

world briefs

BRAZIL

The Brazilian government handed out 11 million condoms and declared that "Safe sex is fun for all," in the lead-up to Mardi Gras.

TV ads showed skimpily dressed women and hunky men dancing to samba music and giving each other the eye. The government also distributed 60,000 "Put on a condom" headbands, said Lair Guerra de Macedo, head of the Sexually Transmitted Disease Program.

Brazil has 76,396 recorded AIDS cases and an estimated 500,000 HIV-positive citizens.

CANADA

Ontario Court General Division Justice Gloria Epstein rewrote Ontario's Family Law Act on Feb. 9 so that its alimony and child-support provisions apply to same-sex couples. She said the act was unconstitutional in excluding lesbian and gay couples from its definition of "spouse."

Support obligations will arise when a couple has lived together for at least three years or the relationship has developed "some permanence" and resulted in children, reported Toronto's *Globe and Mail*.

CANADA

Canada's new secretary of state for multiculturalism and women, Hedy Fry, promises that she will use her new cabinet status to push for gay equality.

Fry's Vancouver district is home to Canada's largest concentration of homosexuals, according to the *Vancouver Sun*.

Fry entered the federal parliament in 1993 and has repeatedly criticized the government for delaying a promise to amend the Human Rights Act to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation. The amendment will be somewhat symbolic, since recent court decisions require that the act be construed as if the gay protections already exist.

CHILE

For the first time, an HIV-positive person is fighting back against alleged AIDS-related discrimination in Chile.

Rafael Moyano, 25, was fired in February from his job as a laboratory technician for the Reifschneider

chain of photography stores. His dismissal, he charges, followed repeated questioning from supervisors and personnel officers about his HIV-positive status.

The company has denied that Moyano was "laid off" because of his HIV status.

The Chilean AIDS Prevention Council (CChPS) asks activists worldwide to send complaints to: Reifschneider, SACI, Jose Manuel Infante 1639, Providencia, Santiago, Chile, fax: 011-56-2-225-7713. Send a copy to CChPS at Casilla 85, Correo 3, Santiago, Chile.

CYBERSPACE

The annual EuroPride celebration has a new World Wide Web site at <http://www.iesd.auc.dk/~zennaro/Europride/enindex.html>.

The party is in Copenhagen this year from June 20 to 30. The site can be accessed in English, Danish, German, French, Italian or Spanish.

FRANCE

The Bishops' Conference of the French Catholic Church on Feb. 12 approved the use of condoms to prevent HIV infection.

The move contradicts Vatican doctrine, which says it is a mortal sin to engage in sex acts that are

not open to the possibility of procreation with one's spouse. Catholics who commit mortal sins and do not confess them and receive absolution will go to Hell, the church teaches.

But the French bishops stated: "Many competent doctors state that a viable condom is today the sole means of [HIV] prevention. In this respect, it is necessary. The condom is... understandable for cases in which a person who already engages in sexual activity needs to avoid a serious risk."



The French army has temporarily excused from mandatory military service a gay man who needs to care for his sick lover.

The army at first rejected 22-year-old "Olivier's" request to stay home with 26-year-old "Hervé," but relented after a few days of media coverage and after Hervé threatened to stop taking all his medication.



INDONESIA

Condoms will not be provided in Indonesian hotels because they "would create the impression that prostitution is legal," the tourism ministry ruled in mid-February.

"Our nation still strongly holds religious and cultural norms, so providing condoms... would give a bad impression," Director General Andi Mappi Sameng told the official Antara news agency.

SOUTH AFRICA

South African Anglican Archbishop the Most Rev. Desmond Tutu, the well-known anti-apartheid figure, chastised his church in February for its refusal to ordain noncelibate gay men and lesbians.

"If we say that in relationships where there is fidelity between one couple, [that] is acceptable, why should we not extend the same condition to same-sex relationships?" Tutu asked in a BBC interview. "I am opposed to injustice, and I know where my Lord would stand," he said.

Two days prior, Tutu signed a pro-ordination advertisement placed in the British religious press by the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement. To the distress of Anglican leader Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey, the ad was also signed by other senior clerics and members of parliament.

SWEDEN

Swedish gay male icon Jonas Gardell won the Swedish Oscar-type award, the Guldbagge, Feb. 12 for the script of *Pensionat Oskar*. The film also snagged the best male actor and best supporting actress statues.

In accepting the award, Gardell kissed his lover, TV director Mark Levengood, live on national television.

SWITZERLAND

Angry that their petition demanding equality for same-gender couples has been ignored for one year, 600 Swiss gay men and lesbians picketed the federal parliament in Bern in February.

They erected a 40-meter-long waiting-room bench and took turns sitting on it impatiently. Media coverage of the stunt was heavy.

The petition, which contains 85,900 signatures, demands equal legal status for same-sex couples but leaves the mechanism—such as marriage or registered partnership—open to debate. A parliamentary committee will probably consider the petition this spring.

Compiled by Rex Wockner

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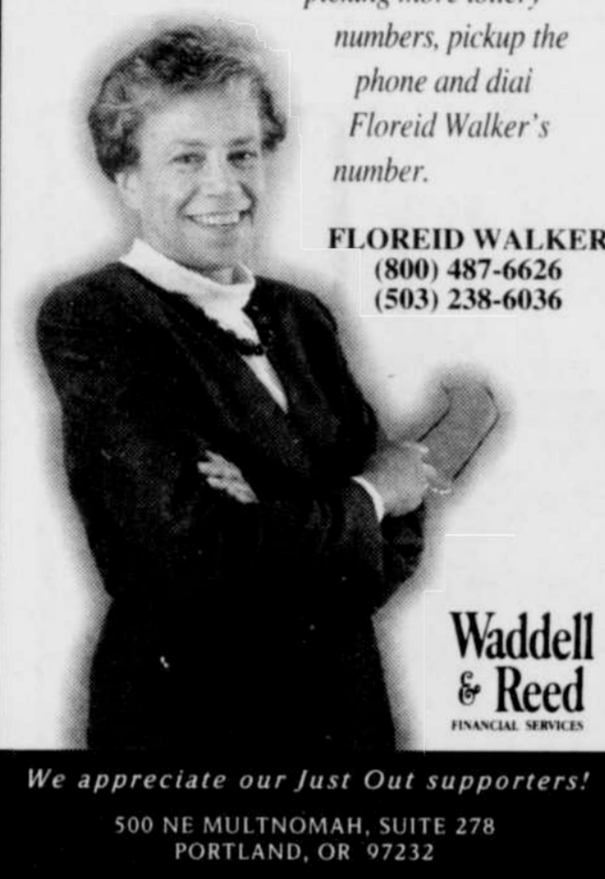
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