

Jay

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Homosexuals in the military? Absolutely. Let's also do away with grooming standards, uniform regulations, the drug policy. Let's unionize: Why not?

Let's embrace the inevitable "civilianization" of the services without protest and take the lead from "politically correct" special interest groups who believe that the real purpose of the military establishment is to serve as a shining example of tolerance, egalitarianism, and facilitation of divergent groups and ideas.

Let's drop the outdated notion that the military exists to fight and win wars, because only then can we discard old-fashioned concepts like discipline, unit cohesion, morale, combat-readiness, and a focus on the needs of the unit over those of the individual. We must accept that the new focus of the modern American military is the realization of the individual; that the signature of American values of autonomy and self-

fulfillment must also become the defining values of the military.

It seems that many civilians do not see anything wrong with the military coming to resemble a civilian business, rather than a military organization. Sadly, that conversion appears to be well under way. It is a process brought to us courtesy of civilian interest groups who think they know better than military officers how to run a unit, and who mistake lack of widespread protest from the ranks as an indication that we accept this trend — perhaps the senior leadership does not represent the consensus of opinion in the military.

While senior leaders have spoken out as forcefully as their quasi-political positions allow them to, concerning admitting homosexuals, there is danger that, in light of the silence from the ranks, their positions may be seen as primarily those of the "old guard," positions not representative of generally held views in the ranks. That is not the case. Although there are certainly some who privately disagree with our senior leaders on these issues, it is the authors' experience that the great majority of officers and enlisted servicemembers, though publicly silent, do not.

Career military personnel put up with many things civilians would never tolerate. One of the reasons we

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do so is the pride of belonging to a profession that focuses solely on performance and mission, a special community defined by standards more demanding than those of the larger society. But as those standards are replaced by the norms of the larger society, the question for the military professional becomes "why bother?" If our "calling" becomes just another "job," then why not just get a different job that doesn't require constant moves, family separations, low pay, and the possibility of violent death in a training mishap or combat?

Military service is well on the way to becoming just another "job." The institutional values that once defined the armed forces are rapidly being eroded by inroads into its culture by special interest groups who view the military as a platform for their politically correct agendas,

i.e., as just another vehicle for advancing what they think are desirable goals for society at large.

Allowing overt homosexuals into service is an extremely bad idea. The loss of public respect for the services in those segments of society from which we draw our people (segments not generally inclined to moral relativism), the barracks "blankets parties" that will inevitably follow forcing young heterosexual males to live with homosexuals in a zero-privacy environment, the implications of accepting an AIDS-intensive community into the close confines of military units, the discipline problems that will erupt when subordinates are expected to heed a homosexual superior. If the military resists accepting homosexuals, it is only because we are backward-thinking dinosaurs who, presumably, will come to the enlightened realization that "gay" people just have an "alternative lifestyle" if we are forced to admit them into service.

All of this is going on at a time when the military is being scaled back. Mid-career officers are being offered "voluntary separation incentives" while retirement-eligible officers are subject to "selective early retirement." All this will ultimately cause a loss of loyalty to the organization itself and will hurt it in ways that are intangible but are certain

nonetheless.

Critics who have never worn the uniform, yet consider themselves competent to dictate how the military should function, simply do not understand that although the military will always mirror society in some ways, it cannot fully reflect it and still maintain its identity as a military force. The focus of these advocates is individual autonomy and choice; yet the military is necessarily an undemocratic society within our egalitarian, democratic society, a fact little understood at a time when both the public and policy-makers, unlike the post-World War II generation, are largely unfamiliar with the military. If we continue on our present track and allow homosexuals into service, then we may as well permit the military to unionize and act like any other civilian corporation, for that is all it will be.

Opening the services to homosexuals would simply be the latest step toward the permanent loss of the military's identity as something more than just another business among many. The final loss of that identity also will witness the loss of combat effectiveness against any enemy who is minimally competent. Chances are, any future foe will not have sacrificed combat effectiveness or forsaken military standards for the sake of political expedience.

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