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TONGUE IN CHEEK BY KEVIN ISOM
Going Dutch

THERE'S A LOT MORE TO going Dutch than you might think. No, not making your guy or gal pay for his or her meal on your next hot date. I mean becoming Dutch, as in becoming a citizen of that fine nation. You know, the ultra-liberal country that's gotten all the ridiculous flack from those editorial cartoons depicted the Islamic prophet.

The Dutch have always been way ahead of the curve on a variety of issues. Like the oldest profession, for example. Yes, it might be nice if there were no such thing as prostitution, but no matter what efforts government has made at eradicating it, it has never gone away. So the Dutch made it legal — and regulated it. Problem solved. Same with marijuana. You can go into any smart café in Amsterdam and choose from a list of available blends. There is no black market for pot, because there is no need for it. Again, the Dutch simply made it legal and regulated it to solve the problem. And of course, the Dutch provided legal gay marriage to resolve the problem that committed gay and lesbian couples had in being deprived of the legal protections and recognition of legal marriage. Like I said — way ahead of the curve.

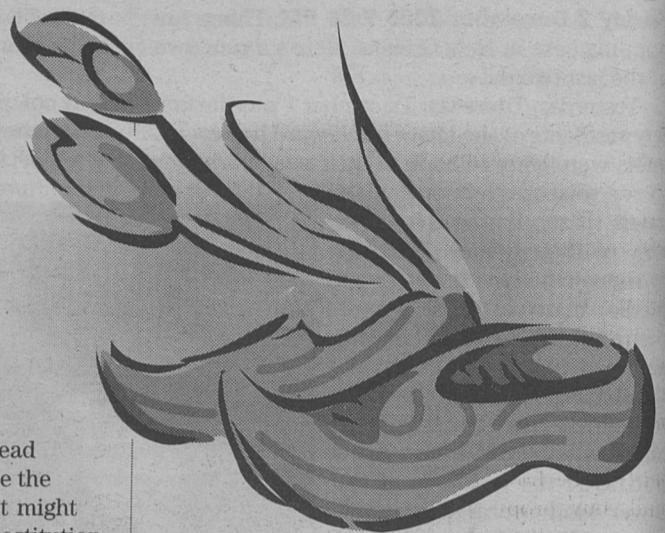
It seems that the Dutch have now become concerned about the increasing number of non-assimilated immigrants of the Muslim faith in their country — the kind of immigrants who come to the Netherlands and instead of saying "Wow! Look Ma! I can pay for sex, smoke pot, and legally marry Johan now!" prefer to riot over cartoons instead.

So the Netherlands is taking a radical approach. In order to become a citizen, you have to pass a tolerance test, a test that will determine whether a prospective immigrant is ready for liberal (and by liberal, I mean light years ahead of the radical right elements in our own country) Dutch culture.

What does that test consist of? A video too extreme for American broadcast TV. A video that would make Girls Gone Wild blush with embarrassment. A video that would make Pat Roberston predict another hurricane to be sent by God to devastate Florida.

According to the Associated Press, the images in the new video include two gay men kissing in a park and a topless woman coming out of the ocean water at the beach. If the prospective immigrant can't handle the truth, then there is no need to apply.

No other country has ever come up with a test like this one, which recently became required for all immigrants to the Netherlands, with certain exceptions. Not everyone in the Netherlands is thrilled, saying that the video might offend some Muslims, but according to the AP, the chairman of a national Muslim association actually defended the film, suggesting that since homo-



In order to become a citizen, one must pass a tolerance test that will determine whether the prospective immigrant is ready for liberal Dutch culture.

sexuality is a "reality," all immigrants should "embrace modernity."

Speaking from the perspective of my own reality, I say, "Go Dutch!" It's about time someone stood up and said, "Look, if you're wanting to come to a liberal democracy, then you have to accept that the mullahs will not rule, and that all people's rights are to be protected and cherished." Come to think of it, it's about time someone said that to Pat Robertson, Focus on the Family, and other Americans of their ilk.

And I wondered — can we give this test to George W. Bush, Bill Frist, Condoleeza Rice and (heck, why not?) Hillary Clinton to see if they would pass? Can we have that Dutch Muslim leader speak with them as well?

But back to the issue of immigrants, I think this test is a step in the right direction. I can think of nothing more dangerous to gay rights than religious radicals assuming political power, whether Muslim or Southern Baptist. While in our part of the world, God just sends the occasional hurricane or two, at Pat Robertson's request, just in time for Gay Days at Disney; in the Muslim part of the world, gays are imprisoned and killed. So if the Dutch are telling immigrants in this video "this is our culture — accept it or leave it," then they're on the right track, and they're taking another step to protect gays and lesbians in the Netherlands.

Now if we could just get them to send a copy to Pat Robertson. ▼

Columnist Kevin Isom is the author of *It Only Hurts When I Polka and Tongue in Cheek and Other Places*, available at bookstores and online. He may be reached at isomonline@aol.com or KevinIsom.com.