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world briefs

AUSTRALIA

A ruling that had granted lesbians access to insemination clinics was overturned by Queensland Supreme Court Justice Brian Ambrose on Oct. 24 in Brisbane.

An Anti-Discrimination Tribunal had previously found that a medical practitioner service company and a doctor had discriminated against a 26-year-old woman by refusing to inseminate her.

State Health Minister Mike Horan welcomed the new ruling, saying, "I strongly support the view that every kid should have a chance to have a father from the outset."

CANADA

On Oct. 20, Canada's largest union, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, argued for the right to grant same-sex domestic-partner benefits before the Ontario Court of Appeals.

"It's about dignity and self-worth," said CUPE attorney Peter Engelmann. "It's about having same-sex relationships recognized on the same level as those of heterosexual colleagues, not being treated as second-class citizens."

The union is prevented from extending its pension plan to gay and lesbian couples by Revenue Canada's refusal to redefine "spouse" in the Income Tax Act.

COLUMBIA

The province of Valle del Cauca, where Cali is located, elected an openly gay governor Oct. 26, reports Colombian correspondent David Olson.

Coalition candidate Gustavo Alvarez Gardezabal, a well-known author who previously served as mayor of the small city of Tuluá, defeated Conservative Carlos Holguin.

According to Olson, Alvarez Gardezabal defines himself as a liberal with renovated ideas.

Olson also says as mayor of Tuluá, Alvarez Gardezabal was known as an incorruptible administrator.

DENMARK

The bishops of the state Lutheran Church voted unanimously Oct. 28 not to perform same-sex weddings.

Since 1989, gay and lesbian Danes have been able to register their partnerships at city halls and acquire all the rights of matrimony except access to adoption, alternative insemination and church weddings.

Ignoring the recommendations of their own committee, the bishops said they adopted the policy to preserve church unity. Some bishops had previously spoken in favor of same-sex weddings.



Eigil and Axel Axgil in 1989: the world's first legally recognized gay couple

Despite the new stance, bishops say gay and lesbian relationships will be acknowledged within regular church services, just not with a wedding ceremony.

Greenland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden have nearly identical registered-partnership laws that also don't allow for church weddings.

INTERNATIONAL

AIDS is on the decline in the 15-nation European Union, and HIV infection remains relatively low at one infection in 2,078 residents, new statistics show.

There was a 10 percent drop in the number of AIDS cases in 1996, following a leveling off of the numbers in 1995.

JAMAICA

Jealousy over favors that guards bestowed on prisoners they were having sex with sparked August's prison riots, police investigators told an investigating commission Oct. 23.

Sixteen inmates were killed—by other inmates who thought they were gay—and 40 were injured in the melees at Kingston's General Penitentiary and Spanish Town's St. Catherine district prison.



Violence broke out after Corrections Commissioner John Prescod proposed distributing condoms to guards and inmates. The guards went on strike to protest the implication they were having gay sex and the inmates seized control.

Early reports said the inmates were also upset over the suggestion of gay activity, but police Superintendent DaCosta Briggs testified that the anger was actually fueled by the special treatment guards lavished on their sex partners, including letting them roam the compounds and sending them outside the prisons on errands.

LATVIA

A policeman in Bauska has been forced to resign after coming out of the closet in the mainstream newspaper *Atspulgs*.

Gatis Bugoveckis' superiors insisted he name other gay cops or leave his job "voluntarily," reports the Latvian Homosexuality Information Center, which acquired audio tapes of the conversations.

In response to the incident, HIC is demanding passage of laws banning discrimination based on sexual orientation and also that the Commission of the European Union not discuss Latvia's proposed entry into the EU until the nation protects the fundamental rights of gay men and lesbians.

NETHERLANDS

On Oct. 28, a special parliamentary committee on gay and lesbian equality instructed the government to legalize full same-sex marriages and gay adoptions.

The government is expected to do so by April 1998. It will be traditional marriage rather than specialized gay partnership like in Scandinavia.

In the meantime, a new Dutch partnership law takes effect Jan. 16. It grants registered same-sex and straight couples every right of matrimony except access to adoption and alternative insemination.

The media relations team of the 1998 Gay Games in Amsterdam says men are not, in fact, currently prohibited from registering, except for badminton.

Reports to the contrary (including by this news column) resulted from a loose translation on the English summary page of the Dutch gay newspaper *De Gay Krant*, says Gay Games media officer Paul van Yperen.

However, Van Yperen says the longer Dutch article also misrepresented the situation.

"Only for badminton there is a waiting list for men," he wrote via e-mail. "For 28 sports (ice hockey is full) and many cultural activities men can register at the moment... We get and got many worried questions from participants about the rumor that we halted registration for male participants. For certain sports men have to wait for their turn...[but there] is not a ban or a halt to male registration."

He says because 50 percent of the spots are reserved for women until Jan. 1, some male participants could be placed on a waiting list. After that date, however, there will no longer be reserved places.

Compiled by Rex Wockner



Kristin Applegate-King

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