

Recently Bowdoin College in Maine has dropped a policy, adopted in 1990, that resulted in the U.S. military's being barred from recruiting on campus. Under Bowdoin's 1990 policy employers had to certify that they do not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation. Because the military will not recruit openly gay people its representatives were barred from the Bowdoin campus. As of February 1995, however, employers that discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation are allowed to recruit at Bowdoin. Robert H. Edwards, President of Bowdoin, said the change was prompted by an amendment to the bill authorizing defense programs recently enacted by Congress that was supported by Representative Jerry Solomon, a New York Republican. The Solomon amendment prohibits the Department of Defense from supporting any research at colleges that bar military recruiters.

Is the Solomon amendment morally justifiable? If so, why? If not, why not?

(Reported in the Chronicle of Higher Education 3/3/95)

MODERATOR'S ANSWER: The Solomon amendment is morally unjustifiable. It appears to be aimed at punishing colleges that express their opposition to the position of the U.S. military concerning recruitment of openly gay individuals. From the standpoint of the public interest, the Department of Defense should allocate research funds on the basis of judgment concerning the extent to which scientific and technical research is likely to reach results that contribute to meeting the national security needs of the United States. The decision should not be made on the basis of an individual's or institution's expressed opposition to the recruitment policies at the military.

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