

world briefs

AUSTRALIA

Police are investigating the possibility that toilets at three Sydney train stations were bombed because they are "T-rooms" where men have anonymous sex, reported *Capital Q*.

Bombs exploded in October at the Circular Quay, Central and St. James stations during morning rush hours.

There were no injuries, but damage was substantial at all three sites.

AUSTRIA

The first chamber of Austria's parliament, the Nationalrat, voted on Nov. 27 to repeal two anti-gay laws and reached an impasse on a third.

Legislators voted 128-52 to repeal a ban on gay organizations and 90-89 to repeal a ban on pro-homosexual information. But a vote to lower the age of consent for male-male sex from 18 to 14 (which is the age of consent for heterosexual and lesbian sex) ended in a 91-91 draw.

The repeal measures now move to parliament's second chamber, the Bundesrat, where the same outcome is expected.

BRAZIL

The special commission drafting Brazil's same-sex-partnership bill will send the final measure to Congress on Dec. 10, reported *O Globo* newspaper.

Congress is expected to pass it.

The bill grants same-sex couples spousal rights in the areas of property, inheritance, health benefits, loans and immigration, *O Globo* said. Adoption rights would not be granted to homosexual couples.

Evangelical Christians in Congress have warned that if the measure becomes law their God will destroy Brazil like he did Sodom and Gomorrah.

BRITAIN

Britain's South Yorkshire police force placed an ad in the December issue of *Gay Times* looking for new officers.

The ad shows a handsome officer tipping his helmet flirtatiously, with the caption "Fancy a chat with Tom?"

Police spokesman Sgt. George Roper said gay men make good cops because they have greater sympathy for people who are suffering.

Up to five percent of South Yorkshire's cops are gay, but Roper said, "We would like to bump that number up. There are many more gays in society than 3 or 5 percent."

CANADA

A British Columbia Unemployment Insurance appeal board has ruled that a woman had "just cause" in quitting her job to follow her same-sex partner to another city, reported Vancouver's *Xtra! West*.

The woman initially was refused unemployment benefits by an adjudicator even though benefits are granted routinely to a heterosexual spouse in the same situation.

FRANCE

French prisons will now give inmates condoms and bleach to slow the spread of HIV. Bleach is used to clean drug users' syringes.

Health Minister Hervé Gaymard and Justice Minister Jacques Toubon announced the new policy Nov. 22.

The AIDS rate among France's 52,000 prison-

ers is 10 times that of the population in general.

GREECE

Greece is up in arms over reports that three monks and a priest at the Osios Theodoros monastery on the Aegean island of Kithira hosted gay orgies for men and boys and staged beauty pageants where they flounced around in flowing cocktail gowns, The Associated Press reports.

The four men were ordered to face trial before a religious court by Kithira Bishop Iakovos, who accused them of "breaching a series of religious canons" and causing a "rude televised scandalizing of the flock."

ISRAEL

Government-controlled Israeli Educational Television canceled the Nov. 21 episode of the youth talk show *Klafim Petuhim* ("Open Cards") after politicians objected to its topic, gay teenagers, reports correspondent Zvi Rimalt.



The decision was made by Education Minister Zevulun Hamer, a member of the National Religious Party.

At press time, the MERETZ party's Gay Rights Activist Group was planning a demonstration in Tel Aviv to protest the cancellation.

MACAO

This Portuguese enclave, located at the mouth of China's Canton River, is "advising" foreigners who test HIV positive to return to their native countries, according to China's Xinhua News Agency.

One hundred ten of the 140 people with HIV in Macao are foreigners—mostly Thai women working in the "entertainment" field, Xinhua said.

SWEDEN

Sweden's national social insurance office has granted a lesbian policewoman paternity leave.

The woman, identified only as "Pia," was initially denied time off after her wife, "Monica," gave birth to their child, but the decision was reversed on appeal.

Such leave is commonly granted to new fathers under a policy that lets men use some of their wives' yearlong maternity leave.

UKRAINE

Ukraine is planning to isolate all HIV-positive prisoners at two jails in the Black Sea coastal city of Odesa.

"Our aim is to restrict...contacts between healthy prisoners and the ones with AIDS," Valery Ivasiuk, head of the government's National AIDS Committee, told Reuters.

HIV has spread dramatically in the prison system in recent years due to rape, gay relationships and sharing of needles, officials said.

There are 2,100 known HIV-positive inmates nationwide.

ZIMBABWE

The World Council of Churches will go ahead and hold its 1998 Assembly in Harare, the capital, despite objections from members who oppose the strident homophobia of Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe.

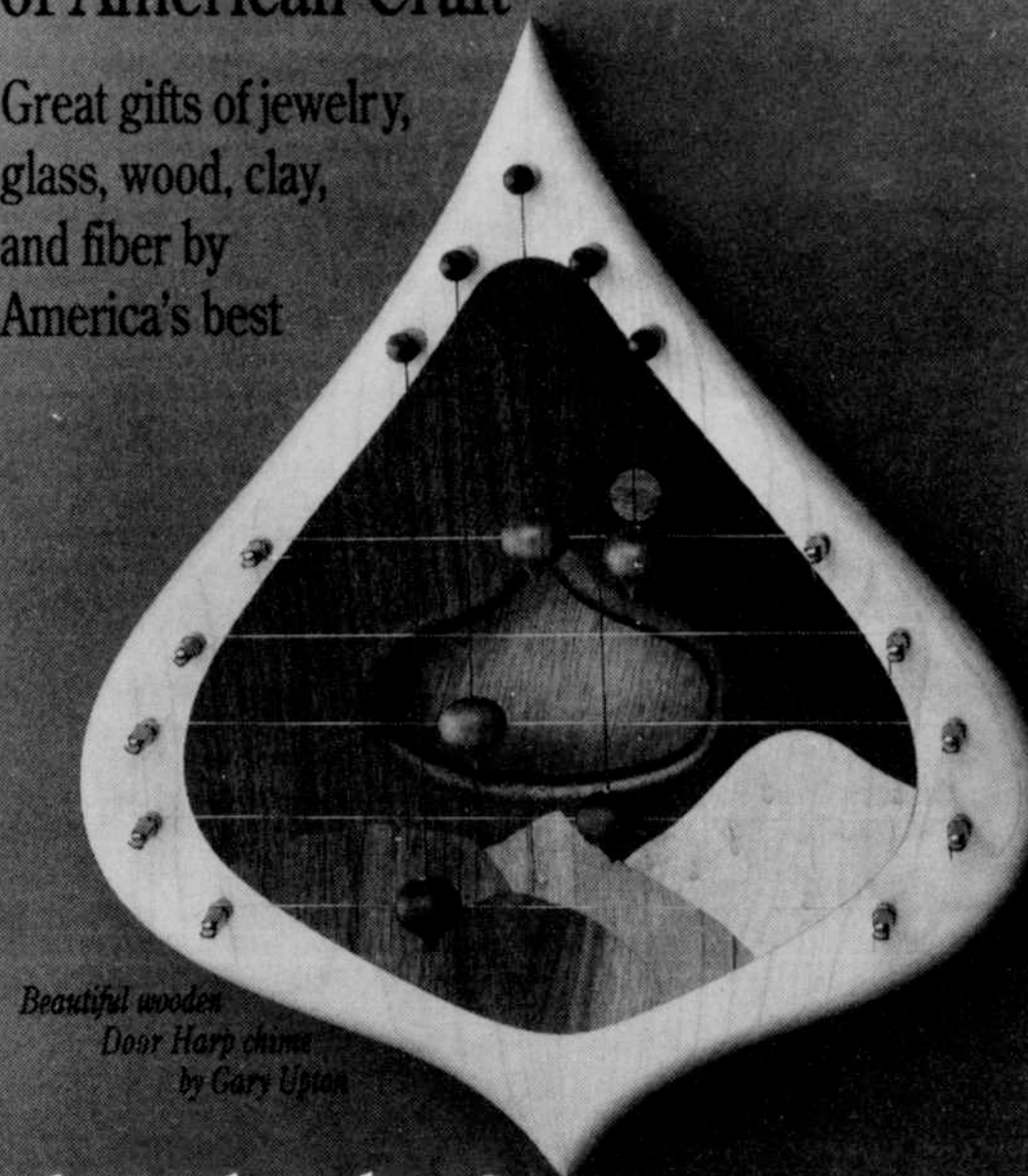
According to reports, an agreement between the WCC and Zimbabwe's government will protect lesbian and gay delegates to the assembly as well as the right of all delegates to speak their mind on any topic.

Mugabe has called homosexuality "an abomination" and urged citizens to "hand [gay men and lesbians] over to the police."

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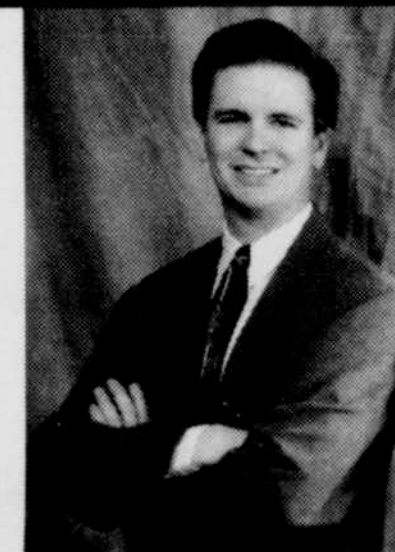
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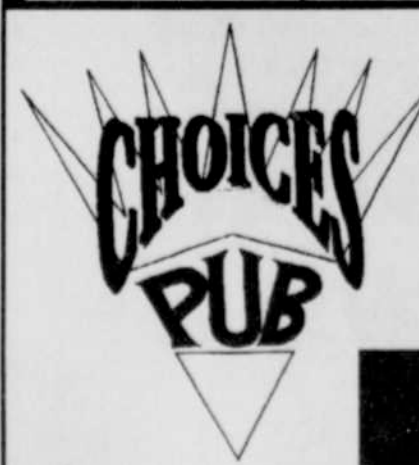
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