Gordon R. Sullivan and other chiefs makes the change. Army Gen. McCurdy (D)-Okla.) to convince Staff, working through retired Adm. easily dodge the question once he presidential transition, but he cannot to face the uniformed services in the most explosive social question signed an "immediate repeal" of the ailed another campaign promise to tary service but said he would "con- siders knowledgeable about the lobby- the alternative could be costly. Two members of the Joint Chiefs are said by associates to be ready to reign over the issue, though such reports may prove exaggerated. "Strategically, given his back- ground, he can't afford this fight with his military establishment," the official said. "Politically, he just can't do it. So what you do is study it. You say, 'I want to get the right answer but I want to do what's best for the national security.' That takes it off the agenda." Crowe, whose endorsement of Clinton in September was regarded by aides as the turning point in answering "the commander-in-chief question" about the unstated Arkansas governor, has publicly disagreed with Clinton on the gay issue. Gregory King of the Human Rights Campaign Fund, a leading gay-rights lobby group, Thursday rejected the call for a commission. "I expect that President-elect Clinton will repeal the ban on gays in the early days of a Clinton administration," he said. "Nothing, he said today leads me to think that's not what he plans to do. He recognizes that the implementation may require further consideration and that is not in any way contradictory to his stated intent of ending the ban." Clinton appeared to feel both interpretations Thursday. He said he wanted "to put together a group of people and let them advise me about how we might best do this." That sounded as though he might mean a commission, but he made clear that he was "not going to change my position" on the ultimate question. Even so, some Clinton defense advisers and military officers assert- that the issue is more complicated than first appeared in the presi- dential campaign. Because the ban on gays is not a matter of law, Clinton could end it by executive decree. But Clinton must also decide whether to drop pending cases to enforce the 49- year-old policy of homosexual exclusion.

Clinton Reaffirms Pledge on Homosexuals in Military

By Barton Gellman

President-elect Bill Clinton, torn between gay-rights supporters and aides who fear upheaval in the U.S. armed forces, Thursday reaffirmed a campaign pledge to permit acknowledged homosexuals in mili- tary service but said he would "con- spect. There's not any room for mistakes on my part. ... I can't jeopar- dize the gays and lesbians who follow." They Promised. We voted. They won. Now What?

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MONDAY, November 16, 1992 • 6:00PM • HARVARD HALL, Room 201

Gay Sailor Returns to Duty

By John E. Yang

For nearly two years at Moffett Field Naval Air Station here, Petty Officer 1st Class Keith Meinhold tugged some crew on P-3 Orion aircraft to hunt submarines. Thursday morning, he returned to Patrol Squadron 31 after a seven-month hiatus and said he was intent on teaching the nation that homosexuals can serve ably in the armed forces despite the long- standing policy against their inclusion. "I have to go and prove that all the assertions the Pentagon made against gays serving in the military are wrong," Meinhold said in an interview at his home in nearby Palo Alto Thursday. "If the test case, there's not any room for mistakes on my part... I can't jeopardize the gays and lesbians who follow." Hours later, Meinhold, 30, a 12-year Navy veteran with a strong service record, became the only man returned to military service after publicly declaring his homosexuality under the military's mandatory- discharge policy.

Surrounded by cameras and reporters, Meinhold arrived at Moffett wearing civilian clothes and carrying his Navy dress blues on a hanger and his cap and regulation black shoes in a brown-paper shopping bag. He passed through the main gate at 8:10 a.m. PST, 10 minutes late, after an impromptu news conference.

Glancing at his watch with a black face and pink triangle, a sym- bol of gay pride, he declared: "It's time to get to work."