiative Thirteen were mixed. A small story in the *Seattle Times,* published in late August just after the Rodney shooting, noted that Brydon's CRFE had released poll results that showed 66 percent of the city would vote to retain the civil rights laws—a two-to-one opposite of the vote that had occurred elsewhere. Optimistic though that sounded, two weeks later the *Seattle Sun* reported that 43 percent of the people CRFE had contacted had refused to answer any questions about gay rights at all, about twice the normal refusal rate for a poll. That cast doubt on how valid the survey was. Also a bit odd was that 40 percent of those who were willing to vote to retain the laws gave no reason for wanting to do so. Only about 14 percent cited a belief in gay civil rights; 17 percent simply said they did not think homosexuals posed any threat. It was hardly an impassioned or solid pro-gay sentiment.[23]

Also, Wayne Angevine, the now well-known gay city clerk, had decided to run for city council, only to be soundly trounced in the September primary. Angevine, in fourth place, had gotten only about forty-five hundred votes; the leader, incum-

bent Wayne Larkin, received more than twenty-one thousand. Trailing well behind in second place, with about ten thousand votes, was an African American bank executive named Norm Rice, who had taken strong stands in favor of gay rights. Leaders at SOME immediately snickered that the clout and size of Seattle's potential gay vote—which activists had estimated at fifty thousand—had been greatly exaggerated. Even the *Seattle Gay News* was disgusted. "Bend over Seattle gays," it editorialized, "because many should have their posteriors booted."[24]

Still, after the Rodney shooting, it was Estes who felt the pressure to recoup. Being put on the moral defensive was not part of the successful strategy that had enabled Cotterill and the Anti-Saloon League to manipulate Washington's initiative and referendum laws. Nor had any similar situation emerged during the anti-gay campaigns in Miami, St. Paul, or Eugene.

Falk began to lower his public profile as SOME co-chair. After the inquest, an African American named Wayne Perryman briefly emerged as the new SOME spokesman in what appeared to be an attempt to reclaim some moral ground. Perryman began to argue that, as a black, he knew what discrimination really meant, and the repeal of protection for sexual minorities was not discrimination.

As quickly as Perryman appeared, though, he disappeared, resigning and telling the *Seattle Sun* that leaders in the city's black community now felt that any association with SOME meant "that I also support Dennis Falk and his shooting of an unarmed black suspect."[25]

Galvanized by Rodney's death, African American leaders now had their own concerns not only about Initiative Fifteen, but about Thirteen as well. If women were upset that the Estes initiative would weaken the handling of discrimination claims brought by women, African American leaders realized that the city Human Rights Department, which investigated racial discrimination, was already overloaded and would be more burdened by adding discrimination against women to its caseload.

By proposing the repeal of the gay protections and at the same time shuffling the responsibility for who would handle the remaining discrimination complaints, Estes and Falk had erred by attacking three minorities at once—gays, women, and blacks.

Support for keeping the laws continued to accumulate. The city's top political and religious leaders were already on record. In early October, Local 174 of the Teamsters Union, with several thousand members, voted to oppose the initiative, the *Seattle Sun* wryly commenting that the union had not previously been known for its "tolerance of sexual minorities, nor union officials for their liberalism." And KIRO-TV, home to anti-gay commentator Lloyd Cooney, weighed in with a three-part series of news reports on Initiative Thirteen that even Jim Tully and Jim Arnold, the owners and editorialists at the *Seattle Gay News,* praised as "well-considered [and] carefully researched." (Cooney, on the other hand, continued to urge voters to pass the initiative.)[26]

Four weeks before the vote, SOME began to run out of money. Estes and Falk had raised and spent about fifty thousand dollars, one-fifth of it from Anita Bryant's Protect Our Children, and much of the rest from people living outside Seattle. Cash flow problems had become evident in the weeks after John Alfred Rodney was slain. SOME was paying a consultant forty-one hundred dollars a month, but from mid-September until mid-October, Estes and Falk raised only about fifty-six hundred dollars, leaving no money to pay for the last-minute media blitzes about homosexuals molesting children that had worked so well in other cities.

By contrast, the three organizations opposing Initiative Thirteen had gathered forty-five thousand dollars during the same one-month period, mostly from Seattle donors. By the end of the campaign, WAT and SCAT had collected a total of fifty thousand dollars, and CRFE had passed the hundred thousand dollar mark.[27] For a change, thanks to their appeal to very different segments of the voters, the last-minute media barrage belonged to the pro-gay activists. CRFE canvassed swing precincts and hit radio and TV with its keyhole message. SCAT and WAT emphasized person-to-person contact, doorbelling in neighborhoods, posting sentries at major intersections throughout town, raising banners along freeways, and buying ads on the sides of city buses. Their slogan, "Someone you know is gay," emphasized making gays and lesbians visible, rather than making them private.

Suddenly the division in political strategy and organizing began to seem constructive. There could be—indeed, had to be—more than one political dance floor in town. CRFE could organize particular types of people with its appeals. It could raise thousands of dollars at low-key dinner parties. It could avoid using "gay" or "homosexual" in its ads. SCAT and WAT, on the other hand, could hold highly public fund-raising events designed to raise the gay profile—a Halloween dance at the Seattle Aquarium, beer parties at taverns, roller-skating evenings. The money cleared might be minimal, but the excitement generated among potential volunteers was electric. Those volunteers then canvassed neighborhoods all over Seattle.

Perhaps to everyone's surprise, even the messages telegraphed to the larger heterosexual electorate did not have to be precisely the same. What seemed to matter more was that they were assertive rather than defensive and passionate rather than coolly controlled. There was also another hidden card in Seattle. One observer described it this way to the *Seattle Sun:* "One old man in the Pike Place Market said he hadn't decided what he thinks about 'the gays.' Told that a 'no' vote would keep things the way they are, though, he said, 'Well then, I'll vote against it.'"[28]

On the evening of November 7, a typically drizzly night in Seattle, Charlie Brydon's troops gathered inside a cavernous ballroom at the Eagles Hall on Seventh Avenue and Union Street in downtown Seattle to await the results. It was an appropriate place. The Eagles were a fraternal organization that John Considine had helped to create once he had succeeded in vaudeville at the old underground People's Theater.

A few blocks away at Pike Place Market, SCAT and WAT assembled two thou-

Marchers take to the streets to celebrate the victory against Initiative Thirteen, November 1978. *(Doug Barnes, Freedom Socialist Party)*

sand followers in the streets and passed out candles with tiny cup covers to protect the flames from the wind and sprinkle. In North Seattle, about thirty of Estes and Falk's supporters met at a restaurant.

The absentee ballot results came in first. Conventional thinking held they would be the most conservative and anti-gay. But the absentees in West Seattle had voted to oppose the repeal—just by a narrow twenty votes, but it was a hopeful sign. In North Seattle, the absentees refused the initiative by twenty-two votes. After 8 P.M., the tallies started in earnest and the trend soon became clear. In the north Seattle suburbs, the battle had been more pitched than SOME could afford if it hoped to win—49.5 percent for the initiative, 50.5 percent against. In West Seattle, almost the same numbers, Estes and Falk again narrowly losing 48 percent to 52 percent. Along the southern edge of the city, the results grew even bleaker for SOME. The initiative was being defeated there three to two.

Other good news for Seattle's gays and lesbians began arriving. The statewide initiative against homosexual teachers in California was losing. Norm Rice, the supportive black leader, was being elected to the city council. And Mike Lowry, a King County Council member who had always supported funding for the gay counseling service, was unseating Jack Cunningham. By a large margin of some nine thousand votes, Lowry would become Capitol Hill's new congressional representative.

The central city finally turned the night into a SOME rout. Ballard, Wallingford, Queen Anne, and Magnolia voted 64 percent to 36 percent to keep the civil rights

laws as they were. On Capitol Hill and in the University District, the count soared to 76 percent in favor of the laws. Only a single precinct out of 163 on Capitol Hill and in the University District voted in Estes's favor—and that by only two votes. Finally, in the heavily racial and ethnic neighborhoods of the Central District, 77 percent voted to keep the laws as they were. Not a single precinct there voted in Estes's favor.

The prohibitionists' strategy of using initiatives and referendums to play on anxieties about morality had stunningly crashed. The final vote was 64,225 for the Estes proposal and 108,124 against it.

That night, the two thousand marchers that WAT and SCAT had assembled paraded across Arthur Denny's knoll and circled the downtown Olympic Hotel where the press had posted its election-night watch. In a sea of twinkling candles, they chanted "Thank you Seattle, thank you Seattle, thank you Seattle." At the Eagles hall, lesbian and gay couples spread across the dance floor. "It was jammed," Brydon remembered. "Jammed to the gills."

The *Seattle Gay News* sang: "We have proven that we can win an electoral battle; we have broken the charge of the bigots."[29] The lesbian and gay role in the city's political conversation had finally been secured.