

# world briefs

## BELARUS

Belarus is the latest former Soviet republic to move to legalize male same-sex relations. The measure has passed the necessary parliamentary committee, and it's just a matter of time before the full Parliament OKs it, reported the Austrian gay magazine *Lambda Nachrichten*.

Belarus Legal Code Paragraph 119.1 calls for three to five years in prison for anal sex between males.

Other former Soviet republics that have decriminalized gay-male sex (lesbian sex was never illegal) include Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia and Ukraine.

## CANADA

A British Columbia gay couple that has been together 46 years appealed Nov. 1 to the Canadian Supreme Court for access to the federal allowance for spouses of low-income pensioners. James Egan and Jack Nesbit's case is the first gay challenge to the equality-rights section of Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

"They do not seek greater rights or privileges or benefits than heterosexual couples," said their lawyer, Joseph Arvay. "They come to this court with a simple plea [that] they want equality. My clients are a gay couple who have lived together in an intimate, sexual, emotional and financial interdependent relationship for over 45 years. Few heterosexual couples can make the same claim."

The couple was denied the allowance seven years ago and has been fighting to receive the benefits ever since.

## ONTARIO

Ontario's toll-free hotline for gay youth has been swamped by callers, and the provincial government is stepping in to help. The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Youth Line received 1,300 calls since starting up in May, but phone company records show another 30,000 callers got a busy signal, according to the *Toronto Star*.

"There are a lot of young gay people, particularly in small-town Ontario, desperately in need of someone to talk to," said Timothy Guimond, one of three volunteer coordinators of the service.

The government will give \$35,000 right away and \$10,000 per year thereafter, said Community and Social Services Minister Tony Silipo. Volunteers say they need \$98,000 to answer all the calls.



## CHINA

On Oct. 27 China's legislature passed a law that bans marriage by people with contagious diseases or mental problems. The Maternal and Infantile Health Care Law takes effect June 1, 1995.

The Xinhua News Agency said China has 10 million disabled people whose births could have been prevented by such a law.

## EL SALVADOR

Wilfredo, an AIDS educator and Salvadoran national, has been threatened with death in an apparent attempt to stop his disease-prevention efforts, according to the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission. Advocates have begun using only his first name, to hide his identity.

He has been working since July to distribute condoms and educational materials in some of San Salvador's poorest neighborhoods.

On Nov. 5, Wilfredo was accosted twice by two men with guns. They announced they were "here to clean up the city, and if AIDS doesn't kill the faggots, we will." Later they said they would kill him unless he ceased his work and left El Salvador within 30 days.

## ENGLAND

More than 5,000 people attended a star-studded benefit concert for the British gay and lesbian lobby group Stonewall on Oct. 23 at London's Royal Albert Hall, reported *Capital Gay*. Celebrity performers and speakers included Sir Ian McKellen, newly out Pet Shop Boy Neil Tennant, Elton John, Sting, Melissa Etheridge, Richard Gere, and openly gay Member of Parliament Chris Smith.

According to *Capital Gay*, John skipped around the stage singing "I Feel Pretty" and called Sting a "silly old tart." Frequently bizarre Gere raised eyebrows by announcing, "I am a lesbian."

About \$160,000 was raised, half of it profit.

## INTERNATIONAL

Two statements concerning lesbians have been included in an official United Nations statement adopted last week in Vienna, Austria, at a preparatory meeting for the fourth U.N. World Conference on Women. The document, entitled the ECE Regional Platform for Action, acknowledges that sexual orientation must be taken into account in addressing the human rights of women and calls for the inclusion of lesbians in the design, development and implementation of strategies for the advancement of women.

This is the first time the terms "lesbian" and "sexual orientation" have been included in a U.N. document adopted by member states. The document is one of five being prepared for the World Conference on Women, scheduled to take place in Beijing, China, in September 1995.

## ISRAEL

Israeli police say the diaries, videotapes and photographs of a university professor who had AIDS reveal he spent the last year of his life attempting to infect up to 500 men with HIV.

The man, Yeshayahu Demner, 46, was found murdered at his Haifa home in late October. His diaries show that starting in September 1993 he advertised for sex, paid partners not to use condoms, and sometimes had more than one partner a day—among them U.S. sailors, and students from Technion University, where he taught.

"There is no doubt he wanted to extract revenge for getting AIDS, that is made clear in his diaries," a police detective said.

Israel's leading gay group, the Society for Personal Rights, said the revelations were lousy publicity for the gay cause.

## KENYA

An Australian gay man who worked at a hotel in the resort town of Lamu was deported Nov. 2, according to Reuters. Immigration officials said the man was told to leave "to protect him from the people of Lamu, who abhor homosexual activities."

Two other suspected queers were targeted as well, but immigration officials were unable to locate them.

"Homosexuality is prohibited under our country's laws and is morally unacceptable in our society," Kenyan immigration spokesman Frank Kwinga explained. "We shall not allow these people to come and teach our people bad manners."

## LATVIA

The Latvian Lutheran Church issued a statement in October saying gay men and lesbians must fight within themselves against the deadly sin of homosexuality. The church also said gay men could not hold positions in the church and were banned from communion until repenting their gay sins.



Homosexuality is not normal and pro-gay-and-lesbian propaganda must be countered, the church added. Most Latvians are Lutheran.

## ROMANIA

The head of the country's Orthodox Church asked parliament Nov. 7 to bring back the Communist-era ban on gay and lesbian sex, which is now only illegal if it "offends public morals," reported Reuters.

"Even in times of greatest trial our forebears knew how to distinguish between sin and virtue, natural and unnatural, normal and abnormal," Patriarch Teoctist said.

"Contrary to appearances, European structures will accept us in their fold with our specific values and our traditional Christian identity," he said. "The Church rejects unclean love, the tyranny of selfish, barren passion."

## RUSSIA

Russia's proposed law mandating HIV testing of foreigners and "high-risk" Russians passed the lower house of parliament Oct. 28 by a vote of 447 to 3. It is expected to pass the upper house as well. The law would affect people "who visit Russia as tourists, students, or for any other purpose," as well as foreigners now living there. Testing positive, or refusing to be tested, would result in denial of entry or deportation.

The test would be run by a Russian state medical facility unless an agreement for issuing AIDS-free certificates could be reached with one's home country. Russian testing is problematic, since Russian clinics have a shortage of disposable syringes and have reportedly infected people with HIV by re-using needles.

The legislation does not say which Russians are at "high risk" for HIV, but AIDS activists believe gay men would be targeted.

## TASMANIA

Four activists who confessed to having same-sex relations in the Australian state of Tasmania will not be charged, the director of public prosecutions said in late October. Tasmania is the only remaining state to ban gay sex. Gay men have fought a years-long public battle against the laws, which were condemned in April by the United Nations Human Rights Committee as violating the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Australia is a signatory.

Rodney Croome, Jason Rostant, Roland Sinn, and Richard Hale gave police declarations in May detailing their sex acts with each other. Lesbian activist Lavinia Savell joined the action by confessing she aided and abetted Rostant by letting him have gay sex in her house.

But officials determined it was not "in the public interest" to prosecute the five for their "alleged criminal conduct." Federal legislation designed to neutralize Tasmania's ban on gay sex passed the lower house of Parliament on Oct. 19 by a vote of 114 to 4. It is under consideration by the upper house.

Compiled by Rex Wockner and Jann Gilbert

## cathartic comics I featuring The Brown Bomber and Diva Touché Flambé by Prof. I.B. Gittendowne

