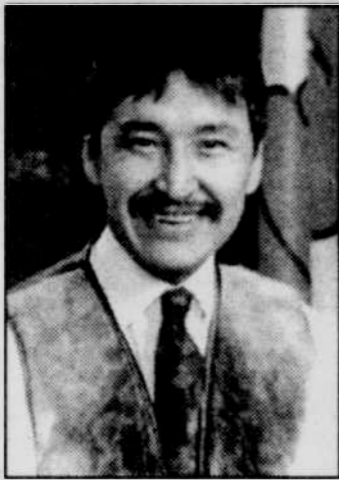


WORLD news

"I believe our inmates that I know of are all heterosexual people, and I haven't heard of any same-sex relations to date, so if we did see any, condoms could be readily available," Premier Paul Okalik said.



Paul Okalik

AIDS activists responded by pointing out that Nunavut likely does have gay prisoners and that straight men often have sex with each other in gender-segregated environments. Nunavut was created in a split from the Northwest Territories in 1999.

COLOMBIA

A vote is expected shortly on a gay partnership bill in Colombia's Senate.

Several prominent politicians and conservative public figures, including former President Julio Cesar Turbay Ayala, have denounced the measure. A full-page ad in the daily *El Espectador* newspaper said passage of the bill would increase the number of AIDS cases by condoning unnatural homosexual coupling and lead to the downfall of society, as in ancient Rome.

"The ad was so preposterous...that the general reaction among the public...and journalists has been very supportive" of the bill, said Andres Duque, a *New Yorker* who hails from Colombia and is assisting activists there. "I've tried to get supporting statements from Colombian stars such as Shakira, Juanes and Carlos Vives, but their managers are telling them to stay mum."



A full-page ad in the daily *El Espectador* newspaper denounced Colombia's gay partnership bill

Two lesbians jailed in separate Colombian prisons were granted conjugal visitation rights Nov. 21 in Manizales.

Marta Alvarez had been fighting for visits with her lover since 1998. In his ruling, a local judge said not letting the women visit each other violated their rights to equality, privacy and free development of their personalities, according to the International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission.

THE NETHERLANDS

The man accused of killing Dutch gay politician Pim Fortuyn confessed Nov. 23.

Volkert van der Graaf, an animal rights activist, told police Fortuyn was a menace to society because of his anti-immigration stance and prejudice against Muslims, who Fortuyn believed have not integrated into Dutch society. Fortuyn, who might have had enough support to become prime minister, headed the new party Pim Fortuyn's List, which snagged 26 of Parliament's 150 seats nine days after the May 6 assassination, coming in second behind the Christian Democrats, who won 43 seats.

In addition to stemming immigration, the party stood for a crackdown on crime and increased attention to problem areas such as hospital waiting lists, train delays and education funding. The List joined a three-way center-right governing coalition, but the parties proved unable to work together and the Cabinet fell in October, becoming the shortest-lived Dutch government in 50 years.

Gay tourism to Amsterdam has dropped at least 35 percent in the past five years because the city has become too bourgeois, square, frumpy, orderly and calm, Gay Business Amsterdam said Nov. 24. The group told the French Press Agency that visitors now prefer Berlin, London, Paris and Barcelona, Spain.

Tourist officials need to go beyond promoting tulips and windmills if they want gay people to return, spokesman Siep de Haan said. "They should try to present more of the sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll image."

UNITED KINGDOM

Despite having done so as a regional archbishop, the incoming Archbishop of Canterbury no longer will ordain sexually active gay people, according to the *Church Times*. Anglican Church policy prohibits such ordinations, and Rowan Williams has faced aggressive criticism for his previous actions since being selected.

"The church has made its views clear on this," he said Nov. 28. "I don't think I would [ordain] at the moment. It is never at the end of the day the

sole decision of the bishop.... It becomes a matter not just of my personal view but for the discernment of the church, [but] I would like the church not to stop thinking about the question."

Britain's Crown Prosecution Service announced Nov. 28 that it will begin aggressive prosecution of homophobic and transphobic crimes. These are "particularly serious because they are motivated by prejudice, discrimination and hate and undermine people's right to feel safe in their sexual orientation and gender," the agency said.

The crimes are defined as "any incident which is perceived to be homophobic or transphobic by the victim or any other person." A recent British survey found that 38 percent of sexual minority people experienced at least one homophobic incident in the previous 12 months.

BELGIUM

Belgium's Senate approved what news agencies called "gay marriage" Nov. 27 by a vote of 46-15 with four abstentions. The bill now moves to the lower house.

The legislation reportedly does not include adoption rights or joint parental rights, making Belgium's proposal similar to the registered partnership and civil union laws that have been enacted in numerous European nations. Only the Netherlands lets gay people—including foreign residents—get married under the same laws as opposite-sex couples. [E]

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.

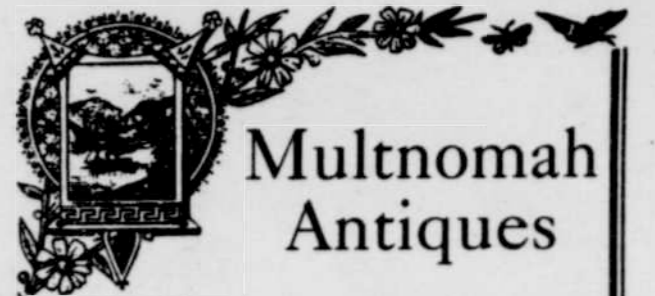
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