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The Citizen, Ottawa, Friday, May 28, 1982

# Lamontagne reverses stand on gays

By Iain Hunter  
Citizen national editor

Defence Minister Gilles Lamontagne has been convinced by senior officers that homosexuals should be kept out of the Armed Forces.

The minister horrified Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Ramsey Withers and other top brass at a Commons committee Tuesday by stating there should be no discrimination against homosexuals in the Forces.

He also said he wasn't aware any such discrimination existed.

Visibly surprised, Withers leaned over to conduct a whispered conversation with the minister. But Lamontagne appeared insistent.

"I think what I said stands," he declared.

But on Thursday the minister said the policy forbidding the "enrolment or retention" of homosexuals in the

Armed Forces — a policy he was not aware of until informed of it by Withers Tuesday — will continue.

Lamontagne argued some of the requirements of recruits, such as security, can't be fulfilled by homosexuals.

"If they can't fulfil some of the requirements, we can't accept them," he said.

NDP MP Svend Robinson, who raised the issue at Tuesday's defence committee hearing, said Thursday he will pursue it in the Commons before Parliament rises for the summer.

The Burnaby MP said the Human Rights Commission has recommended that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation be prohibited in all federal areas, and has reported it has met particular resistance from the Forces in trying to stamp out this form of discrimination.



Maurice Lamontagne  
Horrified Chief of Staff

*Let's see  
M. Robinson  
PHE note a  
PHE file*

*© DALS  
for info.*

M. NEUGEBAUER, LODG  
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The GAZETTE, Montreal, Friday, May 28, 1982

# End archaic discrimination

What Defence Minister Gilles Lamontagne said the first time was what he, and the armed forces, should say all the time: There should be no discrimination against homosexuals joining the military.

That's the sensible policy Mr. Lamontagne espoused on Tuesday before the Commons defence committee. But then his generals informed him that in fact homosexuals are banned. Mr. Lamontagne quickly backtracked and told a reporter that "homosexuals can't fulfill some of the requirements that are asked (of) a recruit — for example, security."

Nonsense. In the days when homosexuality was illegal and every practising homo-

sexual was thus a potential target of blackmail, that reasoning made some sense. It makes absolutely none today, when homosexuality is permitted under the law and when it is sufficiently publicly accepted for great numbers of homosexuals to have "come out of the closet."

Some homosexuals may still be security risks, just as some heterosexuals are. Some may fail to meet other criteria of the armed forces, just as some heterosexuals do. But there is absolutely no excuse for a blanket policy which excludes all homosexuals for no other reason than their sexual preference.

This is an archaic and unjustified rule. Mr. Lamontagne should see that it is speedily dropped.

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