

Canadian Armed Forces / Forces armées canadiennes

26 July 1979

Mr. R.G.L. Fairweather,
Chief Commissioner,
Canadian Human Rights Commission,
Ottawa, Ontario.
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Dear Mr. Fairweather:

Since your letter of 26 June to Mr. Nixon touched on the policy position of the Canadian Armed Forces with respect to homosexuality, I thought you might find my comments useful.

The policy of the Canadian Forces is that homosexual conduct is not condoned and, therefore, that homosexual persons are not knowingly enrolled or retained in the Forces.

This policy is based, for the most part, upon the fact that the Canadian Forces, unlike most other employers, provides in many instances a combined working and social milieu. Because in such a milieu persons having unusual behavioural traits may attempt to inflict them upon others, there is only one method of assuring our servicemen and women that their rights will be respected: by denying employment to homosexuals. This is particularly important when servicemen and women are ordered to isolated posts, to service at sea, or to a communal life in barracks or in the field; situations where personal privacy is difficult or impossible.

In such circumstances, where the employee has no choice as to either his environment or the company he keeps, the employer has an obligation to provide a milieu which is acceptable to the vast majority of his employees. As a matter of fact, experience has shown that the presence of homosexuals can be most disruptive. Such disruption often takes the form of physical attacks on the homosexual(s) concerned, and it is possible to prevent this sort of thing only by avoiding the employment of homosexuals in the first place.

There is also the serious question of the image of the Canadian Forces in the eyes of the public. This is of direct concern to me since the maintenance of a volunteer force depends a great deal on how that force is viewed by potential recruits and by their relatives and friends. My personal view is that

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the majority of Canadians are not prepared to accept the idea of homosexuals in the Forces, and that they would not see such an organization as a suitable environment for their sons and daughters.

Unless and until social attitudes change considerably it is impossible to place homosexuals in positions where a security clearance is required. Such persons are still, in our society, subject to blackmail either directly or indirectly because of the involvement of a partner.

Finally, and most importantly, a substantial number of military personnel serve outside the country: under UN, NORAD and NATO auspices, or in Canadian military missions throughout the world. In a great many cases homosexuals would be ineligible for such service because of the laws or social mores of the host country. Such limitations on the employment of homosexuals are a fact of life and would seriously reduce the operational flexibility of the Forces.

I can sum up by saying that a military force, particularly one composed of volunteers, has an image of itself which is to some extent determined by how it is viewed in the eyes of the nation, of foreign nationals, and of allied military forces. Military forces have historically seen morale, a function of self-image, as being of supreme importance in crisis situations. This military "spirit" depends upon group cohesiveness and a host of intangible factors; it can easily be destroyed but is extremely difficult to rebuild. To enrol or retain homosexuals would do grave damage to morale in the Canadian Forces and, for that reason alone, I see such a course of action as being unacceptable.

I hope these views will be helpful to you.

Yours sincerely,



R.H. Falls
Admiral

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