

world briefs

AUSTRALIA

Australia's National Census of Population and Housing conducted Aug. 6 recognizes for the first time cohabitating gay and lesbian couples as such, reported the gay newspaper *Brother Sister*. Such couples were previously considered to be unrelated adults sharing a household.

BULGARIA

Police are attempting to crush Bulgaria's gay community. According to reports from several activists, the crackdown began on July 10. Among much else, police raided and closed down the Flamingo Center (which publishes gay erotica and a news magazine), raided and limited the hours of the Sofia gay bar Kayo, arrested scores of gay men at the gay beach near the Black Sea resort of Varna, and seized all equipment and tapes from the Sofia gay video arcade Comet. Further anti-gay harassment has included phone taps, mail theft and raids of cruising areas, activists said. A man who described himself as Bulgaria's most visible gay activist, Angel Bliznachki, head of the Flamingo Center, is so frightened by the events that he has posted twice on the Internet seeking political asylum abroad.

CANADA

The provincial government of Newfoundland and Labrador will not appeal a court decision ordering that sexual orientation protections be read into the Newfoundland Human Rights Code, reported the Halifax gay newspaper *Wayves*. In addition, Labor Minister Ken Aylward has said the code likely will be amended formally in the fall. Gay men and lesbians are protected in all other provinces/territories except Alberta, the Northwest Territories and Prince Edward Island.

Teachers from British Columbia's fundamentalist Christian Trinity Western University have been banned from teaching in B.C. public schools because the university bans "homosexual behaviour," reported Vancouver's *Xtra! West*.

The B.C. College of Teachers, which certifies the province's public-school teachers, voted 17-1 to deny recognition to TWU graduates.

"We would be very concerned about a [teacher's] world view that may not be able to support a student of a different background," said BCCT spokeswoman Maria Kerchum.

"[TWU] follows discriminatory practices which are contrary to public interest and public policy...as expressed in the Teaching Profession Act," she said.

The university also bans premarital sex, adultery, abortion, pornography, involvement in the occult, immodesty and profane language.

Canada's federal government will pay medical and dental benefits—but not pensions—to same-sex partners of public servants, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation reported on July 18.

Such servants include Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers, members of the military, federal workers and employees of federally regulated entities such as airlines, trains, broadcasters and banks.

The new policy resulted from a human-rights tribunal ruling that the government was discriminating based on sexual orientation. The benefits will be retroactive to the day of the ruling, June 13.

INTERNATIONAL

The International Lesbian and Gay Association says AIDS education is "impossible" in Ecuador, Nicaragua, Chile, Romania, India and China because gay sex is illegal.

The problem is even worse in the Middle East "where homosexuality is punishable by death," the group said.

ILGA also denounced "the cruel lack of institutional funds for AIDS prevention and treatment among people living with HIV and AIDS, especially in Latin American countries [except Brazil], Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia."

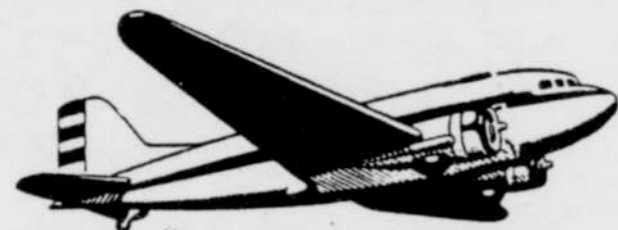
The group further criticized the government of Argentina "for the omission of condom use in its AIDS-prevention campaigns and for [a law] making HIV testing mandatory in its armed forces and among drug users, commercial sex workers and homosexuals in the provinces of Córdoba, Santa Fe and Jujuy."

SOUTH AFRICA

South African Airways announced in July that gay couples are welcome to take advantage of its new promotion, which states, "Next time your husband flies first class to South Africa, you can fly too, for free."

"The offer applies to any couple—married, common-law or same-sex," said the airline's United Kingdom marketing head.

Company spokesman Steve Dunne added, "We



are anxious to uphold equal [opportunities]. Many of our employees are gay, after all."

There was no direct word from the company on whether lesbians can take advantage of the offer.

SPAIN

The Catalonia Superior Justice Tribunal in Barcelona ruled in July that a Colombian gay man whose lover is Spanish has a right to seek residency in Spain.

"This is an important symbolic advance for the recognition of the rights of gay couples, making obvious the need for promulgation of a law on de-facto partnerships," said Gemma Sanchez, secretary general of the Coordinadora Gai-Lesbiana.

"The lack of a law of this type requires gays and lesbians to battle continuously to obtain their rights."

ZIMBABWE

For a second year, Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe has banned the group Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe from hosting a literature table at the Zimbabwe International Book Fair, which began on July 30. But this time, GALZ and fair organizers planned to defy the ban.



"GALZ does not intend to be bullied by government," said spokesman Keith Goddard. "To bow to such pressure will simply encourage government to continue with its invasive behavior."

Compiled by Rex Wockner



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