

OBSERVATIONS

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Are we prepared to bet young people's lives, or the effectiveness of our armed forces, on the presumption that Pat Schroeder knows better than Colin Powell?

Homosexuals in the military

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CONTROVERSIES over official policies toward homosexuals in the military are not only serious in themselves, but are also painfully revealing as to the kind of thinking—or lack of thinking—by advocates of accepting gays into the armed forces.

Many arguments run along the line that all that legitimately matters is the individual's own job performance. It is one of the signs of the utter unreality of our times that adult human beings could seriously apply this atomistic view of the world to an organization which is the very antithesis of individualism, and in which the stakes are life and death.

Military success or failure—which is to say, the fate of nations—does not depend on *individual* performance but on group coordination and group morale. Whatever policies emerge in the military must recognize that central fact if they are to deal responsibly with the lives of young people who are put in harm's way for the sake of their country.

It is hard to imagine how anyone who has ever lived in a military barracks can seriously suggest that open homosexuality there will do any-

thing positive for group morale.

No doubt there have been homosexuals in the military before, as there have been homosexuals in many other walks of life. But no one is concerned about what people do privately. It is official acceptance of homosexuality that would make it an intrusion into the lives of other people, as part of everyday barracks life.

Privacy is not to be found in military barracks. Nor are military relations egalitarian relations. Given the rigid hierarchy and the degree of subordination inherent in military life, any form of sexual activity between military personnel is fraught with explosive dangers, even in peacetime.

In combat, when members of a platoon under fire have to depend on each other for survival, what does it do to that unit's cohesion when soldiers know that some of their comrades are lovers, who are likely to look out for each other, rather than the platoon?

Does anyone doubt for a moment that official acceptance of homosexuality will be only a prelude to demands that homosexuals not be "discriminated" against—which is to say, that any adverse decision regarding an individual who happens to be homosexual will be a potential lawsuit?

And does anyone expect either military discipline or morale to be unaffected by all that? Without discipline and morale, what is a military unit but a disaffected mob?

We need not limit ourselves to speculation. As homosexuality has become increasingly accepted on many of our leading college campuses, gays have become another privileged class.

Students have been punished merely for daring to criticize the homosexual lifestyle. On some college campus-

es, men's toilets have become rendezvous centers for homosexual activity to such an extent that gay activists have published annually updated guides to the best places for such encounters.

Toilets in libraries at Georgetown University, Howard University and the University of Maryland, for example, have made that list. Holes have been drilled in the toilet stalls to facilitate anonymous homosexual activity from Dartmouth to Georgetown to the University of Florida and the University of California at San Diego.

Concentrations of young males in institutions that accept homosexuality have proven to be magnets for gays. Toilets at the University of Florida have attracted gay men from as far as 40 miles away. Are we now to turn the military into another concentration of young males in an institution that accepts homosexuality?

When you can't even go to the toilet without being a witness to or a target of homosexual activity, we are no longer talking about how someone does his individual job. Can anyone imagine how soldiers, Marines or paratroopers are going to react to such situations?

The last refuge of the advocates of admitting gays into the military is to analogize the military's resistance to their past resistance to the racial desegregation of the armed forces. But such analogies are strained, and they certainly do not prove that military leaders are always wrong and politicians are always right.

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No small part of the social problems of this country today derive from three decades of blithe disregard of factors which transcend the individual. Social norms have been waved aside as mere superstitions and public decency has become something regarded as quaint, if not oppressive.

After a chilling string of failures of the 1960s social philosophy in civilian life—deteriorating education, soaring crime rates, disintegrating families, growing drug addiction—zealots are now ready to apply it to the military.