

**WORLD news**

receive newly available gay-themed films before independent stores do.

"The business model of the small gay and lesbian bookstores has become outdated," he told *Fugues*. "Gay and lesbian culture is now present everywhere and available in regular stores, and gay men and lesbians are not buying only gay products."



Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien has called for hearings on same-sex marriage

In the wake of a court ruling ordering Canada to let same-sex couples marry, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien announced Aug. 7 that a parliamentary committee will hold national hearings on the issue.

"It's a social problem which needs attention at this time, and we want to have a committee to consult Canadians and experts," he said. "I could decide tomorrow, but there is a process in place. It's an extremely complex issue."

The Justice Ministry is appealing the July 12 ruling by the Ontario Superior Court, which said not letting same-sex couples marry violates the nation's Charter of Rights and Freedoms. As matters stand now, the decision will become law July 12, 2004, if the federal Parliament has not legalized same-sex marriage by that date.

The ruling came in the case of two couples who wed at the gay Metropolitan Community Church via the process of reading banns—asking in church on three Sundays if anyone objects to the marriage, which is a legal way to marry in Ontario. They were given regular marriage certificates by pastor Brent Hawkes, but provincial officials later refused to register the documents.

**LEBANON**

A lesbian couple have been arrested for practicing "unnatural sexual relations," the *Lebanese Daily Star* reported Aug. 23.

They were caught in what the newspaper called "*flagrante delicto*" when police broke into their house to recover money and jewelry that one of the women's mothers had accused them of stealing. Article 534 of Lebanon's penal code punishes sexual relations "contradicting the laws of nature" with up to a year in prison.

**UNITED KINGDOM**

Domestic partners of gay and unmarried members of Britain's Parliament are expected to receive free spousal travel vouchers between London and their home districts under new rules announced Aug. 16. Plans to extend the first-class benefits were unveiled by the speaker of the House of Commons.

**NEW ZEALAND**

An openly gay member of Parliament will be given a Cabinet appointment, news agencies reported Aug. 12. Chris Carter, who represents an Auckland district for the Labor Party, will be the first openly gay member of the federal government Cabinet.

"I'm looking forward to representing the diversity of New Zealand," he told the New Zealand Press Agency. "I'd like to be defined by my efficiency, not my sexuality."

**SOUTH AFRICA**

Gay bars in Johannesburg have seen a dramatic increase in patrons' drinks being spiked with the date-rape drug GHB in recent weeks, [www.q.co.za](http://www.q.co.za) reports.

The drug also is known locally as "G, Liquid X, Liquid E, GHB and Gamma-oh," the report said. The Web site urged readers to never leave their drinks unattended, to drink only from containers they saw being opened, to keep an eye on friends and to seek immediate medical assistance at the first signs of having been drugged.

A new South African Web site lists allegedly homophobic public figures, institutions and companies, the SAPA news agency reported Aug. 3.

Among the first 34 entries are a life insurance company that refused to pay benefits to a lesbian's partner, an anti-gay church and the current and former premiers of the Western Cape province, where Cape Town is located. "We will not be silenced," said activist Juan Duval Uys, a spokesman for the project.



Dutch queers celebrate Aug. 3 in Amsterdam

**THE NETHERLANDS**

Some 75 boat-floats turned out for Amsterdam's annual Gay Pride parade Aug. 3 on the city's canals.

Israeli and Palestinian gays entered a boat for the first time. Another float featured "Marlene Dietrich" in a black bodice and fishnet stockings accompanied by studly men in top hats, tails and white gloves, Reuters reported.

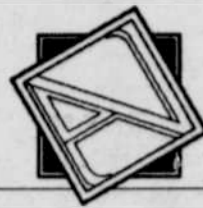
**SOUTH KOREA**

Several groups have formed the umbrella organization Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Korea, the *Korea Times* reported July 26.

"The landscape surrounding the issue has changed so much over the last few years, but the movement has not. So we felt the need for a turning point, with an emphasis on priorities," secretary Kim Byung-suk said.

Founding members include the gay groups Chingusai and Kirikiri and the Web sites Another Love and Safe Zone. South Korea heavily censors gay Web sites. **J**

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.



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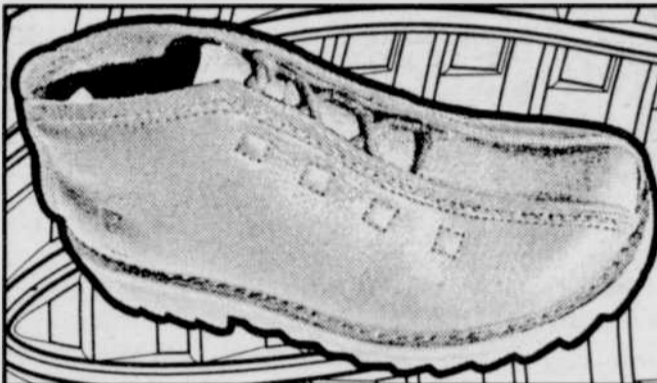


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