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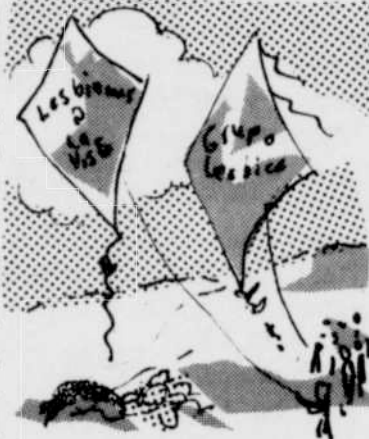
ARGENTINA

There are three new lesbian groups in Argentina, activists reported on the Internet.

Escrita en el Cuerpo (Written on the Body) collects press clippings, diaries, letters, photos, tapes and books about lesbians' personal and political lives and publishes a news bulletin. Write Alejandra Sarda, Piedras 1170 1ero. B, 1070-Buenos Aires, Argentina; call 011-54-1-931-9648; or e-mail ales@wamani.apc.org.

Grupo de Integración Lesbica (Lesbian Integration Group) offers discussion groups and tackles political issues. Write Mirta Molinari, Guemes 4581 P.B., Buenos Aires, Argentina; or call 011-54-1-774-5796.

Lesbianas a la Vista (Lesbians on Sight) stages art performances in "unconventional places." On Sept. 21 they flew kites painted with lesbian messages in a public park. They also offer coming-out groups and give workshops (at public events, schools and private organizations), and will open a hotline for lesbians abused by their lovers. Contact information is the same as for Escrita en el Cuerpo.



CANADA

Canada's nationwide Scotiabank has extended all benefits except pensions to the lovers of gay and lesbian employees, according to an internal memo obtained by this columnist.

The bank's vice-president for human resources said Scotiabank is committed to a workplace free of discrimination and harassment.



Canada's House of Commons rejected on Sept. 18 gay Member of Parliament Réal Ménard's bill to legally recognize same-sex marriages.

The vote was 124-52. The measure was supported by most MPs from Ménard's Bloc Québécois party and by a few Liberals, including Deputy Prime Minister Sheila Copps.

"We can win other fights," Ménard told the Associated Press. "The next fight we'll win."

CHINA

A new book published in Taiwan says nearly all Chinese gay men marry women due to social pressure.

Dark Souls Under the Red Sun by Taipei reporter AnKe-chiang, is the result of two months of research. He interviewed gay men in the cities of Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Shenyang, Harbin, Dalian, Qingdao, Nanjing, Chongqing, Chengdu, Wuhan, Xi'an and Ürümqi.

Every interviewee said the only way to survive is to get married, with the possibility of divorcing later and maybe not remarrying.

The men also said they fear the police more than they fear AIDS.

COSTA RICA

The government has launched a program to teach policemen to respect gay men and transvestites, the local gay press reported.

The report said the program is a direct result of lawsuits filed by drag queens who were abused by police.

FRANCE

The Atlantic port city of Saint-Nazaire started issuing registration certificates to same-sex couples Sept. 14, according to a Reuter report.

Deputy Mayor Maxime Batard said the document will help lesbians and gay men obtain benefits now available to unmarried heterosexual couples—such as access to national health care

for a nonworking partner, family travel fares and rent subsidies.

"All we have sought to do is give homosexuals the same rights as other citizens," Batard said. "If it can get things moving on a national level, that would be pretty good."

National authorities will now have to decide whether to go ahead and open up such programs as the socialized medicine system.

THE NETHERLANDS

Half of gay Dutch blue-collar workers feel intimidated by workmates and 15 percent say their sexuality limits their careers, a new labor-union survey found.

Twenty-five percent of the men surveyed were closeted at work.

The report also said many of the employers discriminate against gays by offering pensions and other benefits only to heterosexual couples.

POLAND

Poland's Committee for the Protection of Radio Listeners and TV Viewers has filed a "report of offense" with the public prosecutor in an attempt to stop the film *Priest* from being shown.

The prosecutor said he will watch the film and decide whether to confiscate all copies using his right to "secure the proof and the tool of offense."

SPAIN

More than 1,000 gay men raised \$1,300 for the financially strapped International Lesbian and Gay Association recently at El Candil discothèque in the town of Sitges.

The party, organized by Barcelona's Coordinadora Gai-Lesbiana, was in honor of ILGA's 17th anniversary. CGL head Jordi Petit is one of ILGA's new co-secretaries general.

This summer, ILGA said it would have to cease operations without an infusion of some \$30,000. The financial mess is partly the fault of the 1994 Gay Games, which went bankrupt and never distributed funds raised for ILGA in New York in 1994 by British actor Sir Ian McKellen, who left the money in Gay Games' care.

A federation of several hundred gay and lesbian groups from more than 80 countries, ILGA is the key link between activists in Western nations and the growing gay movements in the Third World and the former East Bloc. Other ILGA activities include annual world and regional conferences, a news bulletin and issuance of action alerts. Of late, ILGA also has worked, with substantial success, to increase lesbian and gay clout in the United Nations, the European Union, the Council of Europe, Amnesty International and the World Health Organization.

TASMANIA

Although the government here is still fighting a United Nations ruling that it must legalize gay sex, Tasmanian Police Minister Frank Madill said on Sept. 1 that gay men and lesbians are welcome as police officers.

Asked if there actually are any gay cops in the Australian island state, Madill said, "Because we don't ask, we don't know."

Tasmania is the only remaining state to ban gay sex. Last year, the U.N. Human Rights Committee found the law in violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Australia is a signatory. The federal legislature then passed a law to neutralize the statute, but whether they succeeded constitutionally will not be known until a court case tests the matter.

Compiled by Rex Wockner