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Advisory Group  
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Groupe-conseil pour  
l'aviation militaire  
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15 January 1987

Dear Prime Minister;

I am writing this open letter to you on behalf of the Air Force Officers Advisory Group which is an organization of retired senior Canadian Air Force officers, many of whom are still active in senior positions in business and industry.

There is general concern in our Group that the Government may be leaning towards compelling the Canadian Forces to amend its policies to allow the employment of women in combat and the enrollment of homosexuals. Should this be so, then it is time that this Group and others register their concern.

To date the media has focussed their attention on what we believe to be a relatively small number of naive idealists, some of whom may be seeking publicity, who are advocating a radical change in Canadian Forces' employment policies. In virtually every case, these advocates have no combat experience and only a superficial understanding of the consequences of such policy changes on operational effectiveness.

Contrary to some of the criticism levied, the Canadian Forces is fully committed to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. However, in keeping with the provisions of the Charter, reasonable limitations may be placed on the employment of personnel; we understand that it is on this basis that the Forces seek an exemption from specific policies until additional analysis of the impact of full implementation can be completed. We urge that they be given that time.

Frankly, we doubt that it will be concluded that all provisions of the Charter could be applied in all the tasks to be performed by Armed Forces. In fact, we believe that the Canadian Forces already have set an outstanding example of making most occupational fields open to female members; of 137 classifications and trades, 103 are now open, including some "near" combat roles such as tactical airlift. That is significant progress!

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We believe that there are serious risks in proceeding further with social innovation in the Armed Forces since the consequences could be needless casualties and failure in combat. Why? The combat environment, especially on land and at sea, is the most deprivating circumstance one can imagine. It is a situation in which the tremendous physical and psychological stress on any individual or group could only be intensified through the employment of mixed genders. These additional stresses would detract from the the single-minded pursuit of military objectives and thus erode confidence at all levels in the unit's effectiveness or potential for effectiveness.

Similarly, the lack of privacy extant in the Armed Forces, especially in field maneuvers or at sea in training or in combat, is not conducive to the full participation of homosexuals. Our experience is that a self-evident or "found" or suspected homosexual is one of the most disruptive elements in any military unit, and we doubt that the attitude of the majority of heterosexuals will alter sufficiently to ensure no impact on operational effectiveness.

We are puzzled by the apparent inability of the public in general and some government officials to comprehend the special nature and needs of the Canadian Forces vis-a-vis these two subjects. By tradition, and for very good reason, military service subjects its members to orders, regulations and experiences which are implicitly and sometimes explicitly intrusive on individual rights. That is understood by most recruits at the time of or soon after enrollment. Perhaps the lesson is that over time we have created the perception that service is much like a job in industry or at the office, and perhaps too few Canadians get an opportunity to do military service!

Advocates of change appear to be saying that achievement of social objectives is more important than operational effectiveness. In our view, operational effectiveness is still the sine qua non of national security and therefore must not be put in jeopardy by impetuous implementation of social change.

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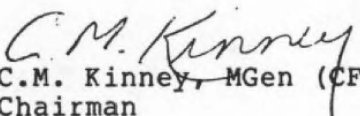
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In conclusion, the Air Force Officers Advisory Group strongly adheres to the view that women should not be employed in additional combat roles at this juncture, and homosexuals must continue to be excluded from the Canadian Forces. Further we urge that you resist the advocates of radical change and, instead, ensure that there is a balance in the implementation of social objectives and maintenance of national security interests. We submit that the advice and recommendations of experienced military leaders should be given considerably more weight than some of the strident voices you hear. Those military leaders not only have the responsibility for making critical security decisions but they must also live with the consequences of those decisions while, for the most part, those advocates for social change have no mandated responsibility in either case.

Sincerely,

  
C.M. Kinney, MGen (CF Ret'd)  
Chairman

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