

Illegal Brigid Pledge Coaching Raises Furor

Rising discontent with the role of pledge coaches during the Brigid's Cauldron Ritual has led to calls for an outright ban on the practice.

The mid-Winter ritual originally developed as a way for each participant to have a deep personal encounter with the Goddess of the faming cauldron.

Reclaiming etiquette has always allowed the support of a pledge coach when one approaches the cauldron. Coaches traditionally sit in a designated space near the altar and communicate with their clients via hand-signals during the pledges.

The occasional whispered reminder was tolerated so long as coaches didn't go so far as to instruct their clients what words to speak.

In recent years, however, pledge coaches have grown bolder. To circumvent prohibitions against coaches writing the actual words of commitment, elaborate number codes have developed.

For instance, the number 33 is widely used to remind pledgers to speak the Goddess's name, while 69 is a signal to invoke more passion into one's life. Thirteen means slow down and breathe, while 99 means enough, already.

Complaints reached a boiling point this year when pledge coach Clarity Eldervision stormed out onto the floor and berated one of her clients who had fumbled the words of his pledge. Grab-

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Dandelion Weighs Principles of Unity

The Dandelion Gathering has initiated steps to amend Reclaiming's Principles of Unity (PoU — see page 76 of this issue), the fundamental constitution of the otherwise nebulous network of anarcho-pagans.

The PoU, adopted in the 1990s, have never been altered. One wing of Reclaiming, the Coven of the Letter, considers the document to be part of the sacred texts (along with *The Spiral Dance*, *Reclaiming Quarterly*, and the *Revolutionary Pagan Workers Vanguard*.)

The Coven of the Letter gained notoriety in 1999 when adherents gathered outside Reclaiming's Samhain ritual and burned copies of the revised edition of *The Spiral Dance*.

The strictures of the fundamentalists

notwithstanding, suggestions have been heard in recent years to alter several aspects of the PoU.

Proposals have been introduced to broaden the gender language of the statement, and also to remove language which suggests that Australian Witches are standing on their heads.

BITTER DIVISION OVER PRINCIPLES

Nothing has proven more controversial, however, than proposed amendments to the political sections of the Principles.

Several years of intense debate and discussion led to the formulation of this proposed new language:

"We are for all good things, and against all bad things."

Despite the apparent inclusivity, a brouhaha erupted over the binary opposition. "So I guess everything has to be black or white," lamented polypolitical priestess Sunshine Moonbeam. "You'd think they never heard of a Third Way."

Sponsors of the proposal agreed to accept an amendment by Flaming Dumbek Circle:

"Acknowledging the irreducibility of moral categories to simple binary constructs, and recognizing the critical importance of the shadow in our magical and political work, we nevertheless are, generally speaking, for lots of good things and against pretty much all bad things."

But many weren't mollified. "What about things that aren't especially good for you, but not really all that bad ei-

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A cheer goes up as the street is declared swept by The Right Ancient Order of the Bristling Broom, a devotional guild of Custodial Witches who clean up each year after PaganFest.