

Interestingly, some areas that had previously closed to the Forces, such as Student Union “Fresher’s Fairs”, are now allowing access to the Services because of what is seen to be a more enlightened approach. (Ministry of Defense, 2000e, p.2)

Because sexual orientation is now seen to be a private matter, the British Armed Forces will not set any quotas for the recruitment of sexual minorities and will not monitor recruitment levels of sexual minorities. No records will be kept if recruits volunteer the information that they are homosexual.

The report acknowledges that the policy change was not popular with some military personnel before its enactment, as some servicemembers originally expressed apprehension about the lifting of the ban:

Within the Services, the change in policy was accepted as inevitable, although there were some expressions of ‘political correctness’ having gone too far. The majority of initial misgivings were in regard to the practical aspects of implementation and its consequences, often centered on shared accommodation. (Ministry of Defense, 2000e, p.2)

Such misgivings appear, however, to have been short-lived. After the new policy had been in place for only six months, the Ministry of Defense was able to report that service personnel had adjusted well to the lifting of the ban:

Over the longer term the feeling has been generated that there is widespread acceptance of the new policy. ... Generally people have demonstrated a mature and pragmatic approach which has allowed the policy to succeed. (Ministry of Defense, 2000e, p. 2)

Service personnel have gotten along well and adjusted quickly to the policy change; the actual inclusion of homosexual servicemembers has resulted in surprisingly little reaction. The report also found that harassment of gay and lesbian soldiers had not been a problem since the new social conduct code had been instituted. There were “no

reported difficulties of note concerning homophobic behavior amongst Service Personnel” (Ministry of Defense, 2000e, p. 2).

The evaluation by the Ministry of Defense suggests that the success of the new policy was in large part due to the non-discriminatory nature of the Code of Social Conduct. The Code’s emphasis on behavior allows the military to address problematic behavior without resorting to discriminatory policies or restricting whole classes of people:

The Code of Social Conduct has been very well received and has been found to be a useful guide for commanding officers in dealing with all issues surrounding personal relationship and behavior, going wider than just homosexual issues. (Ministry of Defense, 2000e, p.2)

Because the focus has been placed on behavior instead of sexual orientation, sexual orientation has not become a source of antagonism as some had feared. Gay service personnel know that they have the code of conduct to back them up in the event of harassment or bullying. And all servicemembers know that they have recourse to complain if they witness inappropriate comments or actions. The report remarks on the noteworthy lack of focus by service personnel about the issue of sexual orientation:

[Homosexuality] has not been an issue of great debate, in part because of the underlying principle, embodied in the Code of Social Conduct, that sexual orientation is now regarded as a private matter. In fact there has been a marked lack of reaction. Discussion has rather been concerned with freedom of individual choice and exercising personal responsibility across the board, rather than a focus just on sexual orientation. (Ministry of Defense, 2000e, p.2)

In arguments for the continuation of the ban, military officials suggested that friction between heterosexual and homosexual servicemembers could result in distrust and offense among colleagues and even threaten operational effectiveness. In contrast, the Ministry of Defense’s own internal assessment of

the policy after six months suggests that heterosexual and homosexual soldiers alike have responded well to the change in policy. In spite of the concerns raised in the years and months prior to the lifting of the ban, no major problems have so far resulted from the policy change. At the request of the House of Commons Defense Committee, the Ministry of Defense will conduct another review of the policy in two years. But the report indicates that at this stage military officials believe the new policy has been successfully implemented.

Since the ban has been lifted, several newspaper articles have recorded military reactions to the policy change³⁹. British newspapers have reported the assessment of Rear-Admiral Burnell-Nugent and two resignations over the policy. In addition, researchers for this report interviewed eight Armed Forces officials and two retired Armed Forces officers. The officials include: the director of personnel policy for the Ministry of Defense, a commander with Naval Personnel and Service Conditions who was involved in the writing of the new policy, a lieutenant colonel with Army Public Relations, a major with the Army Training and Recruiting Agency, a squadron leader with the Air Force Engineer Liaison Recruiting Team, an official with the Personnel Management Agency of the Air Force, an official with the Ministry of Defense Press Office, and a Whitehall source with knowledge of the policy's implementation. The retired officers were not apprised of the effect of the transition and were interviewed for background information.

Nine months after the ban was lifted, the assistant chief of the Navy staff, Rear-Admiral James Burnell-Nugent declared publicly that the change in policy had caused fewer problems than the inclusion ten years ago of women at sea. The Rear-Admiral

stated that the removal of the ban had caused less difficulty than many of his colleagues had expected. He further stated that the ruling had raised some issues about accommodations aboard ships but that it had otherwise not caused serious problems. “I think it has caused less of a ruffle than the issue of women at sea did 10 years ago. That is not to say it is not without impact” (Paterson, 2000). The Rear-Admiral also commented that, “Although some did not welcome the change of policy, it has not caused any great degree of difficulty” (Paterson, 2000). Rear-Admiral Burnell-Nugent added:

There are issues to do with sharing accommodation and so on, which we shall deal with using normal management mechanisms. I am not saying everybody is happy with it, but on the whole it has not caused a great upset. (Paterson, 2000)

A straw poll of cadets immediately following the change in policy “revealed an already relaxed attitude to the issue” (Butcher, 2000a). One cadet responded, “It might just be that we belong to a different generation but I do not see it as a problem” (Butcher, 2000a). This attitude was shared by most of her fellow cadets. All those polled agreed that it was possible for homosexuals to serve in the RAF if their professional work was not influenced by their sexuality. One male cadet did say, however, that the presence of a gay or lesbian in a soldier in a unit could damage the team’s morale. “I personally do not have a problem with homosexuals but I can see it being a problem if everyone is cooped up together” (Butcher, 2000a)⁴⁰.

Two officers publicly resigned in the wake of the lifting of the ban. Brigadier Pat Lawless, the Deputy Commander of the Joint Helicopter Command, announced in January 2000 that he was resigning because the ban was lifted without adequate consideration for the military rationale for preserving it. Brigadier Lawless, who reported

³⁹ Newspaper coverage of the experiences of two ‘out’ servicemembers are discussed in the section below.

that he was “very sad to leave”, stated that he “couldn’t reconcile my strongly held moral and military convictions as a soldier and a citizen with the Government’s decision to lift the ban on homosexuals” (Wright, 2000). A friend of Lawless stated that “[Cdr. Lawless] was not taking this decision because he personally has a problem with homosexuals. He saw it as a decision foisted on the Armed Forces for no good military reason” (Butcher, 2000).

Commander Colin Douglas, a senior naval commander who led an air squadron in Bosnia and was director of flying at the Fleet Air Arm’s Culdrose air station, also resigned in January because he felt that policy decisions were being made for political reasons instead of military ones. Cdr. Douglas said that the decision on homosexual inclusion was “the final straw”. He added, “There is plenty of sound military sense against lifting the ban, but the decision was taken for political and legal reasons” (Butcher, 2000). There have been no other public announcements of resignations due to the lifting of the ban.

An article on desertion and recruitment issues in June 2000 commented that the opening of the military to gays and lesbians and of combat positions to women would hopefully *increase* recruitment levels. Problems associated with desertion included bullying, harassment during initiation rites, and an inability of the military to successfully deal with soldiers far away from home when family problems such as terminal illness and marital strain develop (Burke, 2000)⁴¹. Problems in recruiting levels were first made public in 1996. Articles discussing recruitment problems cited the number of foreign operations and the number of humanitarian missions, as well as the family turbulence that

⁴⁰ At the time of the straw poll, there were no open homosexuals at the training college (Butcher, 2000a).

⁴¹ See also Davies (2000).

results from long absences or overseas postings (Schoefeld, 2000). The lifting of the ban was not mentioned as a source of problems.

Two months after the Ministry of Defense's internal appraisal, the responses of military officials interviewed for this report confirm its findings. The transition to the new policy has gone surprisingly well, and there have been no major problems to date. A Whitehall source who had access to the original, unabridged report emphasizes the definitiveness of its conclusions:

The assessment showed that there has been no impact at all. The report looked at all aspects, operational effectiveness, unit cohesion, and there has been no impact. At the end of the day, operational effectiveness is the critical matter, and there has been no effect at all. There haven't been any disciplinary problems. There have only been one or two minor incidents, and they have been handled individually. The whole thing has gone a lot better than people had expected. (Personal Communication, October 9 and 11, 2000)

None of the officials that we spoke to knew of any evidence or had heard of any that suggested any significant difficulties that had arisen as a result of the policy change. No one had heard of any problems with resignations⁴². None of the officials interviewed knew of any evidence to suggest that recruitment rates or training completion had been affected. There have been no major problems with harassment or gay-bashing. Military officials interviewed for this report affirm that the lifting of the ban has largely been a non-issue.

This is not to imply that all servicemembers approved of the new policy before it was implemented. Many soldiers maintain anti-gay attitudes and worried about how the lifting of the ban would affect them. While complaints about the sharing of facilities with

⁴² Military officials interviewed for this report put the number of resignations as between one and three. An additional resignation that was not reported in the papers was mentioned. But more than one official noted that at least one of the published resignations was thought to have actually been due to other factors.

homosexual in particular were vociferous before the policy change, such protests were surprisingly short-lived. Commander Cooper, who worked on the new social code of conduct, explains:

The prime concern, and really the only one raised by people in the run-up to the publication of this policy, which came into effect in January of this year, was sharing accommodations. ... straight chaps and straight girls might not necessarily like having to share living, changing and washing facilities with people of another sexual orientation. ... We've taken the view that we will not separate out homosexuals and give them separate living accommodations. Now I would characterize the reaction to that as being very short-term complaints, very loud but short-lived. And as far as I know, the Armed Forces of the United Kingdom has only lost three people who have resigned over this issue. (Personal Communication, October 13, 2000)

Military officials interviewed for this report were also not aware of any indications that the new policy had negatively affected recruit training completion rates or that there had been any training problems related to the lifting of the ban (Hodges, Personal Communication, October 10, 2000; Cooper, Personal Communication, October 13, 2000; Peebles, Personal Communication, October 17, 2000). Service personnel have responded well to the new code of social conduct and the equitable premise of all servicemembers' responsibility to act appropriately. As was suggested by the Ministry of Defense's internal report, more discussion appears to have been raised about exercising personal responsibility generally than about the specific issue of homosexuality. A

Whitehall source explains:

In the commanding officers' course, they go over the code of social conduct. Homosexuality doesn't even come up anymore – it's no longer an issue. In the Equal Opportunities training, a whole raft of issues are discussed, and race and gender are bigger issues for us. There is one morning in the training where homosexuality gets discussed along with many other issues. One person in six months has argued vociferously against it, and that's it. Everyone else's attitude is to let people alone. No

one wants to flaunt their sexuality, so let people have it. (Personal Communication, October 9 and 11, 2000)

Incidents of harassment or sexual misconduct related to sexual orientation by either heterosexual or homosexual soldiers have also not been a problem since the new policy was implemented in January. None of the military officials interviewed related a single case of gay-bashing or assault related to sexual orientation. Lieutenant Colonel Hodges confirmed with a colleague at the Central Discipline Office there have been no incidents related to sexual orientation reported to that office since the ban on homosexual soldiers was lifted. He added: “The change in policy has been a complete non-event” (Personal Communication, October 9 and November 2, 2000).

Although precise data is not available, there are no indications that the policy change has affected recruitment levels (Bagley, Personal Communication, October 13, 2000; Fuller, Personal Communication, October 17, 2000; Payne, Personal Communication, October 9, 2000). The Armed Forces does not ask about sexual orientation when recruiting, so the military does not possess any statistics specifically concerning either increases in the number of homosexual recruits or decisions not to enlist because of the policy change. Further, so many factors affect recruiting that it is difficult to isolate the effects of one. But there have been no signs, from the experiences of recruiters or assessments within the Ministry of Defense, that recruiting numbers have decreased substantially as a result of the lifting of the ban. A Ministry of Defense official states, “Certainly recruitment hasn’t dropped dramatically – recruitment is quite buoyant at present” (Barnard, Personal Communication, October 13, 2000). After several years of recruiting shortages, the last two years have witnessed the fulfillment of recruiting targets (Hodges, Personal Communication, October 9 and November 2, 2000).

Paul Barnard adds, “Nothing drastic has happened in terms of recruiting or anything else” (Personal Communication, October 13, 2000).

Military leaders emphasize that behavior rather than sexual orientation is what ultimately matters to the men and women in the Armed Services. As long as people do their jobs and contribute effectively to the teamwork of their units, individual differences in opinion or in their personal lives are not considered relevant. The new policy’s focus on behavior rather than on personal attributes has allowed heterosexual and homosexual soldiers alike to maintain their focus on the jobs at hand. It is the emphasis on effective teamwork that Lieutenant Colonel Hodges believes is ultimately behind the success of the policy change:

There has been absolutely no reaction to the change in policy regarding homosexuals within the military. It’s just been accepted. In the military, it’s important to fit in and be a member of the team. As regards homosexuals, if someone were acting ‘camp’, they would not fit into the team. But if they are discrete [sic], it doesn’t matter. Our great strength as an Army is that we treat everyone [as] an individual who contributes to the team. We’ve won three recent wars – Sierra Leone, Kosovo and East Timor because we place a lot of importance on personal responsibility, down to the lowest level. Everyone has strengths and known weaknesses, and everyone is given responsibility. Your sexuality doesn’t matter as long as you act as a member of the team. (Personal Communication, October 9 and November 2, 2000)

For those heterosexual soldiers who feared the new policy would bring major changes in interpersonal relationships, the continuity has been a relief. Since the lifting of the ban, heterosexual servicemembers have discovered that the Services after the policy change looks basically like the Services under the old policy. Paul Barnard explains:

And the media likes scare stories – about showers and what have you. A lot of people were worried that they would have to share body heat in close quarters or see two men being affectionate, and they would feel

uncomfortable. But it has proved at first look that it's not an issue. (Personal Communication, October 13, 2000)

Now that the court case has been resolved, people have been able to effectively move past the controversy. There have been no major surprises, no radical or inappropriate behavior. Heterosexual and homosexual soldiers alike continue to focus on the primary task at hand: doing the job that they signed up for. Paul Barnard adds: "It's gone better than a lot of people thought it would. It's almost gone unnoticed." (Personal Communication, October 13 and November 6, 2000)

Military officials also suggest that servicemembers were better prepared to adapt to the lifting of the ban than many military commanders expected. Both the on-the-ground reality of homosexual service and more accepting attitudes in general about homosexuality among the young were raised as partial explanations for the relatively tranquil transition. Homosexual service personnel have been a part of the Armed Forces since long before the policy change occurred – a fact that was not denied by military officials even during the legal battle. Barnard argues that for many heterosexual servicemembers, the admission by a colleague of his or her sexual orientation in the wake of the new policy has not come as a surprise:

A lot of gay people have gone about like before and not said anything. But in most cases with those that have said that they're gay, it was probably known already. Close associates who worked with them probably already knew, but they kept quiet about it, because they didn't want to get the person in trouble. So often it hasn't been a surprise. It just has not been an issue. (Personal Communication, October 13, 2000)

Commander Cooper in turn emphasizes the more liberal attitudes of younger service men and women:

We have a ground-breaking social policy here. ... But in broad terms, I don't think we're shy about the fact that there has been an atmosphere of

resigned acceptance, particularly amongst the younger people in the Navy. ... There is a more relaxed attitude among younger people towards those of a different sexual orientation, and by and large it has been, therefore, a non-issue; it really has. (Personal Communication, October 13, 2000)

In interviewing military officials for this report, the theme of a lack of response was repeated. Officials emphasized that the policy transition had occurred more smoothly than expected, that any criticism to the lifting of the ban quickly died away, and that the anticipated problems have not developed. People on all sides of the issue have behaved responsibly and respectfully. And while problems may still develop at a later date, many Service officials are genuinely surprised by how agreeable the transition has been. A number of interviewed officials commented on the disjuncture between the predicted difficulties and the reality of the change. The Ministry of Defense Director of

Personnel Policy states:

And [the] code of conduct seems to have been accepted and applied generally around the Armed Forces, and we've had very few real problems that have emerged, and people seem to have, slightly surprisingly, settled down and accepted the current arrangements. And we don't really have the problems that we thought we'd have. (Fuller, Personal Communication, October 17, 2000)

Peebles concurs:

As far as I am aware, the rank and file airmen and airwomen have accepted the revised policy. The anticipated tide of criticism from some quarters within the Service was completely unfounded. (Personal Communication, October 17, 2000)

And Commander Cooper adds:

We now have chaps at sea that people now know are homosexuals – there are very few – we're talking about a handful of people who have come out, and there wasn't a [problem] coming out at all. And our youngsters have just taken it in stride. So it's a major non-issue, which has come as a considerable surprise. (Personal Communication, October 13, 2000)

Given the fact that the new policy has been in place for less than a year, insufficient time has passed for any quantitative or in-depth external study of the policy change. Nonetheless, researchers for this report felt that it was important to canvass relevant observers outside of the military to further assess the impact of the lifting of the ban on homosexual soldiers. Academics, journalists and non-profit organization representatives⁴³ who have been following the controversy concerning sexual minorities in the military, or who are knowledgeable about British military personnel issues more generally, provide an independent check to the information provided by the Armed Forces. The outside experts may be aware of issues that have not been brought to the attention of the upper echelon of military commanders, they can provide a different perspective on events, and they may be more critical of the policies or the culture of the British Services than commanders.

Researchers for this report spoke with six respected academics and journalists who have been commentators on the military policy concerning homosexuality since before the ban was lifted. The interviewees included: Dr. Gwyn Harries-Jenkins, a professor of military sociology at the University of Hull; Dr. Christopher Dandeker, a professor of military sociology and head of the Department of War Studies at King's College; Dr. Hew Strachan, professor of military history at the University of Glasgow; and Edmund Hall, former journalist for the Sunday Times, Independent and the Evening Standard, and the author of the most widely-read book on the subject, We Can't Even March Straight.

Professor Harries-Jenkins and Dandeker specialize in military personnel issues

⁴³ The opinions of relevant non-profit representatives are provided in the following section.

and have written specifically about homosexuality in the Armed Forces. Researchers also interviewed Joan Heggie, a doctoral candidate at the University of York who is presently working on a dissertation on lesbian service personnel in Britain, and Tim Butcher, a reporter for the Daily Telegraph who has covered the topic for that paper since 1995. The researchers asked these and other contacts if they knew of any other prominent scholars or commentators who should be reached for this report; we could uncover no other principal sources on this subject.

The academics and journalists contacted for this report agree that it is still too soon to determine what the long-term consequences of the policy would be. The information available so far does, however, suggest reason for cautious optimism. None of the respondents knew of any major problems that have occurred in the wake of the policy change. And the (admittedly scant) information that they have heard about indicates a relatively smooth transition. Professor Dandeker states:

It's too early to say, but the reports I have heard say ... that so far there are few problems and indeed, perhaps less than the ones arising from gender integration. (Personal Communication, September 20, 2000)

Professor Harries-Jenkins also agrees that insufficient time had passed to definitively assess the outcome of the new policy, but he does add that “press statements (‘an informed source’) suggest a slight decrease in the incidence of harassment” (Personal Communication, October 16, 2000). Joan Heggie argues that the relative lack of news about the transition is itself a sign that no major problems had occurred. Since many military and political officials had been

highly antagonistic to the removal of the ban, any sign of significant problems would have created a public furor. Heggie declares:

But there has been no feedback the new policy is not working. Certainly the fears of massive resignations or sexual harassment have not come true. (Personal Communication, October 2 and 16, 2000)

Professor Dandeker, Heggie and Hall all suggest that the relatively smooth transition may have been due in part to the fact that most gay and lesbian soldiers presently serving in the military have remained quiet about their sexual orientation and their private lives. Professor Dandeker and Heggie argue that such low visibility most likely stems from continued bias against homosexuality by most heterosexual soldiers. Professor Dandeker explains:

Most expect gay personnel to continue to be extremely discreet until attitudes within the services change further, and that this is an acceptable price to pay for achieving a lifting of the ban on personnel serving simply because of their homosexual orientation. (Personal Communication, September 20, 2000)

Heggie adds:

Even though the situation is better, soldiers don't want to set themselves up for a fall. Even though the rules have changed, not everyone feels comfortable. (Personal Communication, October 2 and 16, 2000)

Hall, however, argues that gay and lesbian service personnel were unlikely to be particularly conspicuous even in the most accepting environment:

When the ban was lifted, I think that many people who had been serving quietly in the armed forces breathed a sigh of relief. Gay people who go into the armed forces tend to be conservative in their politics, and reserved about their private lives. After the ban was lifted, you didn't find these people indulging in ostentatious out behavior. (Personal Communication, September 25, 2000)

Professors Harries-Jenkins and Dandeker, both noted experts on the

British military in general, also concur that the issue of homosexual service in the

military was minor given the priorities of the military at present. Like many other Western militaries in the wake of the Cold War, the British military has had to confront the effects of a shift in priorities and the extension of peacekeeping missions with shrinking resources. Professor Harries-Jenkins states that homosexuality “is a minor issue in the light of major problems for recruitment and retention caused by overstretch, role uncertainty, turbulence and rates of remuneration” (Personal Communication, October 16, 2000). Professor Dandeker also cites overstretch, recruitment and retention as primary problems presently facing the British military, and he adds that the size of the defense budget is an additional source of concern (Personal Communication, September 20, 2000).

Echoing Rear-Admiral Burnell-Nugent, Professors Dandeker and Harries-Jenkins suggest that the integration of women into the Armed Services is perhaps a more vexing personnel problem than that of including homosexuals. Professor Harries-Jenkins declares:

At present, the major [personnel] issue is the political policy that women should be recruited to direct combat on the ground posts in armor, infantry and special forces units. Whilst it is possible to substitute males in terms of race and sexual preference, there is a strong body of opinion in the military which questions the ability of women to serve in such posts. The lifting of the ban on gays may or may not have effects upon good order and discipline but these can be covered by regulations. (Personal Communication, October 16, 2000)

Both Professors did, however, append caveats to this assessment. Professor Dandeker contends that it “remains to be seen” whether the integration of women and sexual minorities will “interact and lead to difficulties” (Personal Communication, September 20, 2000). Professor Harries-Jenkins adds that the legislative approval of gay marriages or the “active promotion of the rights of

homosexuals” would “alarm service chiefs” (Personal Communication, October 16, 2000).

Finally, Dandeker, Heggie and Butcher all caution that while the rules may have changed, fundamental attitudes have not. Many military personnel remain opposed to the change in policy, including a number of commanders. And a large number of those who are resigned to the new regulations continue to view homosexuality in an unfavorable light. Given the discretion placed with commanding officers in interpreting what constitutes social misconduct, such anti-gay feelings could result in harsh restriction of homosexuals. Professor Dandeker explains:

It should be pointed out that the ‘lifting of the ban’ is not quite right. Integration of open homosexuals is problematic and remains so under the new policy. ... Much will depend on how commanding officers use discretion and how much gay personnel wish to be discreet about their orientation as well as scrupulously careful about their behavior both on and off duty. (Personal Communication, September 20, 2000)

Heggie also warns that “the rules of conduct are so loose that they allow discrimination by individual commanders” (Personal Communication, October 2 and 16, 2000). How the implementation of the code of social conduct proceeds in the coming months will have a considerable effect on the ultimate success of the new policy. Because gay-bashing is punishable by administrative discharge, however, Butcher expects that “the quality of life for the average homosexual servicemember [will] go up considerably” (Personal Communication, August 8, 2000).

Researchers for this report also talked with representatives from relevant major non-governmental organizations to determine their assessments of how the policy change was proceeding. We contacted the Christian Institute, the major NGO opposing the new

policy; TORCHe, the gay rights group of the Conservative Party; the Royal United Service Institute (RUSI), an independent military think-tank; Stonewall and Outrage!, the two primary gay-rights groups in Britain; and Rank Outsiders, an organization that promotes the rights of gay and lesbian servicemembers. Rank Outsiders has been monitoring the inclusion of gay and lesbian service personnel closely since the policy change was announced in January.

Colin Hart, the executive director for the Christian Institute, does not feel that sufficient information was yet publicly available to assess the impact of the removal of the prohibition against homosexual servicemembers:

Well, it's far too early to say what the results of lifting the ban have been. Clearly some senior officers are so concerned that they have resigned. We have not yet been able to investigate the implementation of the policy. (Personal Communication, September 21, 2000)

Debbie Gupta, the Director of Policy and Public Affairs at Stonewall, also feels that her organization is not in a position to know the military effects of the policy change on morale, unit cohesion, or harassment levels. She points to the statements of Rear-Admiral Burnell-Nugent as providing the best public evidence of the impact of the policy change (Personal Communication, October 18, 2000).

None of the other organizations, including the non-partisan RUSI, know of any major problems with morale, unit cohesion or operational effectiveness that have developed in the wake of the policy change. Steven Johnston, the Chair of Rank Outsiders, posed the question of operational effectiveness and morale to Air Marshal Pledger at a RUSI presentation on September 28 concerning personnel matters:

I asked the very same question [concerning operational effectiveness and morale], and his direct reply was that there had been no change in either operational effectiveness or problems with moral[e]. In fact, I have three

members of my Association who have been accepted back to full service (all in the Navy) where they have rejoined with the service knowing about their sexual orientation. These three individuals are of the three rank structures: Lt. [Commander], Chief Petty Officer and rating. This I believe is sufficient evidence to back up that statement. (Personal Communication, October 16, 2000)

Peter Tatchell, the Chairman of Outrage!, echoes Joan Heggie's comments about the lack of news about difficulties during the transition. Although Outrage! does not have the military connections that either RUSI or Rank Outsiders maintains, Tatchell suggests that the level of concern before the removal of the ban means that major post-change problems would have been brought to light:

But clearly, there has been none of the damage that the army chiefs were predicting to morale or operational effectiveness. ... [G]iven the dire warnings the service chiefs were making before the ban was lifted about how it would cripple morale, the consequences they predicted were so severe that we should be seeing something by now. But they have not come to pass. (Personal Communication, August 21, 2000)

RUSI, Rank Outsiders and Outrage! also have no knowledge of any increases in harassment related to sexual orientation. Rank Outsiders has been monitoring this issue and has been in close contact with the military on these matters. It is best positioned to assess the issue of anti-gay harassment, because they both support gay and lesbian service personnel and have access to the military's own analysis. Rank Outsiders might hear about cases of harassment of homosexual servicemembers that were not reported within the chain of command. Johnston, the Chair of Rank Outsiders, states that he knows of no significant harassment problems within the British military. He only knows of two minor instances of harassment, both of which were successfully resolved:

As an Association we have not heard of any major problems of harassment or assaults [sic] within the AF. I have been privy to two incidents in which we were able to advise and the problems were resolved quite

quickly. ... Both incidents were of a 'name calling' situation with only one that included any physical efforts, that being belongings overturned and adverse comments painted onto a private motor vehicle. The local commanders were very sympathetic ... The end result was that the individual, by his own request, had moved units and is now an instructor at his unit Training Center! (Personal Communication, October 16, 2000)

Johnston further reports that the military has expressed a desire to work effectively with Rank Outsiders should any future problems arise. Johnston explains:

I have been to the Ministry of Defense a number of times in which [harassment] has been the subject of many discussions. It appears that there have not been any cases that they are aware of and were very positive as [to] this situation. I have been told, however, that if any do come to light that I am aware of and require assistance, they will investigate at the highest levels (Personal Communication, October 16, 2000).

Michael Codner, the Assistant Director for Military Sciences at RUSI, believes that assurances of this kind by military commanders are not simply empty gestures. He is convinced that the Armed Forces are strongly committed to making the new policy work. Codner argues that not only has the top brass invested in the policy change, but also that the new thinking about homosexual inclusion is part of a larger shift that has affected the military. Codner explains:

The intention is to be far more than cosmetic. If you look at the thinking of senior personnel, they have invested a great deal of credibility and authority into this policy shift. They want to see it fully implemented.

There has been a kind of generational shift. [For] the people who are moving into the rank of 1-star and 2-star general, who are around 50-53 ... for them this is just not so much of a major issue. (Personal Communication, September 26, 2000)

The Chairs of Rank Outsiders and OutRage! both suggest that the eradication of the ban on homosexual service in the military is just the first step in

a longer process toward full equality in the military for sexual minorities. The attainment of equal access to domestic partner benefits, joint accommodations and pension benefits will signal a real acknowledgement of the contributions and sacrifices that homosexual personnel have made, as well as their full acceptance into the fabric of military life. Johnston explains:

As to the future, there is still much to be done. The ban being overturned is a major step for the future, but equal rights with their heterosexual colleagues is a different matter. Full employment rights will include: pension rights, accommodation rights and partnership rights ... These, when obtained, will show the commitment by the [Armed Forces] hierarchy to full equality to every member of the [Armed Forces] ...

As for the transition to the new policy, well it has all been very much a 'matter of fact' and life goes on as it always has. In summary, there has simply been no change but a positive step forward that at last each and every person can be themselves and give their very best to the roles that they undertake! (Personal Communication, October 16, 2000)

Since the ban on homosexual servicemembers has been lifted, the British media has reported the first instance of a gay soldier coming out to his crewmates. Most recently, it has also reported the acceptance of the boyfriend of the first openly gay officer in the Royal Navy as a "naval wife", with rights to benefits such as subsidized flights to see his partner in port and invitations to formal Navy dinners (Gilligan, 2000). Researchers for this report also spoke with four sexual minorities presently serving in the British Armed Forces about their experiences before and after the policy change. The four men include: a chief petty officer in the Royal Navy, a lieutenant commander in the Royal Navy, a corporal in the Royal Air Force, and a junior technician in the Royal Air Force. The chief petty officer and the lieutenant commander were both discharged under the former policy and have recently been reinstated. The corporal has been in the

military for ten years and was recently promoted. He has been out to his colleagues since the ban was lifted. The junior technician has served continuously for the past five years and has not disclosed his sexual orientation to any of his colleagues. Because these interviewees do not constitute a representative sample of presently-serving homosexual soldiers, their experiences cannot be said to provide a complete picture of life for sexual minorities under the new policy. But their perspectives as servicemembers most affected by the policy change allow for a more detailed portrait of the present conditions on-the-ground than the comments by MOD staff members and other non-military observers.

At the end of January 2000, the first purported servicemember to publicly acknowledge his homosexuality in the wake of the lifting of the ban told his shipmates that he was gay. The sailor, who asked reporters not to disclose his name, announced his sexual orientation several hours after the lifting of the ban. The 280-member crew was ‘reminded’ of the rules against bullying and harassment, and that any allegation would be “thoroughly investigated” (Fleet, 2000). The man told members of the ship’s mess while docked near Portsmouth, Hants, his hometown. He reported that his announcement was well-received. “They were all fine about it. I was surprised. I had no problem with them about it at all”.

The sailor, who had been with the Navy for eight years but had only realized his sexual orientation four years ago, said that he was relieved to have been able to disclose his sexual orientation with his crewmates:

I was just fed up with lying to people, especially when I went home at the weekends. People have asked me where I have been, and I have had to make up somewhere because I had been to a gay club. I was living separate lives. I had my Navy life and I had my life at home. Coming out in the Navy has been a big weight off my shoulders. It has been a big relief. (Fleet, 2000).

The sailor added that he did not expect any problems in the wake of his announcement. He declared, “I do not expect any problems in the future or for it to affect my work” (Fleet, 2000).

On October 29, the Sunday Times reported that the partner of the first openly gay naval officer had won the right to some partner benefits, including joining naval spouses flying out to see their husbands and wives. Lieutenant Commander Craig Jones said that his partner Adam has been “made to feel welcome” by the navy and has been “fully integrated” into naval family life (Gilligan, 2000). Jones’ partner has attended formal dinners on ship and ashore:

Our first mess dinner, in Portsmouth, was a worry, but we had a great time. It was a difficult issue for Adam and me, but people generally, and particularly my colleague’s wives, looked after us very well. (Gilligan, 2000)

All of the out servicemembers interviewed for this report also state that they have had no major problems with their colleagues because of their sexual orientation. Corporal Andrew Blythe has had no difficulties with his colleagues at Bentley Priory, all of whom know that he is gay. Chief Petty Officer Rob Nunn and Lieutenant Commander Michael Griffiths, who have been recently reinstated in the Navy after earlier discharges due to sexual orientation, report that colleagues have responded well to their reinstatements. The circumstances of their departures and returns have meant that the sexual orientation of each officer is widely known by co-workers. This has not, however, resulted in problems for either officer. Lieutenant Commander Griffiths explains:

I am now out to anyone who wishes to know. Just about everyone who knew me before 1995 knows [my sexual orientation,] and I have already met about a dozen people who know since rejoining. They have been absolutely fine, welcoming me back to the Royal Navy and it obviously

isn't causing them any difficulty. I have come out to one person who knew me [prior to discharge] but didn't know [my sexual orientation]. He was astonished, remarked that I kept it very quiet before and has been fine since. (Personal Communication, October 22, 2000)

Chief Petty Officer Nunn, who has served in the navy for a total of 21 years, may be returning to submarine duty and is in line for a promotion. He also reports a positive response from co-workers:

Now, the people in the mess have asked me all sorts of questions, and I've answered their questions. They think I'm very brave doing what I've done, and we've now got to the stage where the mess president a couple of nights ago asked if my partner was coming to the Christmas ball. (Personal Communication, October 17, 2000)

Chief Petty Officer Nunn believes that the best approach has been to allow for an open dialogue with colleagues about the subject of his sexual orientation and his reinstatement. This has enabled him to counter stereotypes, improve the knowledge of his colleagues, and put people at ease. Chief Petty Officer Nunn has not been subject to harassment either before his dismissal or after his return; he has, however, encountered several people since his reinstatement who have been unsure how to respond to him. He describes the experience:

Well, it's the not being able to ask me a question. It's the old – 'I don't know quite what to say'. In fact, one guy that I talked to who couldn't sort of talk to me, I said, 'Right, I'm going to ask the questions that you want to ask, and answer them.' So I did. (Personal Communication, October 17, 2000)

Chief Petty Officer Nunn adds that his open approach has been successful. Once colleagues are able to ask the questions that they have about homosexuality and about the service of gay and lesbian soldiers, any remaining discomfort seems to disappear. With respect to the colleague who was once afraid to voice his queries,

Chief Petty Officer Nunn reports that he is “nice as pie now” (Personal Communication, October 17, 2000).

All four respondents feel positively about the policy change. While Lieutenant Commander Griffiths and the junior technician believe that it is too early to know if the policy will be implemented fairly for both heterosexual and homosexual soldiers, Corporal Blyth and Chief Petty Officer Nunn both feel that the army is committed to providing equal standards for heterosexual and homosexual soldiers alike. Corporal Blyth says that, “In fact I now feel more protected under the military code than my partner does at work ([h]e’s a civilian)” (Personal Communication, October 27, 2000).

Chief Petty Officer Nunn believes that he has already seen evidence of the military’s commitment to enforcing across-the-board both a code of social conduct and a zero-tolerance policy for harassment. He explains:

To a person, everybody I’ve talked to, commander downwards, has said – if you’ve got problems, come and see me. ... I can deal with most of it. But you know, I know full well that if I went to one of them with it, it would be sorted out. They are more than willing to use the legislation, which is very good news from our point of view. (Personal Communication, October 17, 2000)

He also reports that he has just acted as the Provost Marshal at a Court Martial for a male soldier who had been sexually harassing female trainees. The male soldier was severely disciplined; he was demoted a rank, had to forfeit a medal and lost twelve years of good conduct. Chief Petty Officer Nunn argues that this punishment was a good example of the military’s willingness to apply the social code of conduct to all its servicemembers (Personal Communication, October 17, 2000).

Chief Petty Officer Nunn, Lieutenant Commander Griffiths and the junior technician also report that not much has changed in the day-to-day life in the Armed