

WORLD news

BRITAIN

Unlike some celebrities who get outed, newly knighted British actor Nigel Hawthorne, star of *The Madness of King George*, did not find the experience liberating.

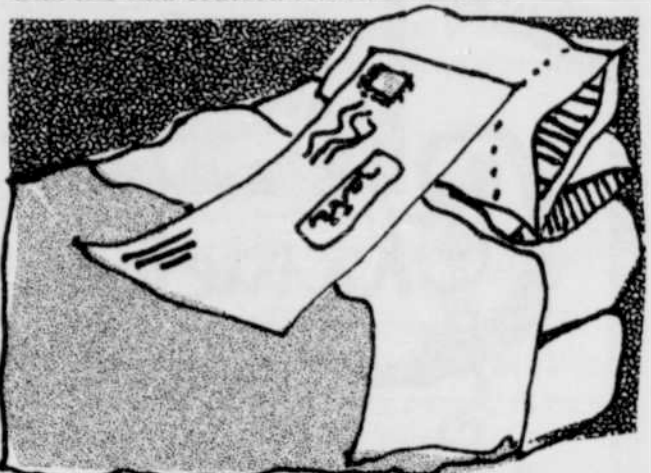
"I felt it was a terrible intrusion on my privacy," he told *The Times* of London. "[Gay actor Sir] Ian McKellen always said I should come out. But why? I make my living playing heterosexuals."

He adds he feels "the best way to get people to accept you is to move about the community and show them there's nothing to be afraid of."

CANADA

The mayor of Ottawa from 1951 to 1956 and 1960 to 1964 was apparently a lesbian.

The late Charlotte Whitton's secret life was revealed Jan. 7 when staffers at the National Archives opened a box of her personal papers that she had ordered sealed until now.



It contained love letters to and from her live-in companion, Margaret Grier.

"Oh! Mardie, Mardie, how can I go on," Whitton wrote in one missive three weeks after Grier's death in 1947. "We must just go on being with each other.... Ours wasn't love, it was a knitting together of mind and spirit: It was something given to few of God."

Whitton was the first woman mayor of a large Canadian city. Among her more memorable words: "Whatever women do they must do twice as well as men to be thought of half so good. Luckily, it's not difficult."

All but one of Canada's 12 provinces and territories ban discrimination based on sexual orientation, according to a new report from the national lobby group Equality for Gays and Lesbians Everywhere. The Northwest Territories is the lone holdout.

All but four provinces and territories—Alberta, Quebec, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland—grant equal workplace benefits to same-sex partners of government employees.

Three provinces require equal pension benefits for gay and lesbian employees: British



Columbia (implementation pending), Ontario and Nova Scotia.

British Columbia and Ontario also allow same-sex couples to adopt, extend child support laws to same-sex pairs, and guarantee that a same-sex partner can make medical decisions on behalf of an incapacitated lover.

On the federal level, discrimination based on sexual orientation is illegal and workplace benefits are provided to government employees' same-sex partners.

CHILE

Chile has repealed its ban on same-gender sex as part of a general reform of sex-related laws, the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission reported Jan. 14.

Sexual relations between adults of the same sex had been punishable with up to five years in prison.

Under the reform, the age of consent for same-gender sex is set at 18, higher than for heterosexual sex.

"We hope that the governments of Nicaragua and Puerto Rico pay attention to the news from Santiago," says Mirka Negroni, an IGLHRC regional specialist. "These are the last states in Latin America that still criminalize homosexual activity."

Meanwhile in the United States, 19 of the 50 states still ban sodomy, including five states—Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas—that solely ban homosexual sodomy, IGLHRC officials say.

"These statutes don't just fly in the face of privacy and common sense; they violate international law," says the group's Scott Long.

In a case filed by gay and lesbian activists in the Australian state of Tasmania in 1994, the United Nations Human Rights Committee ruled that prohibition of same-gender sex violates the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, of which the U.S. is a signatory.

As a result of the ruling, Tasmania legalized homosexuality.

ITALY

Antonio d'Amico, the partner of slain gay fashion designer Gianni Versace, launched

his own design career with the unveiling of his first fashion line Jan. 12 in Milan.

Versace was murdered by gay serial killer Andrew Cunanan in Miami Beach in 1997.

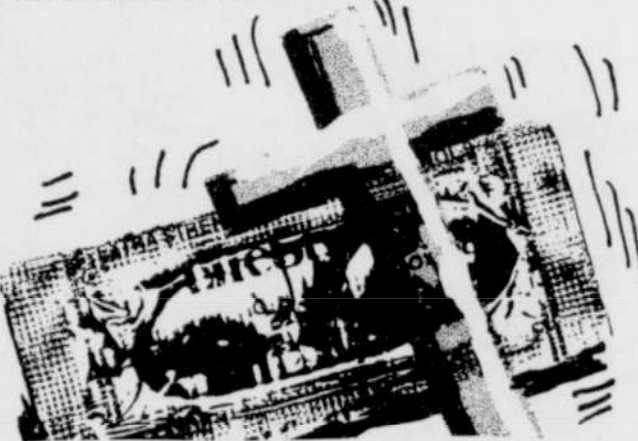
D'Amico presented his first work—much of it leather-oriented—during Men's Fashion Week. Sir Elton John whooped his support from the audience.

"This is all for Gianni," d'Amico said.

Versace's sister and brother, who inherited his empire, did not respond to an invitation to attend d'Amico's show.

PHILIPPINES

The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines has denounced three new television ads that endorse condom use to prevent transmission of HIV.



"The solution is that husbands should remain faithful to their wives, and then there is no AIDS," says Pedro Quitarior, the conference's assistant secretary general.

The ads were funded by the United Nations Population Fund and the local AIDS organization ReachOut.

VATICAN CITY

Fifteen members of Italy's leading gay and lesbian group, Arci Gay, placed a wreath near St. Peter's Square Jan. 13 in memory of the man who set himself on fire there one year ago in protest against the Catholic Church's teachings on gay men and lesbians.

Police refused to let the activists into the square itself.

"The rejection by the ecclesiastical community is a burning wound for homosexuals," says



Arci Gay President Sergio Lo Giudice. "Sooner or later the Vatican will have to ask homosexuals for forgiveness just like it did to the Jews.... We are here because Alfredo chose to kill himself here. The Vatican has a moral responsibility for the malaise in which many homosexuals live these days."

On Jan. 13, 1998, Alfredo Ormando, 40, torched himself and rushed fully ablaze toward the entrance to St. Peter's Basilica. He collapsed before he reached the door and later died. Notes found in his coat said he was protesting society's failure to understand gay people.

The Catholic Church does not condemn gay men and lesbians directly but insists that any sex act that is not open to the possibility of pregnancy is a "mortal sin."

ZAMBIA

A \$1,000 grant by the Norwegian government to an embattled gay group has angered Zambian religious leaders and government officials, the All Africa News Agency reported Jan. 11.

Norwegian Ambassador to Zambia Jon Lomoy gave the money to the Zambia Independent Monitoring Team—the umbrella group for the nation's human rights organizations—which funneled it to the Lesbian, Gay and Transgender Association to fund workshops and a radio program.

"Homosexuality upsets the order of God in which male and female were created," says United Church of Zambia spokesman the Rev. Jon Simukonde. "If Norway has money to spend, let that money go towards alleviating poverty among the many Zambians rather than on unnatural schemes."

Church of God Bishop John Mambo agrees and is urging all Zambian Christians to condemn Norway's gay-friendly attitudes.

Meanwhile, Foreign Affairs Minister Kelly Walubita has summoned Lomoy to his office to explain "certain things" about homosexuality, the news agency reported.

Late last year, Home Affairs Minister Peter Machungwa threatened queer leaders with imprisonment if they appeared at the office of Registrar of Societies Herbert Nyendwa, who insisted he would never cast his eyes upon the gay group's application forms.

At the same time, Zambian Vice President Christon Tembo proclaimed: "An association formed to further the interests of homosexuals can never be registered in Zambia. Those who will persist in championing the cause for homosexual activities in Zambia risk being arrested for the felonies of committing criminal acts or for conspiracy to commit criminal acts."

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