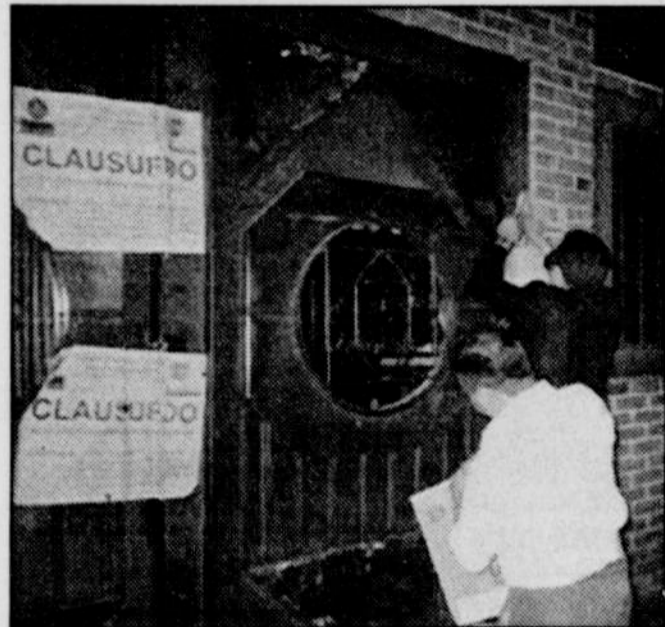


**WORLD news**

because Icelanders have embraced inclusivity." "Every bar is now a mixed bar," the magazine said. "The one gay-identified nightclub, Spotlight, sports the ubiquitous rainbow flag outside, but the crowd inside is as mixed as the straight club next door."

**MEXICO**

More than 200 people marched in Monterrey's first Gay Pride parade May 26. They carried signs demanding respect, equal rights and an end to homophobia.



Police close down a gay bar in Mexico City

"Being gay is not a perversion," one sign read. Others said: "We are not delinquents," "Police abuse and detentions must stop immediately," and "We demand legislative changes that fight discrimination of all types."

In front of the Catholic cathedral, the marchers chanted, "The church is homophobic." The parade circled the Grand Plaza and ended on the steps of City Hall, where participants sang the national anthem and released hundreds of multicolored balloons. A few spectators shouted anti-gay insults, but the majority was supportive.

"We are demanding our rights like all other citizens," said Maria Aurora Mota, Oasis Center for Sexual Diversity director. "We seek the right to health and work. We want to make ourselves visible to society. These events have been taking place throughout the world, and now the gay/homosexual movement of Monterrey is strong enough to decide to organize this action."

Police have closed down numerous Mexico City gay bars and clubs in recent weeks, including El Taller, Anyway, Factory, The Doors, Blush, 14 and Bar Zoo.

The venues in the upscale Zona Rosa neighborhood have been accused of "irregularities" in their operating permits. More than 300 gay demonstrators blocked the street in front of El Taller, perhaps Mexico City's most well-known gay bar, May 22 and 23.

According to www.sergay.com.mx, neighborhood government head Dolores Padierna is responsible for the closures. "[It is] part of a campaign in which she intends to close down every meeting place of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community," the Internet site said.

**CANADA**

Nova Scotia has become the first province to register gay couples, granting them many rights of marriage. The process costs \$15 and takes place at the Office of Vital Statistics.

Marriage rights are granted in areas such as pensions, wills, medical decisions, joint property, alimony and child support, according to the

*Toronto Star*. Gay couples receive some marriage rights in other provinces as well, but Nova Scotia is the first to set up a public registry.

Roger Thibault and Theo Wouters never knew they had so many friends.

More than 4,000 sexual minorities marched down their street May 27 in the Montreal suburb of Pointe Claire to protest a homophobic neighbor who allegedly has spit at them, called them names and whacked golf balls at them. A court case is pending.

"I'm just floored," Wouters told the *Montreal Gazette*. "I feel that I can live again."

**ESTONIA**

Parliament lowered the legal age for gay sex from 16 to 14, in line with the law for heterosexual sex, June 6.

The move came as the body enacted a new penal code for the nation by a vote of 51-1. It will come into force in about a year, according to Lilian Kotter of the Estonian Association for Lesbians and Bisexual Women.

**SWEDEN**

Swedish gay couples married under the nation's registered partnership law do not get spousal benefits when one of them goes to work for the European Union bureaucracy in Brussels, the European Court of Justice ruled May 31. "The term 'marriage' means a union between two persons of the opposite sex," the court declared.

Sweden's partnership law grants registered couples more than 99 percent of the rights and obligations of marriage. In the Netherlands, gay couples can marry under the same laws as heterosexuals, which could present a greater challenge to the EU should a Dutch couple seek benefits.

"We consider this judgment to be wrong and not acceptable," said Jackie Lewis, co-chair of the European Region of the International Lesbian and Gay Association. "It disregards the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights adopted in Nice in December 2000. Article 21 of the charter prohibits discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. With its narrow interpretation, the ECJ also sets a problematic precedent for same-sex registered partners and spouses who want to move freely within the European Union without losing the legal rights and protection they enjoy in their home country." □

Compiled by REX WOCKNER, who has reported for the gay press since 1985. He has a bachelor's degree in journalism from Drake University and started his career as a radio reporter.



Theo Wouters and Roger Thibault share a kiss while leading an anti-homophobia protest through the streets of a Montreal suburb



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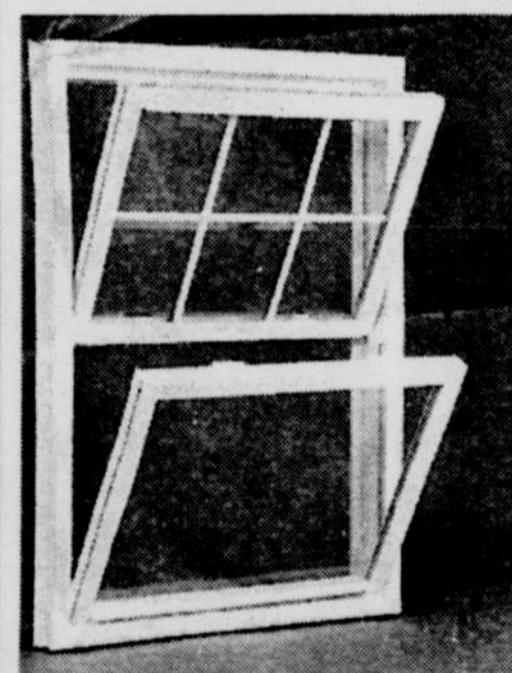
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