

BELARUS

An anti-gay conference in Minsk, titled *The Pernicious Consequences of International Projects of Sexual Education*, was attended by numerous government officials March 11 and 12.

Organized by the nation's Russian Orthodox Church and the European Humanitarian University, the confab attracted, among others, the chairman of the Constitutional Court and the health minister.

According to local gay activists: "The participants of the conference condemned the practice of using condoms and of making abortions, which were regarded as 'satanic influences.' Among the 'authors' of the 'pernicious' projects of sexual education [are] the World Health Organization, UNESCO and the UN."

Gay men and lesbians were declared to be "perverts and criminals," activists reported, and one priest called for all gay people to be executed on the electric chair.

BRITAIN

March 25 ruling by Britain's highest court, the House of Lords, opens the door for foreign gay men and lesbians seeking asylum from persecution based on "sexual identity."

The Law Lords' 4-1 ruling came in the case of two Pakistani women who sought refuge to escape flogging or stoning for adultery.

The court said women from Islamic nations and gay people from various countries may seek asylum in the United Kingdom under the "particular social group" provisions of the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees.

Anti-gay persecution could be direct, as under anti-sodomy laws, or indirect, as when a government fails to protect gay and lesbian people and heterosexuals equally, the Lords said.

CANADA

More than a few people were surprised by a new poll which found that 76 percent of Albertans support a ban on anti-gay discrimination and 51 percent think same-sex marriage is fine.

Alberta is frequently referred to as Canada's most conservative province.

The poll was conducted by the University of Calgary and the *Calgary Herald* newspaper.

Among Conservatives (Tories), 60 percent of women and 55 percent of men support same-sex marriage. Among members of the Reform Party, however, only 37 percent of women and 30 percent of men think same-sex couples should be allowed to tie the knot.



The Kellogg cereal company has ordered the Toronto queer youth cabaret Fruit Loopz to change its name, reports *Xtra!*

The Battle Creek, Mich., company says the kids have infringed on its Fruit Loops copyright.

"We're sympathetic to the festival's predicament but...we have to do what we have to do to protect our trademark," says Jacki Nelson, Kellogg Canada's manager of corporate communications.

Fruit Loopz spokeswoman Janis Purdy says if the corporation refuses to back down, the group may rename itself Queerios. "Then we can have a fight with General Mills," she adds.

In 1988, Kellogg suffered an extended attack from gay and lesbian activists who said a television commercial for the company's Nut 'N' Honey cereal promoted anti-gay violence.

The commercial showed several cowboys drawing their guns on their trail cook after he told one of them there was "nuttin', honey" for breakfast.

Activists said the cowboys drew the guns because one man referred to another as "honey." Kellogg maintained the cowboys were upset at getting "nuttin'" for breakfast. The dispute was never settled, but later Nut 'N' Honey ads abandoned the play on words.

INDIA

Sexual minorities formed a national network—called LGBT India—at the Second Indian National Gay Conference recently held in Hyderabad.

"This was necessary as networking at the personal level leaves a lot to chance and to personal likes and dislikes," says spokesman Ashok Row Kavi.

The group hopes to create a "pink digest of friendly doctors, psychiatrists, hotels, STD clinics, HIV testing centers, ayurvedic and Unani practitioners and sympathetic religious leaders in every city where visible gay groups exist," Kavi explains.

INTERNATIONAL

Gay and lesbian Amnesty International activists held their first international meeting March 26 to 28 in London and formed a committee to combat human rights abuses based on sexual orientation.



At the first international meeting of queer Amnesty International activists March 26 to 28 in London

Delegates from 25 countries on five continents attended the gathering.

"This meeting represents a major step forward in the status of [lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans] human rights across the world," said one of the activists, Francisco Olivera of Argentina.

The Internet site of the International Lesbian and Gay Association offers a new country-by-country survey of the legal situation of lesbians and gay men around the globe—from criminal law to parenting, trans issues to AIDS.

The project can be accessed at www.ilga.org.

ISRAEL

Jerusalem's first gay and lesbian center opened downtown March 18.

Orthodox gays, lesbian feminists, Arabs and secular Jews attended the ceremony, organizers said.

"This is a step out of the closet for Jerusalem's gay and lesbian community," says Jerry Levinson, one of the facility's founders.

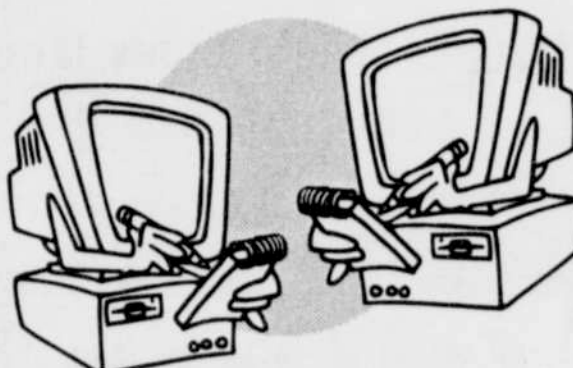
"We are not intimidated by the city's intolerance; rather, we intend to change this. Every gay and lesbian person in the Jerusalem area will find a safe and welcoming haven at the center," he continues. "It will serve lesbian settlers from the occupied territories, gay teenagers from area high schools, Haredi Jews from ultra-Orthodox neighborhoods like Me'a She'arim, university students, Arabs from East Jerusalem and persons of every faith."

Among the center's projects are study and support groups for religious gay people, a youth

group, an anonymous HIV testing center, and a speakers' bureau.

NEW ZEALAND

Hundreds of New Zealanders, including scores of public officials, were outed March 16 when an online gay newsletter was transmitted with their e-mail addresses visible (instead of hidden as blind carbon copy recipients).



Among the subscribers to the *Campaign NewsReel* newsletter—promoted as "New Zealand's intelligent weekly gay news update"—are members of Parliament, local elected officials, diplomats, and executives from the Treasury, the Reserve Bank and various government departments, the *Christchurch Press* reported. A small minority of the subscribers may be heterosexual, the paper noted.

Editor Michael Moore blamed the snafu on his Internet provider, Xtra, but an Xtra spokesman pointed out that such a mistake could only originate from within a user's own e-mail program.

SWEDEN

The Swedish government has appointed an ombudsman for sexual orientation employment discrimination. Well-known gay-rights activist Hans Ytterberg is slated to start his new job May 1.

The announcement was made at the annual conference of the National Federation for Sexual Equality.

YUGOSLAVIA

The Campaign Against Homophobia—a project of the gay group Arcadia, the European Youth Association of Serbia and the Humanitarian Law Fund—has denounced both the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia and Yugoslavian leader Slobodan Milosevic.

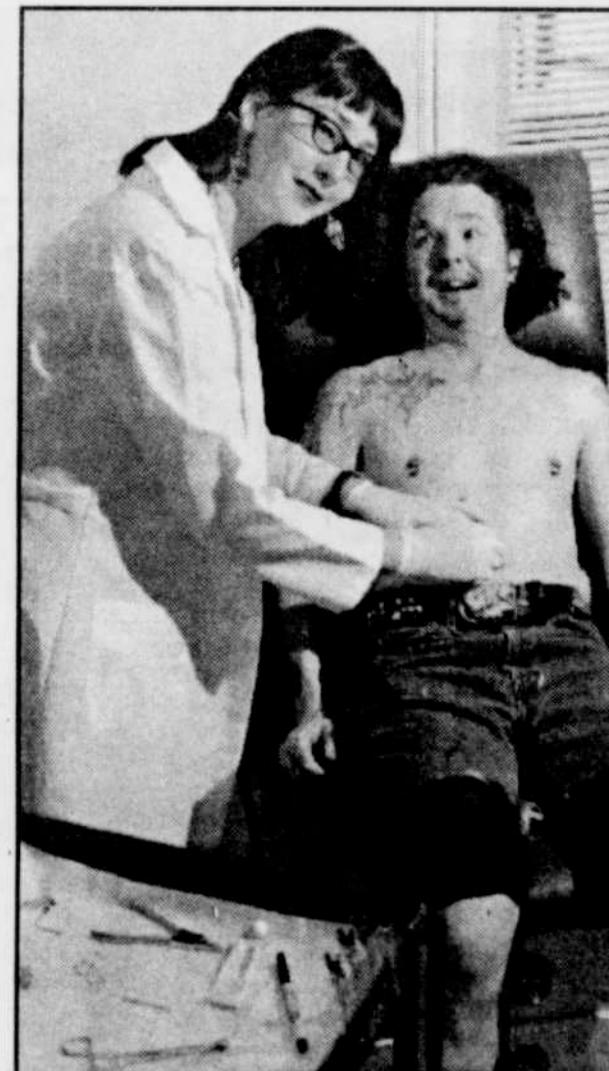
"[We are] disgusted at the attacks of NATO," the activists said in an English-language press release signed by CAH's chief executive coordinator, Dejan Nebragic. "NATO has created a situation which only empowers Milosevic's communist-fascist regime and directly supports further continuation of his terror against both the Kosovo Albanians and every genuine, authentic...opposition in the Republic of Serbia."

The group says that "the coordinators of the Campaign Against Homophobia are directly endangered by these attacks both by the NATO bombs and by the revenge of the local population, as well as of the police, who consider us to be the American 'agents' which, in the Republic of Serbia, means people who fight for democratization of the country."

It adds: "We resolutely condemn the Serbian regime, the one indeed responsible for the current situation, which refuses to stop the war by signing the accord. We as well condemn NATO, which with its attacks directly undermines our activities toward the democratization of the Republic of Serbia and endangers our lives."

Compiled by REX WOCKNER

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