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## WORLD news



Bruce Smyth, Jim Deva and Janine Fuller are suing Canada Customs for confiscating "obscene and dehumanizing" comic books

### CANADA

Vancouver's gay Little Sister's Book and Art Emporium is suing Canada Customs for confiscating U.S. comic books showing fisting and golden showers, *Xtra!* reported. Border officials believe the drawings in the *Meatmen* publications are obscene and dehumanizing.

"Sexual fantasy is on trial," store owner Jim Deva said. "Do they have the right to censor sexual fantasy? They're beautiful books, wonderfully done and just sexual in nature. But [Customs] obviously think they've got something up their sleeves. They've got unlimited funds, and they're going ahead with this."

### UNITED KINGDOM

Manchester, London and Brighton, England, are reporting syphilis outbreaks, with most of the cases occurring among young gay and bi men. Until recently, the disease had all but disappeared from the nation.

Manchester's outbreak is the worst, with 160 new cases in a time period that normally would have seen only one or two. Three-fourths of them were gay or bi men mostly in their 20s or 30s.

According to a report in the *Guardian*, 25 percent of them had other sexually transmitted diseases and about 20 percent also knew they were HIV-positive. Health officials say the men caught syphilis probably because they are bored with safe sex, mistakenly believe HIV is now curable or are too young to have seen friends die of AIDS.

The Terrence Higgins Trust, Britain's largest AIDS charity, is launching a campaign against U.S. immigration rules restricting the entry of HIV-positive foreign visitors. The group is urging supporters to ask their member of Parliament to raise the issue with the U.K. government and the U.S. ambassador to the United Kingdom.

"People with HIV still experience unacceptable discrimination when they seek to enter the U.S.A.," the trust said. "They are faced with a

choice of (1) making a false declaration, which means abandoning or hiding their combination therapy or smuggling it into the U.S., with all the risks that this involves to their health as a result of disruption of their treatment, or (2) obtaining a special waiver, secured in their passport, which breaches their confidentiality but also leaves them open to continuing discrimination by U.S. immigration officials. This is particularly absurd because HIV is actually far more prevalent within the U.S. than Europe. There is no possible motivation other than simple prejudice for this discriminatory policy."

Now is a good time to resume campaigning on the issue because "several of the original perpetrators of the U.S. legislation are retiring [from Congress and] the U.S. is eager to rebuild tourism in the wake of Sept. 11."

The trust also said ample evidence indicates "the great majority of people with HIV do not use the visa waiver scheme when they visit the U.S." Those who do use it frequently report problems, the organization said.

"From the relatively small number of people with HIV who do apply for waivers, THT has heard a disproportionate number of bad experiences," the trust said. "These range from hostile or prejudiced treatment, to unreasonable delays causing people to miss expensive flights, to intrusive questioning on production of the waiver at point of entry and even temporary detention."

### SOUTH AFRICA

A doctor in Nelspruit was fired Feb. 22 for providing anti-HIV drugs to rape victims.

Despite international ridicule, the South African government opposes distribution of the drugs, saying that they are toxic and that HIV has not been proven to cause AIDS. Thys von Mollendorff, superintendent at Rob Ferreira Hospital, was charged with "gross insubordination" for giving rape victims Nevirapine, which can prevent HIV transmission in utero.

Many critics say the government withholds the drugs because it does not want to spend the money. Some wonder whether officials see AIDS as a solution to the problem of the nation's economic output not being able to support the current population.

One in nine of South Africa's 43 million citizens is thought to be HIV-positive. Anti-HIV drugs sometimes have a host of serious side effects, but AIDS scientists and doctors worldwide agree these problems are less grave than HIV infection itself.

Government health officials also have moved to close rape centers that provide victims with free medicine to reduce the risk of AIDS.

"It's ridiculous," said Barbara Kenyon, founder of the Greater Nelspruit Rape Intervention Program. "It's cheaper to prevent HIV than to treat it."

### FRANCE

The European Court of Human Rights ruled Feb. 26 that France did not discriminate against a gay teacher who was not allowed to adopt a child.

Officials had deemed Philippe Frette's "lifestyle" to be "inappropriate." His lawyers argued that rulings within France had violated his rights to nondiscrimination and respect for his personal and family life as guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights.



Barbara Kenyon