

*Human Rights*

some of the very real discrimination they face. When he was prime minister, the leader of our party, the hon. member for Yellowhead (Mr. Clark), asked me to develop a policy position on the issue of homosexual rights. After my election in 1980, I formed a Human Rights Advisory Council with representatives of the homosexual community to help meet my campaign promise to introduce a private member's bill to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. Given the dismal failure record of private member's bills, our objective was, and always has been, to have the subject matter of this bill sent to committee so that the homosexual community across Canada can share with their fellow Canadians some of their experiences, frustrations and hurts before a three-party parliamentary committee so that this issue could be fully aired by all who have an interest in it.

I want to use my time today to share with you some of the things I have learned on this issue as the MP for Vancouver Centre, which has a large homosexual population. First, I learned that minority problems that have been highlighted recently in the press, for example, police raids and so-called gay-bashing, are not reflective of the majority of homosexuals who are neither criminal nor outcasts of society and who feel they deserve the protection of the law.

The second thing I learned was that several of my friends and colleagues were members of the homosexual community, a fact previously unknown to me since the issue had never arisen. One environmentalist was known to me as professionally very competent before I was aware he was homosexual, and the quality of his work has not diminished in my view on learning of his sexual orientation. I still rely heavily on one of my public relations advisers because of the excellent quality of the advice offered, and not just on this issue. A doctor friend of mine who told me he was bisexual remains, in my eyes, a loving, caring person. An acquaintance that I disliked before I learned of his sexual orientation, I still dislike to this day. I make the point, Mr. Speaker, that the majority of Canadians probably do not care about the sexual orientation of their friends or colleagues. They may have concerns as parents, as landlords, or as employers, but within their own family and friends they are relatively indifferent to it. It is only when we become personally aware of the discrimination that this minority faces that we become concerned. Let me give you some examples.

In my first year as an MP, two young men came to see me to tell me that they had been stopped at the U.S.-Canada border and turned back because in their luggage was the address of a homosexual club in Seattle. They were not concerned about being refused entry to the U.S., but they wanted me to have their names removed from the U.S. immigration's computer. I could not believe that two young Canadians without criminal records, contributors to their community, would be banned from the U.S. because they were suspected of being homosexual. But in checking with the U.S. consul's office in Vancouver I found that this, indeed, is the case. The U.S. does not allow suspected homosexuals to enter the country. It is reassuring to know that Canada changed its attitude

on this issue in the 1967 Immigration Act which removed the barrier to homosexuals seeking entry to Canada.

In another case a young man told me that he had been compulsorily released from the Canadian Armed Forces without any opportunity to have access to the nature of the information which led to his dismissal. Instead, he was visited by two military police, taken to a Holiday Inn and interrogated by another military policeman for some time. At the end of the interrogation he was told that although there was no breach of security involved, he would have to resign his commission because he was a homosexual. My constituent emphatically denied that he was a homosexual and said there were no grounds whatsoever to the allegation. The file shows that the military police told my constituent that he was not to discuss the interrogation with anyone whatsoever. He later found that his telephone had been wiretapped.

It stretches one's credibility to believe that in this country a Canadian citizen can be picked up by the military police, have his phone tapped, be interrogated and dismissed without any access to the information on which the dismissal was based. I would like to add that this man's professional record was deemed excellent by his commanding officers. I will call him Captain X, because he wants his privacy respected. One superior wrote:

Captain X has earned the respect of my staff by his professional attitude towards the completion of his responsibilities. This in turn has revealed him to be a dedicated officer with good perception and excellent potential.

Another commanding officer wrote:

Captain X's service was outstanding.

Another wrote:

Captain X's performance was excellent, he was a definite asset on this exercise and his participation was appreciated.

This man is now in the civilian labour force looking for a job, wondering with considerable anxiety if the unknown allegations on his military record will prevent him from getting a job in his profession. I cannot convey to you the extent of his anxiety and his desire to clear his record so that he can be a functioning member of our society.

Still another constituent of mine, whom I recommended for his job, recently told me he had resigned because the company for which he worked did not appear to realize that he had a long term, stable homosexual relationship, and he was in daily apprehension of being fired when his employers became aware of the fact. Now his fears may be unfounded. He passed his company's security test and quite possibly the company took the legitimate view that his homosexuality was not a company concern, provided his work was good. But he could not stand the suspense of living in this shadow world.

Members of this House will probably be aware of the case of John Damien who was fired in 1975 from his position as a racing steward with the Ontario Racing Commission, a job he had held for five years, because he was homosexual, even though his employers admitted that he had performed his job well.