

SUGGESTED DRAFT REPLY

August , 1977.

Mr. David Garmaise,
Coordinating Office,
National Gay Rights Coalition,
P.O. Box 2919, Station D,
Ottawa, Ontario,
K1P 5W9

Dear Mr. Garmaise:

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter of 13 May, 1977, in which you ask (a) what is the policy of the Armed Forces regarding the employment of homosexuals, and (b) does this policy differ according to whether the homosexual is open (or public) or whether he or she tries to hide his or her homosexuality.

It has been a long-standing policy of the Canadian Forces that homosexuals will not be enrolled in the Canadian Forces. Similarly, a serving member of the forces who is found to be a homosexual will be released. Experience has shown that this policy is the one least likely to give rise to serious problems for all concerned.

As you have indicated in your letter, social attitudes towards homosexuality have undergone some changes in recent years, as evidenced by amendments to the Criminal Code in 1969 to remove criminal sanctions against homosexual acts committed in private by consenting adults. Notwithstanding this trend, many behavioural patterns, including homosexuality, do affect

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the suitability of individuals for certain employment, particularly where the employer must provide total employment and social surroundings for his employees as is the case in the Canadian Forces. In addition, discipline requires a strict and autocratic rank structure in the Canadian Forces, which places leaders in a highly dominant position vis-a-vis their subordinates. Consequently, the Canadian Forces must avoid placing its members in any situation where behavioural patterns will cause additional social stress. In the military environment, where members are required to live in close proximity at work, in living quarters, and in social contact, e.g. in barracks, messes, ships, submarines, and isolated posts, this danger of additional social stress can be prevented only if the Canadian Forces have complete freedom in the selection and retention of its members. Experience had demonstrated that overt homosexuality, to mention but one of the behavioural patterns, leads to problems incompatible with the environment necessary to the efficient operation of the Canadian Forces.

The Canadian Forces also has responsibility to provide for the physical protection of its members and experience has also shown that, in a military environment, the overt homosexual is more vulnerable to assault or other abuse.

In addition to the foregoing points, security of information or materiel where homosexuals are involved is more vulnerable to

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compromise. There have been several incidents in our experience where one member has openly acknowledged his homosexuality but where his military partner(s) has not, and thus both remain open to blackmail. The normal conditions of service life make it necessary for members to share living quarters. When a member is required to share accommodation with a person who turns out to be a homosexual, that member may come under suspicion by his or her peers, or become subject to false accusations or threats which, in addition to security considerations, also raises severe morale problems (not to mention that person's right not to be exposed to this type of environment).

Homosexual conduct involving persons under the age of 21, even when committed in private and with consent, remains a criminal offence. Consequently, as a significant number of the members of the Canadian Forces, especially at the recruit level, are under the age of 21 years, the Canadian Forces has a duty to exercise care so as not to expose them to dangers in this regard which dangers, unfortunately, experience has shown to be real.

I trust that the above will help you to understand our policy in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Barney Danson

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