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## world briefs

### AUSTRALIA

Gay activists in Sydney have persuaded 170 hotels, caterers and bars to boycott products from Tasmania, the only remaining Australian state that bans same-sex relations.

Despite six years of continuous controversy, Tasmanian leaders still support the ban, even after losing a case before the United Nations Human Rights committee this year and facing strong pressure thereafter from the federal government.

The activists, calling themselves Buy-Right, have targeted large Tasmanian producers such as King Island Dairies, Cascade Brewery and Cadbury Chocolates, said the *Melbourne Star Observer*.

They also published long lists of purveyors of Tasmanian seafood, produce and dairy products. McDonald's French fries made from Tasmanian potatoes are also a no-no.

### GREAT BRITAIN

In June a Manchester judge granted joint custody of a baby to its lesbian mother and her female partner, British newspapers reported. Identified only as "Debbie" and "Julie," the mother and her partner are believed to be the first lesbian couple in Britain to win joint custody of a child. High Court Judge Douglas Brown said he made the ruling with the child's welfare as the "first and paramount consideration." "Debbie" was impregnated by a surrogate father, and her son is now nearly two years old.

### INTERNATIONAL

The Vatican doesn't want lesbians to get pregnant—via artificial insemination or sex with men.

A June 22 editorial in the Catholic Church's official newspaper stated, "No child loves being known as the child of an unmarried mother, even less so of a lesbian mother. . . . Every child has the right. . . to be conceived by the union of two human beings who love each other and make up a nuclear family."

The editorial was a response to Italian gynecologist Giuseppe Ambrassa's June 21 announcement that he artificially inseminated one partner in a lesbian couple. She is six months pregnant.

"Homosexuals have as much love to give to children as heterosexuals," Ambrassa told Reuters.

### ITALY

The leader of Italy's largest gay organization has called for a boycott of the country by foreign governments. Franco Grillini, president of the group Arcigay, urges a boycott "until we have assurances that the presence of fascists in government won't affect democratic rights."

Grillini spoke as part of a protest march through Bologna. About 1,000 marchers joined the procession to lay a wreath at a monument to gay men and lesbians killed in Nazi concentration camps.

The call to boycott is a response to comments by neo-Fascist politician Piero Buscaroli, who said he believes queers should be sent to concentration camps. Buscaroli is a member of the National Alliance Party, which has five ministers in Italy's new right wing coalition government.



Italy's National Committee for Bio-Ethics recommended in June that alternative insemination be restricted to "adult couples of different sex who are married or at least bound by a stable and loving relationship." The guidelines follow on the heels of a controversy over an Italian lesbian who gave birth to a baby girl after being inseminated by semen from a sperm bank.

The committee's recommendations are expected to play a significant role in legislation on alternative insemination that will be presented by Italy's right wing government.

### JAPAN

OCCUR, Japan's leading queer rights activist group, has declared war on the nation's psychiatry textbooks, which still label homosexuality as "sexual deviance" or "sexual abnormality."

The activists are also demanding that the Japanese Society of Psychiatry and Neurology state its position on homosexuality.

One leading textbook, which is typical, according to group members, says: "[T]he most serious cases of sexual crimes other than exhibitionism and pedophilia are of a homosexual nature. Often they follow other more serious crimes. Homosexuals are often seen as falling into lives of larceny, fraud and prostitution, but it is not unusual for the complications of the breakdown of homosexual relationships to lead to more serious crimes, such as murder.

"Generally, if the homosexuals are young, if their tendency for homosexuality is weak and self-heterogenic, and if there is a desire for medical treatment, there is a possibility for a cure. In five cases where homosexuals made efforts to control their homosexual practices and were helped to fit into heterosexual society, three successfully married."

### MEXICO

Twelve Mexican gay and lesbian activists met with and issued demands to officials of the Mexican mission to the United Nations on June 27.

The leaders, who were in town for the Stonewall 25 march, insisted that Mexico's U.N. officials reveal their position on the International Lesbian and Gay Association's controversial U.N. consultative status; press Mexican police to launch a more thorough investigation of the recent murders of up to 25 gay men and transvestites in the state of Chiapas; and urge Mexican education authorities to improve teaching about homosexuality in schools.

According to Alejandro Garcia of Tijuana, one of the activists who attended the meeting, the U.N. officials promised to pass on the demands to Mexico's secretary of state, prime minister, attorney general, and secretary of public education.

"This is a major step for the gays and lesbians of Mexico," said Jose Navarro of Tijuana's Grupo ¿Y Que?, who also attended the meeting.

### TAIWAN

Embracing the notion that sometimes you've just got to ask for what you want, Taiwanese gay activist Chi Chia-wei went to the Ministry of the Interior on July 14 and formally requested the right to marry his boyfriend.

He later told reporters there are at least 1 million gay men and lesbians in Taiwan, and they deserve full rights. Taiwan's population is 21 million.

"I have never heard of this," said Tsai Tsai-fung, the official who handled Chi's request. "Marriage is a matter of public order and good custom. When you say marriage, that means a man and a woman. The law is very clear."

Taiwan has no laws regarding homosexuality, according to the Reuters news service. *The Spartacus International Gay Guide*, however, claims, "Taiwanese soldiers who have been converted to homosexuality face the death penalty."

Compiled by Jann Gilbert and Rex Wockner

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