

Suffering from the disease

Autor(en): **Marriot, P.B.**

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Der Kreis : eine Monatsschrift = Le Cercle : revue mensuelle**

Band (Jahr): **34 (1966)**

Heft 4

PDF erstellt am: **22.07.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-568559>

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He left the town quickly and stopped only when he arrived at the bench. He had to rest, it was very warm and the hill seemed steeper than before. With bitter irony he talked to himself: Nothing has changed? Everything has changed. There was the bench, there in the valley lay the town—he barely saw it. A town—there are thousands of little towns—this one meant nothing, nothing anymore, nor did the bench. He rose and strode into the forest—toward his company.

Suffering from the Disease

An interesting letter to *Time And Tide*, London, March 3d, 1966, reprinted without comment.

DISCIPLINE AND HOMOSEXUALITY

From Captain P B Marriot, DSO, DSC, Royal Navy (retired)

Sir: 'Tenax' has been brave to query legalised homosexuality. May I comment on a particularly important aspect on which little is ever publicly expressed and on which, it seems to me, very few people indeed are qualified to speak?

In practice, in the vast majority of cases, homosexuality is associated with other crimes and is both a symptom and a cause of a demoralised society. For nearly 20 years I served in submarines where the uninformed might expect homosexuality to flourish. That it does not in fact do so is because the morale and discipline of a submarine crew is of an exceptionally high standard, and for no other reason. To the best of my belief, there was no single instance of homosexual practice in any one of the large number of submarines I was lucky enough to serve in.

More recently, I was the executive officer of a large modern carrier with a total ship's company of about 1,600 men. If there is any place where curious things are likely to occur, it is in these large overcrowded ships often kept at sea for prolonged periods. They do, occasionally, but in view of the extraordinary statistics which are sometimes quoted in other contexts, to a remarkably small extent.

In a ship's company of this size there will inevitably be a few genuine pathological oddities, perhaps half-a-dozen. There will be, however, a far larger proportion of border-line cases who depend entirely on the good influence of their officers and stronger messmates for their survival. For these, too, the protection which the law gives them is a vital factor.

From time to time homosexual outbreaks can be expected. There are those who genuinely suffer from the disease, but these are few. There are those who carry it; but mostly the thing is contagious and one man can infect a whole mess, particularly of young men perhaps lacking in character but in no sense homosexual by nature.

Homosexual practices are almost invariably associated with other disciplinary offences and low morale in a particular quarter. It is indeed a fact that the proportion of men who are sent to detention quarters for other offences but who are found to have dabbled in homosexual practices at some time or another, is very high and of these the proportion of genuine queers, who cannot be redeemed by ordinary disciplinary measures, is minute.

For eighteen months I also commanded the naval element of our Nuclear Trials at Christmas Island. Here we had at one time over 5,000 men cooped-up on a desert island for periods of up to a year. Here was a great hazard indeed and we were all very much aware of it. As a result of this experience. I would have no hesitation in saying that good discipline, fully supported by the law, is the only answer.

Toward the end of this period there was indeed, as in the long run was inevitable, a serious outbreak of disgraceful practices involving almost twenty men of all services and centring around two genuine physiological oddities. Their Lordships of the Admiralty have very rightly always taken a particularly serious view of such conduct because of its extremely adverse effect on morale; but in enforcing this in the service they have never, for one moment, lost sight of the need for Christian compassion.

In this particular case, I myself wrote formally to the Admiralty in mitigation of the crimes in view of the exceptional circumstances under which the men were forced to live. It was subsequently made clear to me that my views were taken very carefully into account.

Those who so irresponsibly advocate repeal of the law because of a few hard cases, little seem to understand the irreparable harm which may be done to those who are not strong enough to stand without protection, which the law at present affords them and which, in my experience, is invariably administered with commonsense and Christian compassion.

This may seem a far cry from South Africa; but Mr Humphry Berkeley, who has now introduced his iniquitous Bill, is also one of the leaders in the campaign against South Africa. This is no coincidence. I regard both activities as part of a Left-wing attack on morale.

P B MARRIOTT

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INCLUDE FORCES IN HOMOSEXUAL BILL

Letter to The Times, London, February 15th, 1966 from their political correspondent

An attempt to delete the part of the Sexual Offences Bill that retains existing penalties for homosexual conduct in the Royal Navy, the Army, and the Royal Air Force is being made by Mr. Mawby, Conservative member for Totnes, and other opponents of the Bill.

Mr. Mawby, who tabled an amendment yesterday to remove the key subsection, said: «If it is right to make it legal for civilians to indulge in homosexual activities—which I dispute—there is no reason why the concession should not extend to military forces.»

It was argued, he said, that the law had to be preserved in its present state for the three Services to maintain good order and discipline. «If this is necessary'» Mr. Mawby said, «then similar provisions must be retained for the control of other disciplined forces such as the police, the prison service, the fire service and, in the interests of security, for certain sections of the Civil Service.»

In committee, Mr. Mawby will claim that the sponsors of the Bill, by putting in the proviso covering the Armed Forces, are admitting that the relaxation in the law which they propose will be prejudicial to good order and discipline and, possibly, to state security.

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