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national news

Wilson ups anti-gay ante

In a move that favors the traditional family, California Gov. Pete Wilson has acted to prevent unmarried couples from adopting children. Wilson is pressuring social service agencies to recommend that courts deny requests for adoption that involve unmarried couples, according to a story in the *Chicago Tribune*.

In addition to the de facto exclusion of lesbians and gay men, the proposal also reduces the pool of potential adoptive parents and puts more strain on the state's overcrowded foster care system. Many opponents of the proposal, like Shannan Wilber of the Youth Law Center in San Francisco, suggest that it's a political bone being thrown to the religious right. The move targets homosexual couples and other nontraditional partnerships while still allowing single parent adoption.

The state's Office of Administrative Law is expected to decide some time next year whether to turn the policy into a regulation. In either case, judges reviewing adoption cases would still have the option of overruling the agency recommendations.

Bus driver attacks rider

Off-duty bus driver Wardy Joubert has been arrested and charged with cursing at two gay men and assaulting one of them on a public trolley in San Francisco in July. Joubert apparently became angry when he saw the two men kiss, verbally challenged them, and later physically attacked one of the men, reported the *San Francisco Examiner*.



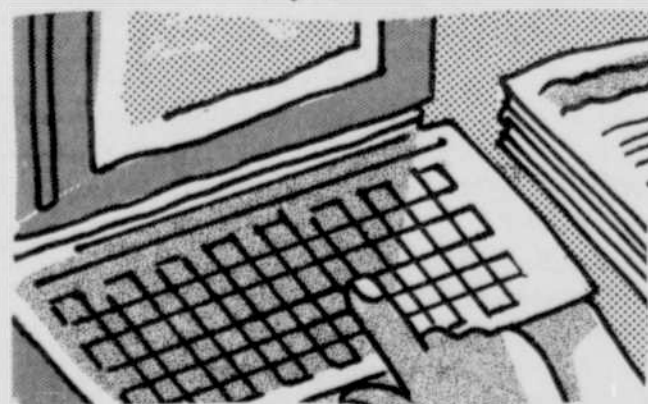
The driver of the trolley reportedly did not intervene, but another passenger managed to stop the assault.

Joubert faces charges of assault with a deadly weapon and simple assault, with the possibility of a lengthened sentence because his alleged crime was motivated by hate. The fate of his job is unclear.

AOL adds new queer forum

America Online recently announced the launch of PlanetOut, an interactive on-line resource for gay men and lesbians. Along with AOL's Gay and Lesbian Community Forum, the new service caters to the social, entertainment, educational and political interests of queer net-surfers.

PlanetOut features the usual chat rooms, resource library, activism networking and ubiquitous product advertisements; it also offers entertainment reviews, daily news and interviews, and



a guide to lesbian and gay film and video.

The mission of PlanetOut, says high-tech activist and company founder Tom Reilly, is to make the Internet "the first medium where the gay and lesbian community can participate instead of being invisible."

Names of HIV-infected Floridans leaked to press

On Sept. 19, Florida health officials confirmed that a confidential list of the names of nearly 4,000 HIV-positive St. Petersburg-area residents was illegally acquired from a county health department office and mailed to the *Tampa Tribune*. State law requires doctors to report the names of those who test positive for the purposes of tracking the spread of the disease.

The *Tribune* also received a letter accusing a drunken health department employee of attempting to distribute the names to customers in a gay bar and later dropping the list, at which time the letter writer was able to obtain a copy. Breaching the confidentiality of the list is a second-degree misdemeanor. The health department worker accused of publicizing the list has been placed on leave with pay pending further investigation.

In an effort to control the damage already done, the state Department of Health refused to verify the list's authenticity, but the *Tribune* noted that the list included the names of several people who have already publicly acknowledged that they have AIDS.

Trial AIDS drug offered free of charge

Agouron Pharmaceuticals plans to give away its experimental AIDS drug Viracept, reports *The Wall Street Journal*. The drug is a protease inhibitor which, although it has not yet been approved by the FDA, has already shown promising results in clinical trials.

The free treatment offer is available to patients in advanced stages of AIDS who have stopped using three commercially available protease inhibitors due to adverse reactions or lack of results. Company president and CEO Peter Johnson estimates that "somewhere between several hundred to probably several thousand" will be eligible to receive Viracept free of charge.

Robert Schooley, head of the infectious-disease division at the University of Colorado, told the *Journal*, "People like [Viracept], they don't feel bad on it, and it seems to have good [antiviral] activity."

Gay youth told not to wear dress disappears

Matt Stickney, the Burlington, Vt., high school student who made national news by fighting a principal's decision to stop him from wearing a dress to school, has been listed as a runaway with city police,

according to a story in the *Boston Globe*. A representative of OUTright Vermont, a sexual minority youth support group, reportedly told a local radio station that Stickney is in hiding.

The controversy began when Stickney started to wear long black dresses, a black wig, lipstick and eyeliner to school, saying, "I'm 15 and I'm gay. This is how I dress to express my personality."

The school's principal contends that Stickney's attire disrupts the classroom learning environment. A meeting between Stickney and school officials was scheduled, but never occurred because of Stickney's disappearance.

Stickney had vowed to take his case to court if necessary.



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