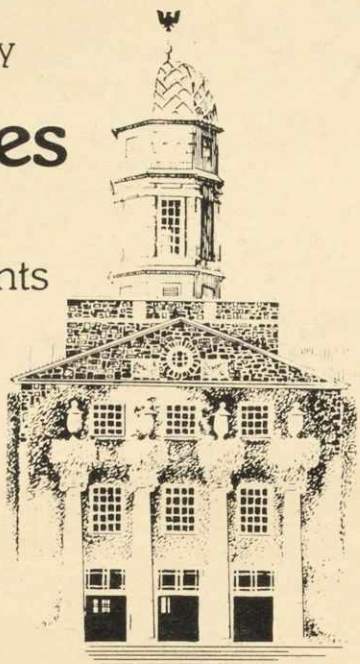


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Continued from page 13

There are a number of cases where the government, particularly the cabinet, have made it quite clear they are not happy with the Charter of Rights. A number of ministers are on record as saying they don't agree with the Charter, said MacKay, and that they, not the federal government, know best about protecting people's rights. "That's been Ron Giffin's line, that's been (social services minister) Edmund Morris' line. They didn't want a charter of rights included in the constitution and they are particularly unhappy with the broad equality of rights the Charter guarantees Canadians," said MacKay.

Some other people are unhappy with the Charter of Rights, too. A small right-wing fundamentalist group has written to Giffin and the daily newspapers congratulating him on his stance. Bob Ritchie, author of the letter and vice-president of the Christian Political Alliance of Nova Scotia, said "the Lord" told him and a few others to start a political party to re-establish Christian principles in the province. "We wish to establish a just rule in this province," said Ritchie in an interview, "and, if we govern this province, God will bless Nova Scotia." Ritchie said the papers edited out the biblical quotes he used in his letter "to show that homosexuality is a sin. It's a sin, a terrible, terrible sin. It's not just a disease, it's not just a bad habit, it's a sin," said Ritchie.

While CPA members are not overly numerous in Halifax, Rit-

chie said he has attended several meetings since the party first formed in April of this year and the response it is receiving in rural areas is "good, better than we expected." These are the people, and perhaps some not quite so extreme, to whom Keith Cole and Ronald Giffin are catering when they say they are answering to the "morals of our society." They are the ones that convince Giffin and Cole that the stereotypes they hold about gays and lesbians are valid representations.

"There are a lot of ramifications of hiring homosexuals as police officers," said Cole. "If a police office does a search, and does it properly, then there shouldn't be any outcry. But he is gay, you'll get some people who wouldn't like it. A lot of people are turned off by homosexuality. And that's when having gay cops becomes a problem," he said.

Even the support gay police officers have been offered by their union is somewhat reserved. Ed Hiscock, secretary of the Halifax Police Patrolman's Association and a member of the board of directors of the Police Associations of Nova Scotia, said the union is prepared to defend the right of any gay office fired because of his sexual orientation.

"When you have a labour union, the union has basic obligations to its people. We will represent the rights of our members," said Hiscock. In court? "I'd hate to get caught up in speculation, saying this is what we would do if a member of our association was fired."

Giffin is saying gay cops can't do the job, said Hiscock. "But

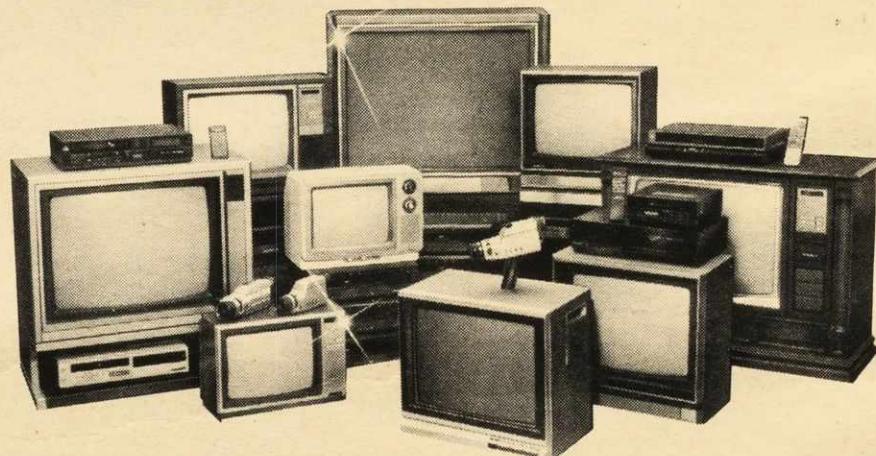
there you are getting into the morality of sexual preference and that's something I want to stay away from. I can see the validity of some of his points. I certainly wouldn't consider doing a body search of a female prisoner, because some people might say that I had some sexual interest in mind. So you can imagine the implications for a gay person if he was searching a man," he said.

Cole uses the same example, and also says having gay officers on the forces would cause morale problems. "Say I was a gay cop and you're another cop, and I put my hand on your shoulder. You'd cringe. And imagine the kinds of catcalls that police officer would get walking down the street," said Cole.

Metcalf said opinions like those are not about to disappear immediately, but he is optimistic that the gay community in Nova Scotia has won this battle, for now. "This issue has outraged people like no other has. There have been more people and more energy at our meetings than I've seen for years. We had our hopes raised with the Charter and people are enraged to see the government try to take that away from us now," he said.

Giffin used the gay community as a "trial balloon," said Metcalf. "Gays are the most vulnerable group. They wanted to see if they could get away with bashing gays, and then, if that worked, they'd try bashing someone else. "But we've won round one. The government hasn't asked for Giffin's resignation, but they aren't rushing to his defence either."

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