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PROGRAM: WORLD REPORT  
EMISSION:DATE: MARCH 4, 1986  
DATE:NETWORK / STATION: GLOBAL/CIII  
RESEAU / STATION:TIME: 18:30  
HEURE:CROSBIE UNVEILS NEW RIGHTS FOR SOLDIERS

GLOBAL: Good evening. The Mulroney government took some major steps today to uphold human equality in areas of federal jurisdiction. Mandatory retirement at age 65 will become a thing of the past. Homosexuals and lesbians will probably no longer be barred from the RCMP and the armed forces. And women may even be able to play some kind of combat role. But the dotting of i's and the crossing of t's on those most difficult issues will probably be left to the courts. Kevin Newman reports.

REPORTER: Of the 83,000 members of Canada's armed forces, 9% are women. They are allowed to work in about two-thirds of the jobs available, from cook to colonel. But no woman could pilot a combat plane or fight on any front line. Justice Minister John Crosbie says women should be able to compete for any job in the armed forces as long as the military decides it doesn't jeopardize national security.

JOHN CROSBIE: ...they will have to be making the decisions on  
(JUSTICE MINISTER)  
the ground with respect to any specific cases, but...

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REPORTER:           Opposition MP's call the Minister's new policy meaningless.

SVEND ROBINSON:   It is vague. It is unclear.  
(NDP CRITIC)

REPORTER:           And the Defence Minister refused to say just how a woman in combat could jeopardize security. But this retired lieutenant-colonel says national security has traditionally been used as an excuse for denying women combat roles. Still, she sees hope in Mr. Crosbie's actions.

SHIRLEY ROBINSON: I think it's a start, and it will have to be  
(RETIRED LT.-COL.) watched very closely. And we intend to do just that.

REPORTER:           Ultimately, the courts may have to decide this issue, plus whether or not homosexuals should be allowed into the forces. The Opposition tried in Question Period to find out just what equality guarantees homosexuals will be given.

SVEND ROBINSON:   Will he say that an end to discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation means that the armed forces and the RCMP should be open to all Canadians and that there should be no further discrimination against gays and lesbians?

REPORTER:           Again, the Minister was evasive.

ERIK NIELSEN: The government's response is fully set forth on  
(DEFENCE MINISTER)  
page thirteen.

REPORTER: One area of firm resolve is the government's  
intention to end mandatory retirement. As a first  
step, the government will remove the 65 age limit for federal and  
crown corporation employees. The reforms on retirement are being  
generally well received, but it will take time, lots of discussion,  
and probably court challenges to determine if Mr. Crosbie's other  
initiatives do allow women into combat or homosexuals into the  
armed forces. Kevin Newman, Global News, Ottawa.

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