

## WORLD news BRIEFS

### AUSTRALIA

For the first time in Australian history a gay man has won custody of his child.

The man's former wife was found to have falsified evidence that the man sexually abused the boy, and the court said the mother's new household was dysfunctional, hysterical, stressed and crisis-ridden.

The parties in the case were not named.

### BRAZIL

Gay activist and anthropologist Luiz Mott, president of the Grupo Gay da Bahia in Salvador, Bahia, received the Citizen of Salvador award in a June 9 ceremony at City Hall.

The city-conferred honor recognizes Mott's work for the human rights of gay men, lesbians and other sexual minorities, and marks the first time a Brazilian gay person received such a designation.

Mott has authored eight academic books on gay-related matters.

### BRITAIN

Thousands of gay men and lesbians marched through Glasgow June 13 during Scotland's fourth annual pride parade.



Singer Jimmy Somerville (left) and ScotsGay magazine dyke editor Heather White

Singer Jimmy Somerville, former Bronski Beat frontman, headlined a festival on Glasgow Green afterward.

Two days earlier, the City Council hosted a pride reception and flew the rainbow flag over the city chambers.

The United Kingdom now has six openly gay members of Parliament.

Ribble South Labour MP David Borrow, 45, came out in the June 8 issue of the *Lancashire Evening Post*, saying: "Everyone is entitled to a personal life, and I do not see why knowing that I am gay should not be something they should know about. I think it is appropriate at this point to be honest with the people of South Ribble."

Ribble South is in northwest England near Blackpool.

Then, on June 10, Blackpool South Labour MP Gordon Marsden told his local newspaper: "I'm gay and I'm happy for my constituents to know about it. Many people in Blackpool already know—I believe my constituents have the right too. I have made no attempt to hide it or mislead people. This is merely the first time I have gone on record and spoken publicly about it."

He added, "I'm a politician first and a gay man second."

Britain's other openly gay MPs are Chris Smith, Stephen Twigg, Ben Bradshaw and Angela Eagle.

On June 7, Amnesty International called on the British government to equalize the age

of consent for gay and straight sex and to repeal other laws that discriminate against sexual behavior that is homosexual in nature.

At present straight sex is legal at age 16, while gay sex is banned until age 18.

Other statutes that discriminate against men who have sex with men include one that criminalizes any private gay sex that involves more than two people.

"These laws violate international standards which prohibit discrimination and arbitrary interference with personal privacy," Amnesty said.

### EUROPE

Following years of research by a standardization committee, the European Union has increased the length of its "standard" condom from 16 centimeters (6.3 inches) to 17 centimeters (6.7 inches).

The diameter also is being increased, from 54 to 56 millimeters.

The European Union is made up of 15 nations: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

### FINLAND

On June 15, Parliament lowered the age of consent for gay sex from 18 to 16, the legal age for straight sex, and repealed a law that prohibited promotion of homosexuality.

No one spoke against the changes, which were part of a larger crime bill.

### FRANCE

An estimated 2,000 people turned out for the third annual gay pride march June 13 in Lille.



"Gays in the heart of the city"

"The demonstration's one and only message was that Prime Minister Lionel Jospin should keep his promises and introduce registered-partnership legislation for unmarried couples, gay or not," said an organizer. "Gays were in the very heart of Lille...and that's where we plan to stay."

The event was organized by the Committee for the Social Recognition of Homosexuals. Lille is in northern France near the Belgian border.

### NETHERLANDS

Come August, hundreds of Christian youth are expected to converge on Amsterdam for an evangelization campaign slated to be held at the same time as Gay Games V.

A spokesman for the Youth with a Mission group tells reporters the timing is just a coincidence.

But televangelist Bert Dorenbosch says: "It is a perfect opportunity for us. I will participate in prayer groups that have the Gay Games on their agenda. I might also help spreading leaflets. Homosexuals do not live according to the Bible.... The Gay Games are contributing to darkness in Amsterdam."

Amsterdam's Council of Churches is taking a different approach: It is organizing an ecumenical service for Gay Games visitors in the world-famous Old Church.

The rate of positive HIV antibody test results among gay male patients under age 30 at Amsterdam's Municipal Health Service dropped from 17 percent in 1991 to 9 percent in 1996, according to a report in the May 28 issue of *AIDS*.

Over 10,000 clinic attendees were tested.

### SOUTH AFRICA

The country's first lesbian magazine, *Closet*, is holding a contest to replace the word "lesbian" because it "has always been used as a very dirty word," a spokeswoman told the *Star* newspaper June 13.

"We would like to find an alternative which would help to make us feel more positive about ourselves," the staffer said.

### SPAIN

Spanish gay groups have denounced Nobel Prize-winning novelist Camilo Jose Cela, 82, for saying, "I would prefer that any homage paid to me after my death be without the support of gay groups."

In a later interview with reporters, Cela added, "I don't care one way or the other [about gays], I just don't take it up the ass."

Cela's original remarks came at a mid-June tribute to famed poet Federico Garcia Lorca in the city of Santiago de Compostela. Garcia Lorca, who was gay, died in Spain's civil war in 1936.

"Who is he to say he doesn't want gays at his own tributes?" said Jordi Petit, Barcelona-based secretary general of the International Lesbian and Gay Association.

Well-known journalist and writer Maruja Torres weighed in with the comment "It's much more dignified to take it up the ass than to lick the ass of power"—a reference to Cela's work as a censor during the rule of dictator Francisco Franco.

### VATICAN CITY

Pope John Paul II lashed out at lesbian and gay families during a June 6 Vatican meeting with U.S. bishops.

"At a time when the very definitions of marriage and family life are endangered by attempts to enshrine in legislation alternative and distorted notions of these basic human communities, your ministry must include the clear proclamation of the truth of God's original design," he said.

### ZIMBABWE

Keith Goddard, program manager for Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe, has been charged with sodomizing a young man at gunpoint.

His accuser, Siphephule Vuma, 20, meanwhile, has been charged with extortion for sending Goddard letters demanding money.

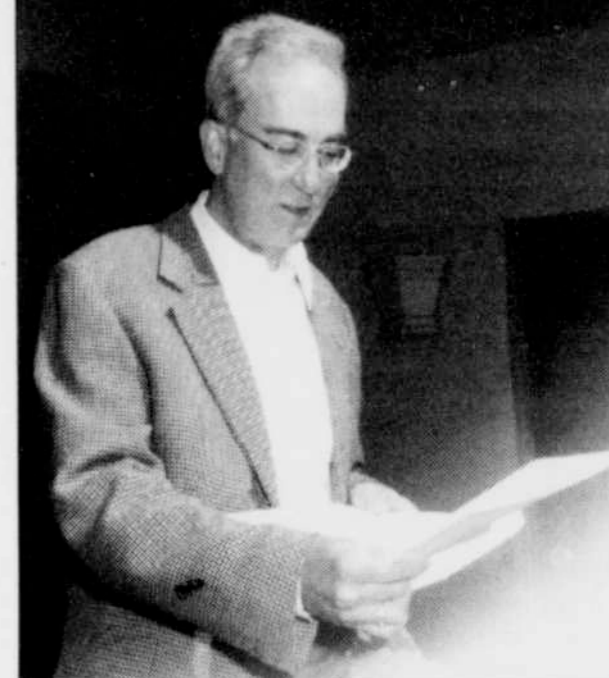
Goddard went to police first to report the letters, and Vuma then accused Goddard of sexual assault. Goddard denies having sex with Vuma.

The two men will testify against each other in separate trials.

The incident occurred as former President Canaan Banana's trial continues. He is charged with 11 counts of sodomy, attempted sodomy and indecent assault.

Compiled by REX WOCKNER with contributions from KENT SPROULE

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