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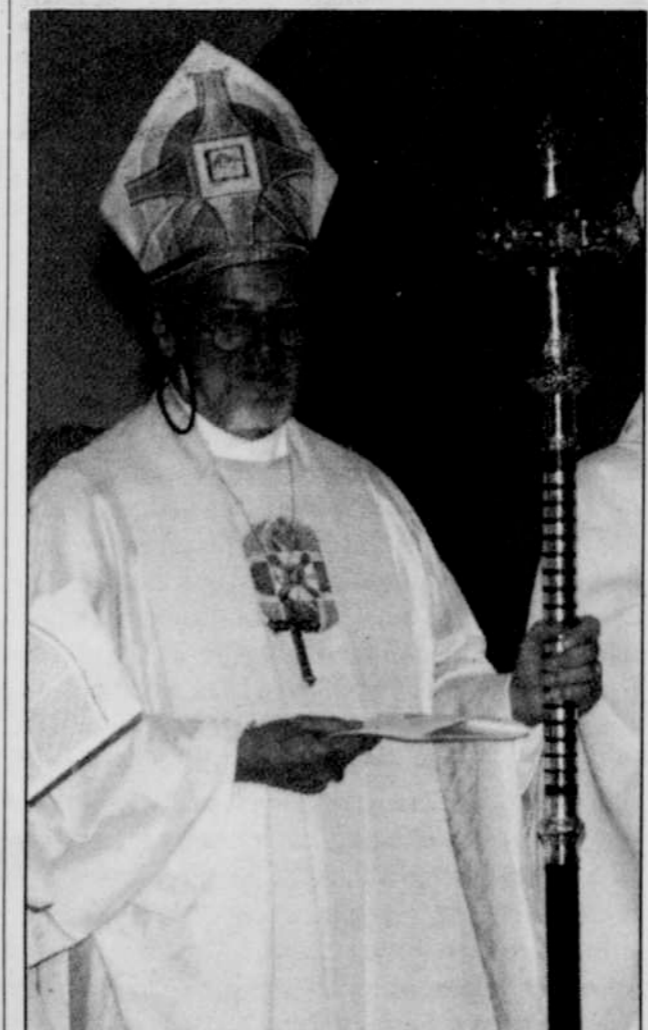
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WORLD news

SWITZERLAND

Switzerland's Council of States (Senate) and National Council (House of Representatives) have voted, in principle, for a same-sex partnership registration measure that would extend some marriage rights to gay couples, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* reported June 3.

The legislation next returns to the National Council to resolve minor differences between the two bodies' versions of the bill. The proposed law would extend spousal rights in areas such as kinship, inheritance, pensions, taxes and health insurance but not in the areas of adoption, fertility treatment or a common surname, the report said.



Archbishop Andrew Hutchison delayed a vote on blessing same-sex unions to prevent "a major schism" in Canada's Anglican church

CANADA

The leaders of Canada's Anglican church, meeting June 3 in Ontario, affirmed "the integrity and sanctity of committed adult same-sex relationships" but delayed voting on a proposal to bless gay unions. Liberal Archbishop Andrew Hutchison of Montreal, who was elected the new head of the Canadian church, said postponing the vote on blessings until 2007 could prevent "a major schism in the life of the church."

About 58 percent of Canadians think homophobia is as bad as racism or anti-Semitism, a new Leger Marketing poll has found.

About 5 percent say it's worse, while 24 percent believe it's not as bad. The remainder of those surveyed had no opinion. British Columbians are most likely to say homophobia is equally nasty (65 percent); Albertans are least likely (47 percent).

Pollsters asked, "Personally, do you think that being homophobic is worse than being racist or anti-Semitic, as bad as being racist or anti-Semitic, or not as bad as being racist or anti-Semitic?" About 1,500 people were questioned, and the results are supposed to be accurate within 2.6 percentage points 19 times out of 20.

The survey also found that 43 percent of Canadians approve of same-sex marriage and that 47 percent do not, the *Globe and Mail* newspaper reported. Quebecers are most receptive (51 percent) and Albertans least supportive (36 percent).

Courts have given gay couples access to

full marriage in British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec, and the federal government plans to open up the institution nationwide. Alberta Premier Ralph Klein has promised an all-out fight to prevent same-sex marriage in his province.

On another matter, 74 percent of respondents said gays should have the same rights as straight people, 20 percent support gays having fewer rights, and 6 percent had no opinion.

UNITED KINGDOM

A higher percentage of gay men are barebacking in London than was the case in 1996, and up to a third of them are HIV-positive and don't know it, *The Independent* reported June 1.

Those are the results of a study of (and saliva samples from) men who frequent gay bars, clubs and saunas. The research—conducted by the Royal Free and University College Medical School and the Central Public Health Laboratory—was written up in the June 1 issue of the journal *Sexually Transmitted Infections*.

More than 8,000 men were questioned, and 1,206 were tested anonymously for HIV via a saliva test. About 42 percent admitted to engaging in unsafe sex, compared with 30 percent in 1996.

A total of 132 of the men who gave saliva samples were HIV-positive; 43 of them were unaware of their infection. HIV cases increased about 20 percent in England and Wales in 2003 compared with 2002.

England's Roman Catholic Church broke with the Vatican and endorsed the idea of legal recognition of same-sex relationships May 26.

In a 103-page document detailing the views of the church in England and Wales on a number of moral and controversial issues, church head Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor and the other bishops stated: "It must be quite clear that a homosexual orientation must never be considered sinful or evil in itself.... It may be necessary...to remedy by law unjust situations in which the bonds of friendship are improperly disregarded (for instance, being excluded from appropriate consultation regarding medical care or from funeral arrangements). In such cases the right to justice is founded on the dignity of every human being and citizenship and not on sexual activity or orientation."

The Vatican, on the other hand, recently declared: "Those who would move from tolerance to the legitimization of specific rights for cohabiting homosexual persons need to be reminded that the approval or legalization of evil is something far different from the toleration of evil. When legislation in favor of the recognition of homosexual unions is proposed for the first time in a legislative assembly, the Catholic lawmaker has a moral duty to express his opposition clearly and publicly and to vote against it. To vote in favor of a law so harmful to the common good is gravely immoral."

Neither the Vatican nor the English bishops approve of gay sex, which is a "mortal sin" that condemns one's "soul" to "hell."

JAMAICA

Amnesty International launched an urgent campaign June 1 asking people to write Jamaican Prime Minister P.J. Patterson insisting he protect gays from violence and legalize gay sex.

"Amnesty International has received many reports of vigilante action against gay people...and of ill treatment or torture by the police," the group said. "Gay men and women have been beaten, cut, burned, raped and shot on account of their sexuality. Once a person's homosexuality becomes known to family or community, they are frequently at risk."