

# Study to recommend apology for gay purge

A sociologist has documented a concerted, Cold War campaign against gays and lesbians by the Canadian public service and the military, **Jim Bronskill** writes.

**A** federally funded study will recommend the government officially apologize to gays and lesbians purged from the Canadian public service and military during the Cold War.

The groundbreaking research by sociology Prof. Gary Kinsman of Laurentian University represents the first detailed analysis of personal accounts of the campaign against homosexuals, who were thought to be unreliable and susceptible to blackmail.

Mr. Kinsman's study, to be released at an Ottawa news conference early next month, will also recommend a commission of inquiry be established to investigate the roots of the security campaign and determine how people can be compensated.

The research, based largely on extensive interviews, was funded in part by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada; a federal granting agency.

Public servants whose careers were ruined in the late 1950s and '60s have been extremely reluctant to discuss their experiences. Some still find it difficult to talk about their experiences. Others have moved on to new pursuits and do not want to make waves. Still others are uncomfortable revealing their sexuality.

The anti-homosexual campaign first received significant public attention



DEREK OLIVER, SOUTHAM NEWS

**Laurentian University Prof. Gary Kinsman spent four years on his groundbreaking study.**

following publication of John Sawatsky's 1980 book, *Men in the Shadows*, a study of the RCMP Security Service. Twelve years later, the federal government released documents detailing the scope of the program, which was much broader than previously understood. By 1967-68, the RCMP had amassed files on 9,000 gays and lesbians, only about two-thirds of whom were public servants. The vast majority lived in the Ottawa area, home of most federal agencies.

The Mounties maintained that homosexuals outside the government were investigated because they might later apply for federal jobs and, in any event, could help confirm RCMP suspicions about government employees.

Since beginning his research four years ago, Mr. Kinsman has spoken to 20 gay men and five lesbians, almost

all in confidence. Most will be referred to in his study by pseudonyms.

Yet Mr. Kinsman's research has helped lift the veil of statistics to reveal the emotional damage inflicted by the policies.

As Harold, forced out of the Navy in the late 1950s, wrote a short time afterwards: "I have undergone an experience which has destroyed the efforts of my life to date."

Security concerns about communist influence after the Second World War prompted the Canadian government to fire, demote or transfer alleged "subversives" in federal departments and agencies.

Dismissal of homosexuals from public service posts began as early as 1952, when a cabinet directive recommended security evaluations consider "defects of character" that could lead an employee to be "indiscreet, dishonest or vulnerable to blackmail."

The order was extended three years later, advising that, security issues aside, such "defects" in and of themselves could make people unsuitable for employment. Homosexuals discovered in the military or RCMP were routinely dismissed.

In 1959, the Mounties began a decade-long hunt for gays and lesbians throughout the federal public service, gathering information that would cost hundreds their jobs.

A federal memorandum warned that hostile intelligence agencies exploited the secret "sexual abnormalities" of adversaries. It also argued that homosexuals "often appear to believe that the accepted ethical code which governs normal human relationships does not apply to them," a tendency frequently accompanied by other "specific weaknesses" such as instability, excessive drinking, willing self-deceit and defiance towards society.

Mr. Kinsman maintains, however, there is little if any evidence homosexuals were successfully blackmailed by foreign agents.

Of 460 suspected, alleged or confirmed homosexuals the Mounties had identified by 1961, about 150 had resigned or been dismissed. There are few concrete statistics concerning later years. Although the Navy and External Affairs were especially hard-hit, at least 33 federal agencies were affected, including several that would seem unlikely targets of foreign spies, such as the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Public Works and the Unemployment Insurance Commission.

Once the RCMP had informed a federal department about a homosexual employee, senior managers in the department would decide what action to take.

Purged gays and lesbians were effectively blacklisted. Albert, who lost a public service job, later unsuccessfully tried to secure another federal position as a policy analyst. "I won the job hands down, but I was denied the job because a person in the board suspected I was a homosexual. As a result, the competition was cancelled and the position was never filled."

Herbert Sutcliffe was a decorated Army major, about to begin a posting in Washington, when he was suddenly called into a meeting one morning in September 1962. His superior, the director of military intelligence, didn't mince words. "The RCMP have told us you're homosexual," said the director. "And you'll be out of the Army in three days."

A stunned Mr. Sutcliffe returned to his Ottawa apartment, poured a drink and took a pistol out of his dresser. He gazed out the window, took a couple of sips, then decided: "They're not going to kill me."

Mr. Sutcliffe, 81, lives in Toronto fol-

lowing retirement from a second career as a teacher. He remains, sad that he was ostracized by military colleagues he had considered friend. The passage of time has not dimmed his opposition to the security policy.

Construction of the bizarre device that became known as the "fruit machine" illustrates the extent of the government's desire to ferret out homosexuals in the 1960s. Psychology Prof. Robert Wake of Carleton University devised the unlikely contraption which recorded the pupil size, blood flow and perspiration of people who viewed erotic pictures and words.

The RCMP had difficulty finding test subjects and the dubious technology was eventually abandoned.

The security policy on homosexuals public servants had softened by the end of the 1960s, though it is difficult to tell when the campaign ended.

"It was a major problem for lesbians and gay men to be civil servants in Canada even into the late 1970s," said Mr. Kinsman.

The RCMP continued to fire homosexuals into the late 1980s, and the military did not openly welcome them until the early 1990s.

In 1992, when extensive documentation on the campaign became public, then-prime minister Brian Mulroney denounced the homosexual purge as an "odious" episode of Canadian history and "one of the greatest outrages and violations of human rights."

However, no steps were taken to correct the perceived injustice.

In addition to advocating government redress, Mr. Kinsman hopes his study will help create an atmosphere in which people affected by the campaign feel more comfortable coming forward.

"That's certainly part of my objective in doing this."

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