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WORLD news



Members of the "Pussy Posse" relax after the first Palace in 1999

CANADA
Liquor law violation charges were dropped Jan. 31 against the organizers of a female "Pussy Palace" night at a gay bathhouse in Toronto. Justice Peter Hryn threw out all of the evidence, ruling the raid by male city police officers should have been conducted by women. "The search was carried out in an unreasonable manner," he said. "There was no reason why male rather than female officers were used.... I find the breach [of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms] to be serious." The event was held Sept. 15, 2000, at Club Toronto. The charter bans unreasonable searches.

Vancouver's Rape Relief Society discriminated against transsexual Kimberly Nixon when it declared she was not woman enough to volunteer as a counselor, the British Columbia Human Rights Commission ruled Jan. 18. It was ordered to pay her \$4,660 for injured dignity.



Kimberly Nixon

NORWAY
Openly gay Finance Minister Per-Kristian Foss made world history Jan. 25 when he was installed as acting prime minister temporarily. Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik and Foreign Minister Jan Petersen, who is second in the line of succession, were both out of the country. "I think that this, perhaps, can have a small impact on the discussion" of gay rights, Foss told Reuters. Last month, he likely became the first Cabinet-level official in the world to marry a same-sex partner. The Conservative tied the knot with Jan Erik Knarbak under Norway's gay partnership law, which grants more than 99 percent of the rights and obligations of matrimony. "I see that many newspapers are writing about it and that's nice, but I don't think about it that much," Foss told Reuters.

CHINA
China's state-run media have developed an "insatiable appetite" for news about gays in the past two months, Singapore's *Straits Times* reported Jan. 27. It started in November when the *Huaxia Times* called China "half a heaven for homosexuals," the paper said. This month, the craze led *Modern Civilization Pictorial*, published by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, to devote an entire issue to homosexuality. A gay cover story also appears in February's *City Weekend* magazine. The Ministry of Public Health says China has 30 million to 40 million gay men. It has no estimate of the lesbian population. Activists speculate the new openness flows

from the government's desire to prevent an explosion of HIV infection among gay men, who are believed to make up only a small percentage of Chinese AIDS cases.

JAPAN
The more than 200 small gay bars in Tokyo's Shinjuku 2-chome neighborhood have seen a drop-off in customers, in part because it's easier and cheaper to make new friends online, *Japan Times* reported Jan. 28. "Today, gays can meet friends or sex partners through Internet sites quickly and for free," said Bungaku Ito, editor of the gay magazine *Barazoku*. "They no longer need to bother to come all the way to 2-chome and pay for drinks just to meet people."


Shinjuku 2-chome also is losing customers to hundreds of small gay bars that have opened up in nightlife areas that previously were patronized only by straight people, *Japan Times* said. Ito said the number of personal ads in his magazine has plummeted, too, from about 1,000 a month to 200.

AUSTRALIA
The top cop in the Australian state of Victoria participated in Melbourne's seventh Gay Pride parade Jan. 20. The march included about 70 contingents and was watched by 50,000 spectators. Christine Nixon was the first police commissioner in Australian history to join a Gay Pride parade. Assistant Commissioner Noel Asby and about 50 officers and recruits also marched. Nixon and the other officers were denounced by the opposition National Party and some callers to radio talk shows. "It is inappropriate for the chief commissioner to take part in this march, and it is also wrong for police officers to be paid to march in their uniforms," opposition leader Denis Naphine said.

Nixon told the *Sunday Age*: "It is about Victoria Police showing that they are committed to the whole community.... I think it is probably a break from previous tradition, but I think it is an important step."




Christine Nixon



Celia Lyon
503-495-5774
celialyon@aol.com

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