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Sunday, Jan. 28, 2007
10:25 a.m.

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world

EUROPE

Swedish Church to Bless Gay Unions

Sweden's dominant Lutheran Church announced Dec. 6 that it will offer blessings of same-sex registered partnerships starting in January.

Individual priests will be permitted to opt out of performing the ceremonies, but in such cases the local church will be responsible for finding another priest to perform the task. Sweden's 1995 partnership law grants registered couples all rights and obligations of marriage.

Scotland OKs Gay Adoption

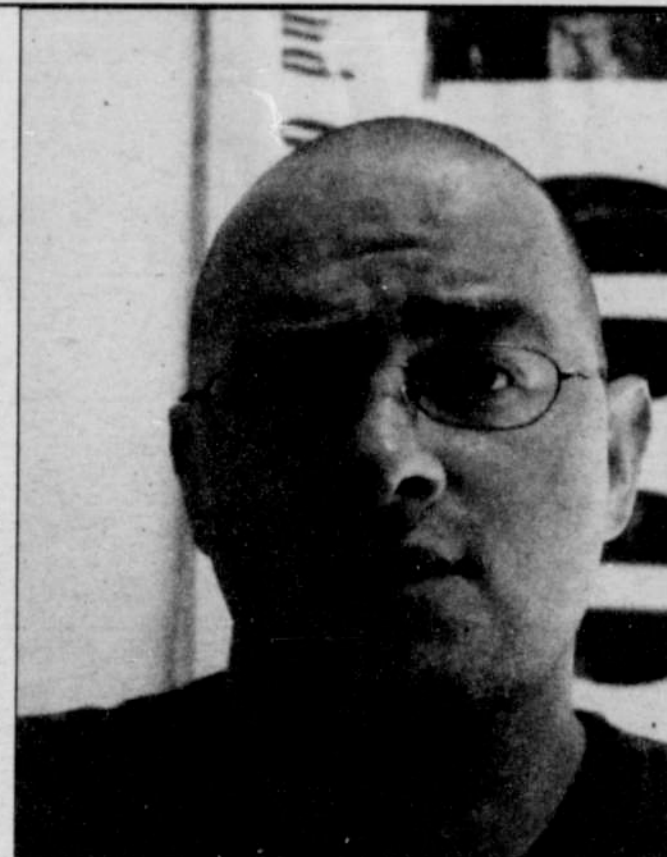
Scotland's Parliament legalized adoption by same-sex couples Dec. 7. The vote was 101-6 with six abstentions.

An attempt to exempt faith-based adoption agencies from having to consider same-sex couples was defeated. Lawmakers attempted to appease religious opponents by adding a clause requiring that those who adopt have formed "a stable family unit," *The Scotsman* newspaper said.

Italy to Introduce Civil Union Legislation

Italy's government will introduce a bill by the end of January to extend some of the rights of marriage to same-sex and other unmarried couples.

The civil union measure is expected to cover areas such as health insurance, health care decisions, hospital and prison visitation, inheritance, immigration, transfer of leases and alimony. Prime Minister Romano Prodi told local media that such a law will be a "fundamental step forward."



Gay activist and Colombian native Andrés Duque expressed incredible disappointment over the legislature's decision to kill a civil union bill.

AMERICAS

Colombian Civil Union Bill Dies

A civil union bill that had passed Colombia's Senate died Dec. 20 in the House of Representatives.

According to the Bogotá daily *El Tiempo*, "Up until the last moment of the [2006] legislature, [the bill] was on the agenda, and when it came time to vote...the quorum disintegrated."

New York City activist Andrés Duque, a native of the South American nation, explained: "The bill was actually brought to the floor for a vote, but some cowardly legislators jumped up and left their seats. Incredibly disappointing if not necessarily surprising."

The bill passed the Senate in October by a 48-40 vote. It would have set up a registration mechanism and granted registered couples marriage rights in the areas of social security, health benefits, pensions and joint ownership of property.

Canada Will Not Revisit Same-Sex Marriage

Canada's House of Commons voted 175-123 on Dec. 7 not to reconsider its 2005 legalization of same-sex marriage.

A motion put forward by the ruling Conservatives asked if MPs wanted to see introduction of "legislation to restore the traditional definition of marriage without affecting civil unions and while respecting existing same-sex marriages."

The move was seen as a fulfillment of a campaign promise by Prime Minister Stephen Harper to revisit the matter. It was widely expected to fail.

"We made a promise to have a free vote on this issue, we kept that promise, and obviously the vote was decisive, and obviously we'll accept the democratic result of the people's representatives," Harper told reporters. "I don't see reopening this question in the future."

Most Liberals, 12 Conservatives and all members of the New Democratic Party and the Bloc Québécois voted against the measure. Among the Conservative opponents were Cabinet members John Baird, Lawrence Cannon, David Emerson, Peter MacKay, Jim Prentice and Josée Verner.

There have been more than 12,000 same-sex marriages in Canada since 2003, when courts in individual provinces began legalizing them.

Foreigners are welcome to go get married in Canada, and there is no waiting period after acquiring a license except in Quebec, which has a 20-day delay that can be waived if advance arrangements are made with the person who will conduct the wedding.

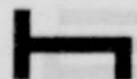
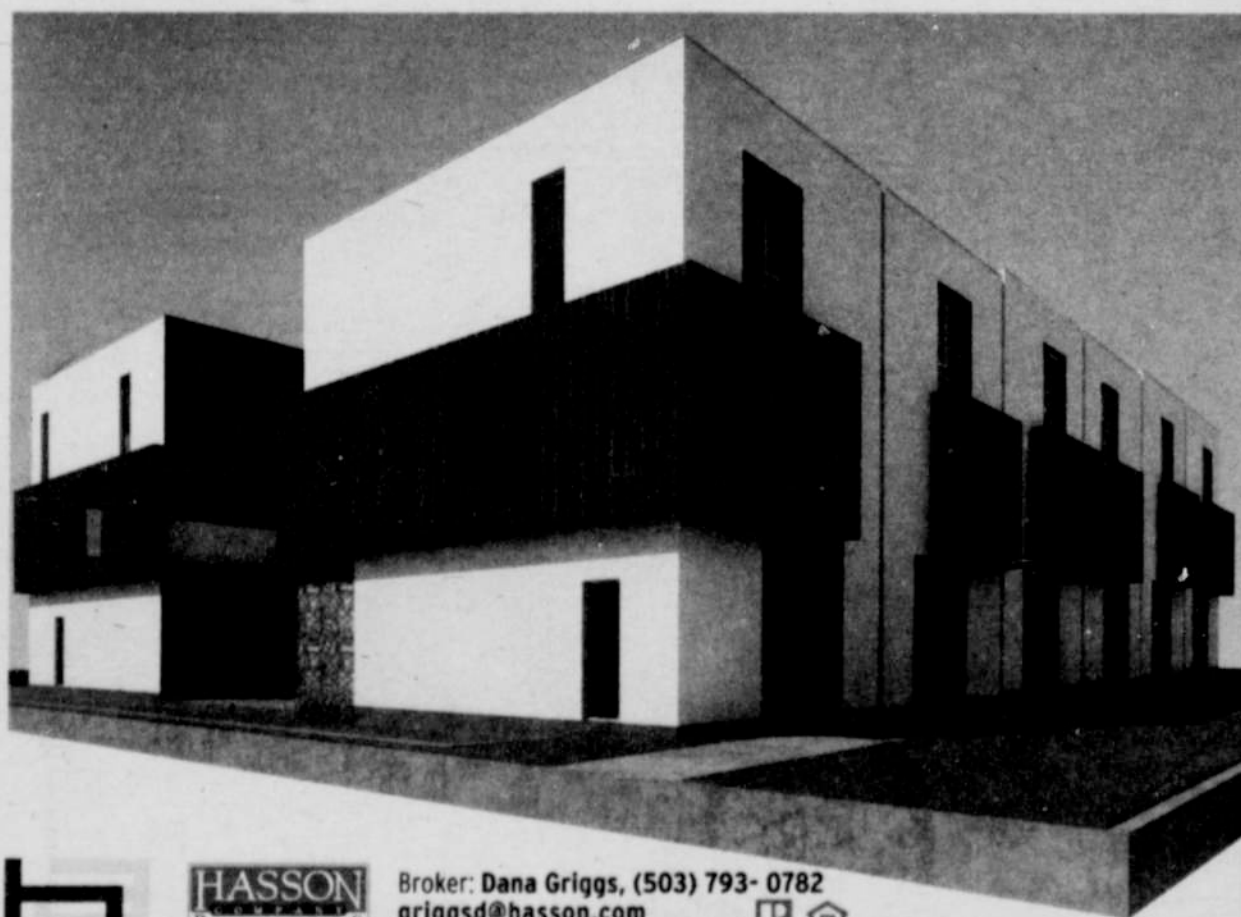
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