

# world briefs

## AUSTRALIA

A founder of a group working to build a lesbian center in Sydney has withdrawn \$20,000 of the \$30,000 she donated to the project, to protest a Dec. 10 vote to ban transsexual lesbians from using the planned space.



Georgina Abrahams told the Sydney newspaper *Capital Q*: "I am heartbroken, as the [Lesbian Space Project] was something I put a lot of my love into, but I don't want to be associated with a project that is discriminatory...that categorizes people into right and wrong, good and bad. There's no place for that in the '90s."

About \$250,000 has been raised toward building the center.



The parliament of Australia's Northern Territory has banned single women and lesbians from accessing in vitro fertilization programs, according to a report in *The Chicago Tribune*.

"The territory government believes that the best possible relationship for a child to be born into is a stable, loving relationship between a man and a woman," said territory Attorney General Fred Finch.

In vitro fertilization is available to all women on a case-by-case basis in Australia's other states and territories.

## BRITAIN

A tape of international safer-sex videos was seized and branded obscene by customs officials in late December en route to the organization Gay Men Fighting AIDS.

The tape contained winning entries from the San Francisco Gay Safer-Sex Video Awards, said the London newspaper *Capital Gay*.

GMFA Chairman Peter Scott commented: "This demonstrates how organizations like Gay Men Fighting AIDS are fighting more than just the virus. Every day we're faced by a new example of ignorance, discrimination and homophobia."

## CANADA

Half of respondents told pollsters they would speak out in support of a co-worker if the employee faced discrimination based on sexual orientation, reported Ottawa's *Capital Xtra!*

And 81 percent said an out gay or lesbian would face discrimination at work, according to the poll, which was conducted by the Angus Reid company.

The survey also found that three in four respondents would feel somewhat comfortable having a gay friend and one in three already have one.

## INDIA

About 70 gay men from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka gathered at the year's end near Bombay, India, for the region's first-ever gay conference.

They demanded that India repeal its law against gay sex, which is punished with up to 10 years in jail, according to gay activist and magazine publisher Ashok Row Kawi, who organized the confab. He said men jailed for homosexuality are forced to work and are chained in their cells.

Delegates also appealed for research on gay themes in ancient Indian literature, poetry and folklore.

Kawi believes there are 50 million gay men in India, almost all of them closeted.

## MEXICO

The Mexican state of Baja California Norte (where Tijuana is) has moved from fourth to third place nationally in AIDS cases, trailing the Federal District (Mexico City) and Jalisco (where Guadalajara is). Seven hundred two cases have been reported in Baja, 88 of them since April 1994. Four hundred thirteen of the cases are in Tijuana, which ranks eighth among Mexican cities.

AIDS is now the leading cause of death in Mexico among people aged 25 to 34; in the United States it ranks second in this age group.

The disease is gaining among women, heterosexuals and children in Mexico. A few years ago, one woman was infected with HIV for every 25 men, but now the ratio is 1-to-5.

## ROMANIA

Both of Romania's gay organizations have died, victims of infighting and societal disapproval, according to the International Lesbian and Gay Association.

Total Relations was formed in February 1993 and Group 200, in February 1994.

"The public still clings to the idea of a traditional, orthodox Romania that can stay uncorrupted by foreign-inspired deviances and perversions," according to printed minutes from ILGA's European Regional Conference, held in Finland.

"Publicly self-identified gay men in Romania are few," the report said. "Publicly self-identified lesbians are virtually nonexistent. [T]he very existence of...any homosexual community which might come to the attention of the police is tenuous and inchoate at best."

## SWEDEN

Two men in the northern town of Ostersund were the first to tie the knot after Sweden's law legalizing gay and lesbian marriage took effect Jan. 1.

Hans Jonsson, 42, and Sven-Olov Jansson, 58, were married at city hall by former member of parliament Jorn Svensson, who publicly supported same-sex marriage as early as 1973.

## SWITZERLAND

Lesbian and gay activists in Switzerland have collected 84,000 signatures on petitions calling for the legalization of gay marriage, reports activist Yves de Matteis.

The petitions have been filed with federal officials, he said.

## TURKEY

Gay identity in Turkey is uncommon but men have a lot of male sex, said the nation's delegate to the International Lesbian and Gay Association's European Regional Conference held in Finland.

Kursad Kahramanoglu said the dominant concept of masculinity divides men into sexually passive and active. He said there are many gay bars, two gay organizations, and one AIDS group.

An attempt to organize a gay pride march in Istanbul last year was quashed by police, and when the organizers tried to hold a press conference the next day the Turks were arrested and the foreigners were deported, Kahramanoglu said.

Compiled by Rex Wockner

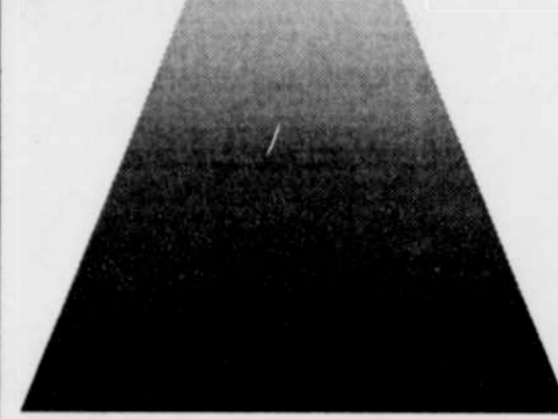
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