

the rest of our world

Kraft: The Right Thing to Do
Chicago – According to an internal email obtained by *Outsports*, the executive Vice President of Kraft Foods responded to news of a boycott by the religious right by saying it would stand by its support for the 2006 Gay Games in Chicago.

“The true test of any commitment is how you respond when challenged.” Marc Firestone wrote. “Kraft is experiencing this to a degree right now, as a result of our decision to be one of several contributors to the 2006 Gay Games in Chicago.”

The email continued, “Diversity makes us a stronger company and connects us with the diversity that exists among the consumers who buy our products. ... We respect diversity of ethnicity, gender, experience, background, personal style and yes, sexual orientation and gender identity.”

He concluded, “It’s easy to say you support a concept or a principle when nobody objects. The real test of commitment is how one reacts when there are those who disagree. I hope you share my view that our company has taken the right stand on diversity, including its contribution to the 2006 Gay Games in Chicago.”

TX Gov: Gay Vets Can Leave
Austin – Texas Gov. Rick Perry suggested last month that gay veterans unhappy with a proposed anti-gay constitutional amendment should move elsewhere.

“I’m going to say Texas has made a decision on marriage and if there’s a state with more lenient views than Texas, then maybe that’s where they should live,” reported the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*.

Perry was responding during a news conference to a question about what he would tell gay war veterans returning from Iraq.

Along with calls for an apology by the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network and the Lesbian & Gay Rights Lobby of Texas, Col. Paul W. Dodd, a retired Army Chaplain, declared, “Governor Perry’s remarks were outrageous and offensive. It is past time that those who fight for freedom abroad be afforded those same liberties here at home,” Dodd said.

Romanian Pride

Bucharest – According to a press release from the Universal Fellowship of the Metropolitan Community Church, devoted to inclusion of LGBT people, Rev. Elder Diane Fisher witnessed

Romania’s first-ever Gay Rights March on Saturday, May 28.

“The March almost didn’t take place. The Mayor of Bucharest refused to provide parade permits. The police chief refused to guarantee the safety of marchers, threatening to use the police to “punish” those who did march. The national government of Romania opposed the march, as did the powerful Orthodox Church of Romania.

“But activists around the world went into action - e-mailing and faxing the Mayor of Bucharest and the President of Romania. Within days, the President called on city officials to work with LGBT groups - and the Mayor and police agreed to work with the march organizers.

“Approximately 500 LGBT people took to the streets of Bucharest and made history as they led Romania’s first-ever Gay Rights March.”

Catholic School: Don’t Act Gay

Costa Mesa, CA – A Catholic school that accepts students who have gay parents now says it expects those parents not to present themselves as couples at official school functions. The school is run by a conservative religious order, and Orange County Diocesan officials have refused to intervene, according to a report from the *Los Angeles Times*.

In January, officials at Costa Mesa’s St. John the Baptist School adopted new admission guidelines that require parents to display “appropriate conduct, in order to support the school’s mission and provide positive role models to our students.” The guidelines were in a memo sent to teachers.

“Practically speaking this means: The children adopted by a same-sex couple” may enroll “on the condition that the same-sex couple agree not to present themselves as a couple at school functions,” the *Times* quoted the memo.

The report also says that the 31-year veteran principal, Sister Mary Vianney, has not had her contract renewed for the fall after raising objections to the guidelines.

WV Lesbian Mom Keeps Custody

Charleston, WV – The West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals has decided not to separate a five-year-old boy from his lesbian mother following the death of her partner, the child’s biological mother.

Tina Burch and her partner, Christina Smarr, decided to have a child together and agreed that

Smarr would carry the child. The couple raised the child and Burch’s biological daughter together as a family until Smarr was killed in an automobile accident in 2002.

Smarr’s parents sought custody of the little boy. The family court found Burch to be the child’s “psychological parent” and awarded custody to Burch with visitation rights for the grandparents.

The Circuit Court, an intermediate appeals court, reversed the trial judge’s ruling, removing the child from a parent he had lived with since birth and giving custody instead to his grandparents. The Supreme Court’s decision overturned that ruling.

Iowa Confirms Civil Divorce

Des Moines, IA – The Iowa Supreme Court chose not to interfere with a lower court’s ruling dissolving the civil union of a lesbian couple.

In December 2003, an Iowa court entered a decree dissolving the civil union of Kimberly Brown and Jennifer Perez. The court reasoned that it could dissolve the civil union under state law just as it could dissolve the relationships of cohabiting heterosexual couples.

The Iowa Supreme Court ruled that contrary to the claims of the parties seeking to interfere, the lower court’s decision to dissolve the civil union did not cause harm to the marriages of the petitioners and that they “have shown no legally recognized interest or personal stake in the underlying action.”

Similarly, the court ruled that the lower court’s decision did not harm the church, which had claimed that the decision would interfere with its teachings concerning marriage.

With regard to the legislators who had claimed that they had standing because it was their duty to preserve traditional marriage, the court ruled that, “It would be strange indeed and contrary to our notions of separation of powers if we were to recognize that legislators have standing to intervene in lawsuits just because they disagree with a court’s interpretation of a statute.”

Anti-Gay Polish Panic

Warsaw – The June “Equality Parade” to celebrate gay pride in Warsaw was banned by conservative mayor Lech Kaczynski, one of the country’s most popular politicians. He called the event “sexually obscene” and a “danger to public morality,” and asserted that its objective was to spread pornography and to hurt people’s religious feel-

ings, according to a report from *Gay Mundo*.

The mayor refused to meet with the parade organizers, the Campaign Against Homophobia. “I’m not willing to meet perverts,” he reportedly said and approved counter-demonstrations by the far-right League of Polish Families and the All Polish Youth for the same day and the same place.

Queer activists and their supporters staged a “Rally for Freedom” on May 11 to protest against the mayor’s suppression of the gay pride parade.

The banning of the march came a month after a gay and lesbian culture festival featuring a “March for Tolerance” in Cracow was attacked by skinhead youths wielding bottles, and throwing rocks, eggs, and acid into the crowd.

Gay Turk to Host Wrestling?

Ankara, Turkey – A gay singer has made a controversial bid to host the national tournament of one of Turkey’s oldest and most macho sports - male oil-wrestling, reports Kaos GL, a Turkish LGBT rights and news organization.

Fatih Urek, an openly gay singer who often appears on television and in the trendy bars of Istanbul, announced his intention to be a candidate for the host or “Aga” of the oil wrestling tournament held every summer at Kirkpinar in the northwest of the country.

The “Aga” wins the prestigious position by being the highest bidder in an auction. The event dates back to the 14th century and a legendary wrestling match to the death between two soldiers who were brothers. The wrestlers or “Pahlivan,” meaning ‘brave warrior’ in Persian, wear only leather shorts and cover themselves in olive oil to make balance more important than brute force.

Maine House Defeats Amendment

Augusta – By a vote of 88-56, the Maine House of Representatives defeated an effort to amend the state constitution to prohibit same-sex marriage. “I believe we should not scribble the graffiti of fear and discrimination into Maine’s most sacred political document,” the Democratic House Majority Leader said, as reported in the *Portland Press Herald*. A last-minute effort by proponents to limit the ban to marriages, not civil unions, only eroded existing support by conservatives.

Earlier this year, the Legislature passed a gay-rights law

that prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation in housing, lodging, employment, credit and education. Opponents of that law were trying to collect 50,519 voter signatures by June 28 to force a referendum.

N.Y. LCRs in GOP

Albany – A conservative state senator in New York was unsuccessful this week in trying to block appointing a Log Cabin Republicans member to the party’s powerful executive committee. Party leaders stressed the need for a “big tent” image heading into the 2006 election, and Patrick Murphy, an LCR member running for a City Council seat in New York City, called the attempt to exclude openly gay members “Paleozoic thinking,” out of step with the party. “The rest of the Republicans are looking out for gay and lesbian families,” Murphy said.

Germans Object to Pope’s Lecture

Berlin – The Green Party and Lesbian and Gay Federation have broken the silence in Germany among groups that disagree with the Pope’s stance on social issues, reports the *Deutsche Welle*. Green parliamentarian Volker Beck said that Pope Benedict XVI’s attitude toward homosexuality was “marked by theological mercilessness and the haughtiness of the Pharisees.”

Manfred Burns, spokesperson for the Lesbian and Gay Federation, called Benedict’s remarks on Monday an “insulting sermon of hate.”

Pope Benedict had told Italian Catholics that gay marriage involved a “trivialization of the human body.”

Until now, German political groups have been careful not to criticize Benedict XVI publicly. Although many Germans disagree with his stance on issues regarding sexuality, public sympathy has been strong for Benedict, the first German pope since 1523. ▼

Compiled this month by Euan Bear.