



National
Gay
Rights
Coalition

Coalition
Nationale pour les
Droits des
Homosexuels

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17 August 1977

NGRC PROTESTS RCMP TREATMENT OF HOMOSEXUALS

The National Gay Rights Coalition (NGRC) is calling on the federal government and the RCMP to stop keeping files on homosexuals and to stop labelling homosexuality as a "character weakness".

The Globe and Mail revealed Wednesday that the RCMP keeps coded files on homosexuals and that the files are classified as "character weakness". The newspaper cites RCMP Superintendent J.R. Bentham as saying that if somebody applied for a job in the force and he was found to be a homosexual, he would be placed in "character weakness" files.

"The RCMP is still living in the 19th century," said NGRC spokesperson David Garmaise. "Classifying homosexuality as a 'character weakness' today is absurd. The American Psychiatric Association long ago declassified homosexuality as a mental disorder," he said, "and experts today agree that homosexuals function perfectly well in society. The public service is full of homosexuals who perform their jobs every bit as well as their heterosexual counterparts."

"Furthermore," Garmaise added, "we object to the government wasting time and using taxpayers' money to gather information on homosexuals."

The Globe and Mail story revealed that the RCMP pays informants "millions of dollars" annually to gather information on potential security risks.

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"Homosexuals can only be security risks if they attempt to hide their sexual orientation," Garmaise said. "It is the government itself that encourages homosexuals to remain in hiding by its policies in the RCMP and the Armed Forces and by refusing to make a clear statement that homosexuals will not be discriminated against in the public service. News that the RCMP is keeping files on homosexuals," he added, "can only make this situation worse."

Solicitor General Francis Fox has told NGRC that "an individual's sexual orientation does not prevent that individual from obtaining employment in the Federal Government or from obtaining a security clearance" (3 August 1977 letter from Fox to NGRC -- see attached).

"Why, then, is the RCMP classifying homosexuality as a 'character weakness'?" Garmaise asked. "The RCMP is part of the Federal Government. Will it hire a person it knows is homosexual?" he asked. "Does the RCMP refuse to grant a security clearance to someone who is openly gay? Or to someone who hides his or her sexual orientation? We demand answers to these questions," Garmaise said.

NGRC has been pressing the government for years to adopt an anti-discrimination policy on homosexuals in the public service. The government rejected an opportunity to do so when it voted down an amendment to add sexual orientation to the list of prohibited categories of discrimination in the recently adopted Canadian Human Rights Act.

"Fox's statement is not sufficient because it doesn't address the question of whether a homosexual who hides his or her sexual orientation will be denied a security clearance," Garmaise said. "The letter talks about 'being open' only in terms of employment, not security clearances. Even Fox's assertion that homosexuality 'does not prevent an individual from obtaining employment in the Federal Government, or from obtaining a security clearance' -- even that statement

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questionable given the RCMP's practice of labelling homosexuality as a 'character weakness' and of keeping files on homosexuals," Garmaise said.

"Besides," he added, "there quite clearly is discrimination in the Armed Forces whose policy specifically excludes homosexuals from serving in its ranks," Garmaise added.

"It's time we had some clear answers to our questions," Garmaise concluded.

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