

during times of war. Gay role models date all the way back to Alexander the Great. And who could forget how gay ingenuity helped win World War II for the Allies? (In case you did forget, Alan Turing broke the German army's secret codes and opened the way for D-Day. Turing later killed himself due to the torment he faced as a homosexual in an unsympathetic society.)

In light of the previous contribution of gays and lesbians in the armed forces, there are those who want to make compromises and let them stay. Many of them claim that gays are O.K. for K.P. duty and the like, but not for fighting. High-ranking generals are pushing for separate assignments, separate quarters — even separate showers for self-described homosexuals.

This alone might put more servicemen back in the closet than before the ban was enacted during World War II. I mean, given the choice between a stall of his own and a soapy hose-down with ten or twenty hunky infantrymen, which do you think a gay man might opt for? Wouldn't it be worth a few years in the closet to experience in real life what most men can only dream about after a late night rental from the local adult video store?

Let's consider another argument often made by the opposition, most recently by Senator Alfonse D'Amato of New York. He claims that homosexuals in the military are a security risk because they might want to stay in the closet. This leaves them vulnerable to those who discover their "secret" and blackmail them later on. For that reason, they should be given the army boot altogether.

Nice reasoning, Al. It's like saying that because I know you're a congressman, I can force you to steal limousines from the government's car pool. The statement's idiotic because the premise is idiotic; it's only made operable by the existence of prejudice — in this case, a fictitious (?) prejudice against congressmen. We're back to

Rotundo's claim that homophobia is the real problem, not homosexuals. Now, if American society could get over its ridiculous prejudice against gays and lesbians, wham-o: no problem with blackmail in the army. It's a question of whether you want to solve the problem or just go on living with it and fearing the consequences.

Other countries don't seem to have much trouble when it comes to allowing gays and lesbians into the ranks. Even though there's a bit of fuss at the time, armies like Australia's and Canada's get used to the change, which turns out not to be much of change after all. Like Barney Frank and countless others have said, this isn't a question of letting gays and lesbians into the army; they're already there. It's just a question of letting them relax a little and get on with their business.

Of course, if we keep up with the ban on homosexuals, maybe those members of the gay and lesbian communities with military leanings will become mercenaries and join the armies of other countries where they're more accepted. Wouldn't that thought instill fear and horror into the hearts of American servicemen? Recent polls show that the majority of them fear finding themselves in battle with homosexuals. An army of queers wouldn't have to use force at all to best American troops; they could just flirt with our boys from afar and drive them away in fear.

With all this fuss about gays in the military, I say fine — let the hets have it. Over the years we've seen too many instances of the military engaging in immoral behavior anyway, whether it's the atrocities of Vietnam or more recent scandals like Tailhook. If heterosexuals want to lay claim to such behavior, they're welcome to it. Once a national gay and lesbian civil rights bill gets passed (hopefully within the next four years), the military will end up with egg on its face anyway and all this stubbornness. Such an outlook would be inconsistent with history, however. Gay people have often played major roles even

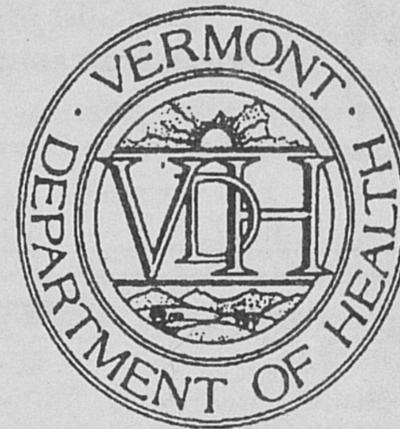
about removing the fifty-year-old ban will seem like so much more macho bull-headedness on the Pentagon's part.

So, let us not put the cart before the horse, as the saying goes. While our brothers and sisters in uniform deserve our full respect and support in this battle for equality, we should not lose sight of the fact that the war against homophobia rages on elsewhere.

As gay and lesbian people, our own forces have always fought for basic human rights and justice throughout all of society. Let's be proud of the integrity of that mission and hold it foremost in mind as we select our battles, and perhaps think twice before investing all our energies in this recent skirmish with the Pentagon.

I don't know but I've been told  
Everyone's as good as gold  
Man or woman, straight or gay  
All deserve respect today  
Forward march.... ▼

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