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From: Sunday Times, London

NICOLAS JAMES

is thirty-eight, a precise square-built man, with lovat-tweedy clothes. No one could look less homosexual. Six years ago he was dismissed from the RAF with ignominy. After four unpleasant years looking for work he became a civil servant and has just been promoted. He says:



I'm still bitter about being cashiered. I don't think it should have happened the way it did. It's a complicated story, but briefly: I was a personnel officer at a Bomber Command station. One day I was given details of a young airman who'd been convicted of what they call 'gross indecency' with a civilian. To my distress I realised this civilian was a man with whom I had once had an affair, and wrote to him about it.

It's Air Ministry policy to discharge anyone convicted of a homosexual offence, whatever the sentence. In this case, as the airman had been only cautioned, and as he had only a short time still to serve I recommended that he be retained. This was my undoing.

A little later another young airman on my staff came to ask my advice. He said he was frightened he might become homosexual.

I tried to give him advice, and arranged for him to go to a Harley Street specialist. Unfortunately at about this time he was transferred to an office where he could see files on secret atomic work.

At the same time a new commanding officer arrived on the station, and *heard* rumours about our friendship. Instead of asking me about it he referred the case to the RAF security police. From that moment life was a nightmare. The police questioned everyone ruthlessly, no privacy was left. They tried everything to get us to admit to a homosexual relationship—but there was none.

Then they found a copy of a letter I had sent to the civilian. He was questioned and admitted we had had an affair. They then persuaded me if I pleaded guilty they might not drag the others into the case. After I did so they nonetheless tried all of us at a court martial. The charges of «undue familiarity» with the airmen were dismissed, but I was cashiered. And the sentence was ordered to be posted on notice boards in every Bomber Command station. I gather the authorities were worried at the time about growing homosexuality in the RAF.

Even if the law for civilians is amended, the Army, Navy and Air Force Regulations will still be as strict as before. I concede that it is wrong for any serviceman to have a relationship with someone of another rank—that could lead to trouble. But if Squadron-Leader Snooks wants to have an affair with a civilian that is strictly his affair. And that was my only real offence.

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