



THE CANADIAN PRESS

Gary Kinsmen, left, studied Cold War-era national security campaigns against gays and lesbians. Daryl Bean, president of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, says homosexuals still live and work 'in jeopardy.'

Union backs call for inquiry into purge of homosexuals

PSAC says workers still being harassed 'on a daily basis'

BY JIM BRONSKILL

Canada's largest federal union threw support yesterday behind a call for a commission of inquiry into the Cold War-era purge of homosexuals from the government.

The Public Service Alliance of Canada backed a new study's recommendation that there be a full probe of the security campaign as well as an apology and compensation for gays and lesbians who lost their jobs.

The study, led by sociologist Gary Kinsman of Laurentian University in Sudbury, is the first in-depth examination of how the government-sponsored campaign personally affected dozens of homosexuals, considered unreliable and vulnerable to blackmail.

Alliance president Daryl Bean said the sort of federal bias against homosexuals documented in the study is still widespread and continues to hinder government employees with same-sex partners, despite advances in the law.

"A significant number of our members are still living and working today in jeopardy, being harassed on a daily basis," he said.

Nancy Riche of the Canadian Labour Congress and Carmen Paquette of the group Equality for Gays and Lesbians Everywhere joined Mr. Bean in condemning federal discrimination.

Gay NDP MP Svend Robinson released a statement supporting the call for an official apology.

Mr. Kinsman has written Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, a Liberal cabinet member while the campaign was in full swing during the late 1960s, urging his government to adopt the recommendations. The Prime Minister's Office had no immediate comment.

The study, funded largely by a federal granting council, is primarily based on interviews with 20 gay men, five lesbians and a former RCMP officer who was involved in the investigation of suspected homosexuals. The research helps flesh out details of the campaign, using archival documents released in the 1990s under access-to-information laws.

Security fears about Communist influence and suspected subversive activities prompted the Canadian government to fire, demote or transfer hundreds of people working for feder-

al departments and agencies, the study says. The navy and then-External Affairs were prime targets.

The campaign, which began in the 1950s, continued to hamper the careers of homosexual public servants well into the 1970s, Mr. Kinsman discovered. The policy persisted within the RCMP until the late 1980s, and in the military until 1992.

"Many people's lives and careers were destroyed by these campaigns," Mr. Kinsman said. Most were uneasy about reliving painful memories, and are identified in the report only by pseudonyms.

The campaign extended even beyond the public service. By 1968, the RCMP had files on 9,000 suspected homosexuals, only about one-third of whom worked for the government.

Mr. Kinsman found no instance of a homosexual ever being successfully blackmailed by Soviet or other intelligence agencies.

The study points out that problems remain.

It says the apology and proposed inquiry should extend beyond the gay purge to include union members, activists, immigrants, Quebec sovereignists, aboriginal protest others who were targeted in government security effort.