

SUGGESTED DRAFT REPLY

August , 1977

The Honourable M. O'Connell, PC, MP,
Room 448 North,
House of Commons,
Ottawa, Ontario,
K1A OA6

Dear Mr. O'Connell:

I have for reply your letter of June 17, 1977, with attachment, in which you have asked to be provided with some background information on the Pte. Barbara Thornborrow case and for a brief explanation of the general policies regarding homosexuals in the Canadian Forces.

The facts leading up to the decision in the Pte. Thornborrow case are relatively simple. Pte. Thornborrow was serving in Ottawa and living in single quarters in shared accommodation. Her roommate lodged a complaint concerning the presence of female visitors after she and Pte. Thornborrow had retired to their respective beds. The alleged nature of these visits and the activities which took place gave rise to a military police investigation into possible homosexual activities. After the commencement of the investigation Pte. Thornborrow requested her release to take effect in six months time, or sooner should she find employment. While it is unlikely that her release would have been authorized on those conditions, events overtook the processing of the release and, on it becoming public knowledge that she was a self-confessed homosexual, she was released compulsorily in accordance with Canadian Forces policy.

.../2

006126

AGC-1511_0001

- 2 -

With respect to the questions raised in your constituent's letter, the following comments might be useful. Your constituent has asked why Pte. Thornborrow's room was searched. In my opinion, this question is seeking information that should not be given by the Canadian Forces to your constituent without Pte. Thornborrow's consent. However, for your information, regulations issued pursuant to Section 12 of the National Defence Act do confer powers of search upon specially appointed military police in conducting investigations into actual or suspected offences involving members of the forces.

Your constituent has also asked "Is the army covering up when they say that she wanted to quit the forces?" As you can see from the above, she did apply for her release and it follows that the Canadian Forces was not "covering up". Parenthetically, I might add that, in the absence of any criminal conduct, the release of a homosexual is honourable in nature and, by and large, being compulsory, can entitle that person to greater release benefits than if such person was released on request.

With respect to the question as to how long people will continue to lose their jobs because of their sexual preferences, I can only speak in respect of the Canadian Forces. In this regard if a person's sexual preferences are such as to classify the person concerned as homosexual, then that person will be released in accordance with the policy reflected in the attached letter.

.../3

006127

AGC-1511_0002

- 3 -

Your constituent has also asked, "Why are homosexuals considered sick?" Whether certain segments of the population do in fact consider homosexuals to be sick, I am not in a position to say. Let me assure you, however, that the policy of the Canadian Forces is not founded on any such consideration.

I am not in a position to comment on your constituent's question as to when a law might be passed banning discrimination against homosexuals.

With respect to your request for a brief explanation of our policy, I am attaching a copy of this department's reply to a letter similar to that received by you. I believe the contents of this letter should provide the background necessary to assist you in replying to your constituent.

Yours sincerely,

M.G. Cloutier
Executive Assistant

Attach.

006128

AGC-1511_0003