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letters

New Zealand protects queers

To the Editor:

On several occasions in the time I have been in Portland I have read in your columns the assertion that South Africa is the only country that legislates against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. Well, to set the matter "straight" I would like you to include New Zealand in future.

In 1992, after nearly a decade of tough lobbying and education by the "kiwi" gays and other enlightened people, New Zealand passed legislation under the Human Rights Act making it illegal to discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation as well as health/HIV status. For example, in my government workplace it was relatively easy for me and other lesbians to establish a Lesbian Equal Employment Opportunities Group where lesbians meet for a half day every three months for support and to discuss any specific workplace issues.

Also, in Carterton, a small town in North Island, the world's first transgender mayor, Georgina Beyer, was elected in 1995. Under our immigration laws it is also possible for gays to seek permanent residence for their overseas lovers if their relationship has [existed] for two or more years. This has been in place for at least five years.

I know we will always have work to do, and just because we have the legislation does not mean that all is perfect, but hell, it's a good start.

So, before you all start leaping off to New Zealand, the time I recommend to visit our luscious and liberal lands is in mid-February—summer—when our Hero festival celebrating all things gay is timed to precede the very famous Sydney Mardi Gras.

See you there in 1997!

Sue Lytollis
Portland

Editor's Note: South Africa is the only country to ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in its constitution. Many other countries, including New Zealand, have legislation banning discrimination.

Crossing the line

To the Editor:

Although Canada may be fun for gays and lesbians to visit, running the gauntlet of their border guard service is most certainly not fun for us. Mistreatment of U.S. citizens by Canadian border guards has become a constant complaint among those of us who travel frequently to Canada.

In spite of my having traveled in Canada on numerous occasions without incident during the past 15 years, I was denied entry permanently last month because of my heinous criminal past, which consists solely of my having been arrested once in 1981 for consumption of alcohol in public. I was

then an adolescent, and I am now 35 years old. The charge was a misdemeanor.

As if that experience were not sufficiently exasperating, my companion and I were detained against our will at the border for five hours without food or water, awaiting the next Amtrak returning to Seattle. Considering round-trip travel time, we were on board Amtrak for a total of 15 hours.

The worst was still to come. During the five-hour detention, we were interrogated by the most contemptuous, officious, arrogant border guards imaginable. I was directly called a liar several times.

Concurrent with my interrogation, our luggage was inspected and our belongings strewn over a 5-foot diameter. The extent of the disarray seemed deliberate to me, and reminiscent of movies about functionaries in dictatorships.

I noticed recently in the Seattle gay and lesbian press a complaint involving abuse of a male couple by the Canadian border guards in Victoria, B.C. The couple was subjected to an almost identical ordeal, also involving a misdemeanor from the Jurassic Period. Apparently, Canadians are no longer interested in tourist income from gay and lesbian visitors.

John Dutcher
Seattle, Wash.

Let your partner know

To the Editor:

Needless to say, as a heterosexual female, I was very shocked and concerned when I opened a recent issue, Feb. 2, 1996, of *Just Out* and spotted a former boyfriend in a photo of gay and bisexual African American men, members of Brother to Brother/Portland.

This relationship ended because of the brother's inability to practice fidelity and monogamy. However, never did it enter my mind that he was possibly jeopardizing my health and life to an even greater degree by engaging in sex with men. Although the goals of Brother to Brother sound good on the surface, I must pose this question to them and any other bisexual men who have not informed their female lovers that they are engaging in sex with other men. Do you really think you can come into your own personal power, be truly intimate with anyone, or be a positive mentor and role model to others if you are not walking in the light—on the path of truth? Men who are living a life of deception and lies are not OK—no matter how much they'd like to think they are or to tell each other they are in their support group. As long as you are leaving behind a trail of innocent victims (girlfriends and wives whose lives are endangered by your irresponsible and selfish behavior), you will never be in your true power, nor can you claim to be a positive mentor and role model to younger gay and bisexual men (African American or otherwise).

Lani Schumaker
Gresham

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