

Military's gay ban cannot be justified

Gays and guns. If you listen to members of the defense establishment, you'd know the two don't mix. If you listen to anybody with a shred of common sense, you'd know otherwise.

The controversy surrounding homosexuals in the military has come to a boil during the past week, as President Bill Clinton attempts to overturn the policies enforcing their ban from the armed services. Most recently, Clinton has agreed to do nothing for six months, allowing the military to prepare itself for "The Day."

What, exactly, is going to change in the next six months that hasn't changed in the past 40 years is unclear. The likely answer is nothing. Big surprise.

The military defends the ban, saying homosexuals will lower morale and disrupt the smooth, oiled-machine-like workings of the armed forces.

Why? Because, according to the military, heterosexual members in the military just can't get along with homosexual members.

The Pentagon has, of course, offered no evidence to support its policy of discrimination. It's just pretty sure the mix wouldn't work. The argument used to be that homosexuals were a security risk. That has since been proved false and is no longer being offered as a defense.

The new rationale points out that the military discriminates against other people, why not homosexuals? People who are too fat, too skinny, too tall, too short, flat-footed, have bad vision or hearing, have chronic ailments, have physical deformities or are single parents are excluded from military service.

Unlike the homosexual ban, those listed above are legitimate. People who fall into one of those categories cannot perform the duties required. Overweight people cannot fit through the hatches on a ship. Flat-footed people can't march very far. Inability to hear an order could put lives at risk. Single parents can't just leave their children on a moments notice.

So what is it homosexuals can't do? Pull a trigger? Throw a grenade? Navigate a ship? Fly a plane? Die in battle? Right now, only the last question can be answered "yes."

Perhaps homosexuals will increase the transmission of HIV throughout the armed forces. But heterosexual members aren't pure and innocent virgins whose ecclesiastical lifestyles keep them out of danger.

Even if the ban is lifted, the Uniform Code of Military Justice prohibits sodomy, and sexual contact is prohibited for all people within military installations. Even if homosexuals were admitted, their alleged "promiscuity" would be forbidden by the UCMJ — as it is for heterosexuals as well.

Homosexuals in the military will face a long struggle for acceptance, just as other minorities have and continue to do. Homosexuals are patriots, too, and have every right to "defend the Constitution of the United States from all enemies, foreign and domestic."



LETTERS

Grain of salt required

There is another student newspaper being published on campus called *The Student Insurgent* and I would like to encourage those of you who read it to take much of what it has to say with the proverbial "grain of salt."

I have noticed it has in the past printed false and misleading information. Apparently it is not as concerned with journalistic accuracy as it is with verbal flamboyancy. As consumers of printed media, I would like to caution you to remember to retain a sense of critical objectivity with anything you read.

Peggy Dee Southard
Graduate Student
Sociology

Credibility gone

Bob Packwood's determination not to resign his Senate seat does not prevent Oregonians' resigning from him. Let him know, with reminders as long as necessary, that we might find him helpful on a particular issue, but we deem it not worthwhile to get in touch with him because his credibility is gone.

Whatever the gravity of his conduct toward women, his attempt at cover-up, like Richard Nixon's in Watergate, has been worse. It alone ought to undo him. Apparently he either has not read or has forgotten the moral in Aesop's fable about the boy who cried wolf.

Packwood may vote in a way helpful to our side of a particular issue, but we cannot be sure the vote will be for the right reason or what the vote will be until he casts it. His overriding concern apparently is to be elected and stay elected. That posture lacks reliable moral substance and deserves our regarding him as if he were no longer in the Senate.

Orval Etter
Eugene

Excited about Otis

I sort of enjoyed reading the oh-so-juicy article about Otis Scarborough (*ODE*, Jan. 26). It was at best entertaining. At worst, well, it was pretty much what I would expect from a person in the business of enforcing someone else's laws — the bad power trip.

What I didn't enjoy was the *Emerald* of Jan. 26. Seventy-five percent of the paper dealt with various harassment charges concerning a couple of guys getting excited. Also, the much-too-long, but still juicy, original article about Otis was nearing overkill.

If Sen. Packwood won't resign his post, what makes everyone here on campus think Otis should? Let's see less tabloid, bandwagon articles please.

Eric Bergreen
Post-Baccalaureate
Biology

You can't be serious

I write in response to Bob Weigel's letter on Wednesday, Jan. 27, in which he claimed he had "never tried drugs, booze or sex" and was still "a happy man." Come on Bob. No sex?

Andrew O'Connell
Student

Oregon Daily

Emerald

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