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Britain to Count Queers

The British government will count gays, lesbians and bisexuals in a survey by the Office for National Statistics, *The Times* reported.

The decision follows lobbying by gay groups and government officials who need the information to adequately provide services.

"LGB individuals and the community as a whole have historically suffered discrimination, and there are concerns that this group is currently ignored in terms of policy and service provision," the office said.

Current government estimates are that 6 percent of the population is gay, lesbian or bisexual.

Officials have hesitated to ask about sexual orientation in the census—as opposed to in a survey—because, said census coordinator Joy Dobbs, "We're still not sure what it is we are trying to measure—is it behavior, inclination, identity, lifestyle?"

So the research will, instead, likely be part of the General Household Survey, which targets 20,000 homes nationwide.

Meanwhile, the 2011 census will count people who have entered into a same-sex civil partnership or marriage, officials said.

Partnership Bill Introduced in Croatia

Debate on a bill to expand the rights of same-sex couples is under way in Croatia's Parliament.

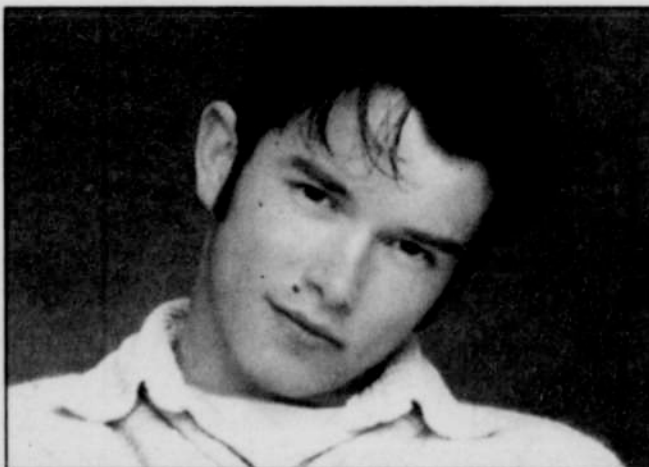
In response to demands by the gay organizations Iskorak and Kontra, gay-supportive legislators hope to beef up the existing Law on Same-Sex Unions to reduce the number of areas in which it provides fewer rights than marriage.

Gay activists have denounced the current law as self-contradictory, saying it both prohibits anti-gay discrimination and embodies the discrimination "it was designed to prevent, through a narrow, almost nonexistent scope of rights...for same-sex partnerships."

Gay Singer 'Marries'

Steven Gately, a singer in the defunct British boy band Boyzone, "married" partner Andy Cowles on March 19 in London, under the United Kingdom's Civil Partnership Act.

The ceremony was held at the Goring Hotel near Buckingham Palace. In the 1990s, Boyzone sold more than 10 million records and had six No. 1 singles in the United Kingdom.



Boyzone singer Steven Gately registered with Andy Cowles under the United Kingdom's Civil Partnership Act.

British Gay Celebrity Ties the Knot

European Parliament member and former British television star Michael Cashman "married" his partner of 23 years, Paul Cottingham, March 11 in London under the United Kingdom's Civil



Michael Cashman (right, with *Bent* co-star Sir Ian McKellen) "married" his partner of 23 years.

Partnership Act, which provides the rights and obligations of marriage.

Cashman starred in the series *EastEnders* before being elected to the Euro Parliament.

Numerous celebrities attended the ceremony, including *EastEnders* stars Barbara Windsor and Michelle Collins, *Coronation Street* actress Helen Worth, *The Bill* star Trudy Goodwin, gay actor Sir Ian McKellen, *Star Trek's* Patrick Stewart and Cherie Blair, wife of Prime Minister Tony Blair.

While on *EastEnders*, Cashman became a gay activist, chairing the national gay lobby group Stonewall.

"I never thought that this would happen in my lifetime," he told *Sentinel Sunday*. "It is a huge step, and I am so proud."

U.K. Navy: The Closet Is Unhealthy

It's a good thing that gays in the United Kingdom's Royal Navy can be out of the closet now, personnel chief Vice Admiral Adrian Johns said March 16.

Leading a "secret life [is] an unhealthy way to be...in the armed services," he said, according to *The Daily Telegraph*. "Those individuals need nurturing so that they give of their best. Our mission is to break down barriers of discrimination, prejudice, fear and misunderstanding."

Johns spoke at a London conference on gays in the workplace organized by the gay lobby group Stonewall. The armed forces dropped its gay ban in 2000.

Czech Parliament Overrides Veto of Partnership Law

In a surprising move, the Czech Republic's Chamber of Deputies overrode President Vaclav Klaus' veto of a same-sex partnership bill March 15.

Klaus called the vote "a defeat for all of us who believe that the family in our society is fundamental, unique, unrivaled."

Prime Minister Jiri Paroubek, on the other hand, said legislators were "liberating one minority of...our fellow citizens."

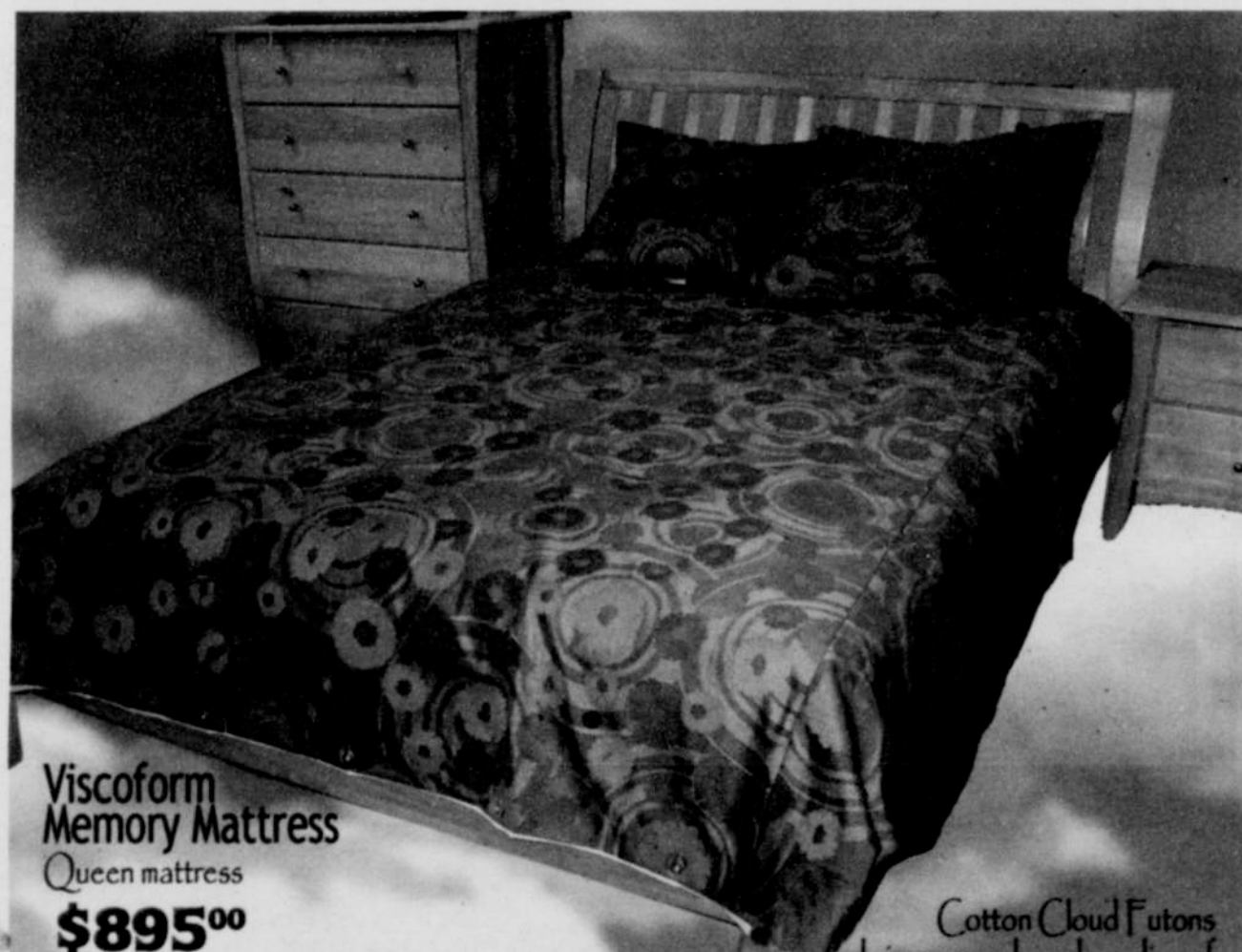
The bill passed 101-76—the minimum needed for an override in the 200-seat chamber. The original measure had passed 86-53.

In his February veto message, Klaus had argued that such a law should be approved by a majority of legislators rather than a majority of those present for the vote. He also said gay unions undermine traditional values.

Paroubek later denounced Klaus as "unable to overcome his prejudices."

In a press statement, the Gay Initiative in the Czech Republic commented, "The public and the lawmakers have sent out the clear signal to the world: The Czech Republic has found its place among the democratic countries of the world, and it considers its citizens from [the] gay and lesbian minority as the equal to others."

A recent poll found that 62 percent of Czechs support same-sex registered partnership.



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