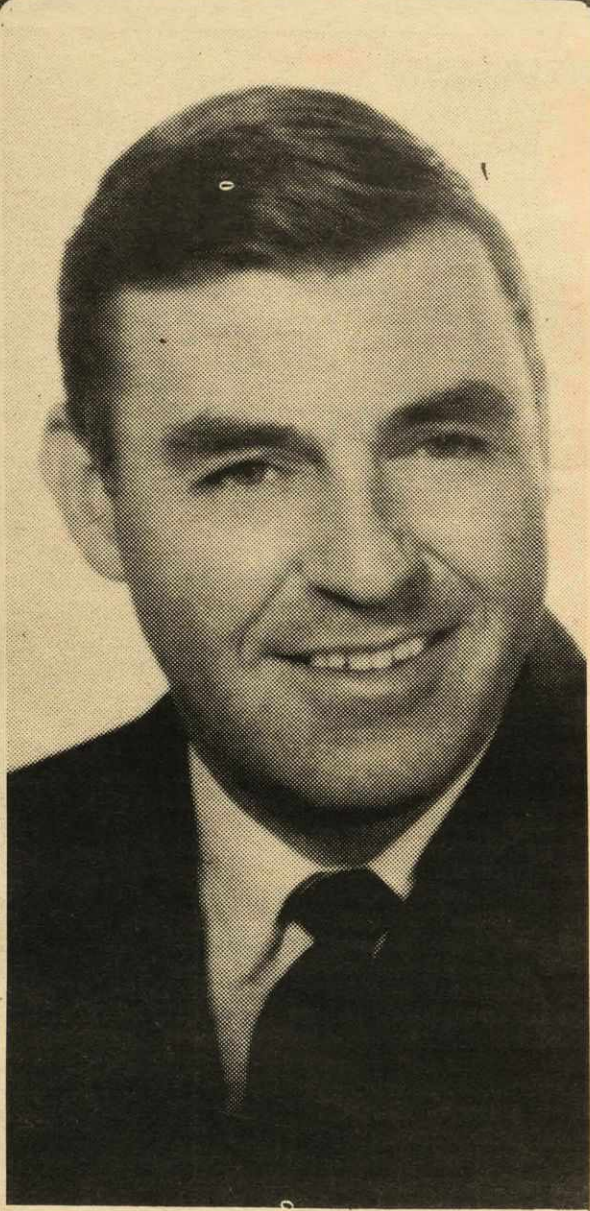


# Human Rights Legislation



Hon. James Harding

By CAROL BEAL

HALIFAX — a Bill intended to eliminate discrimination in the fields of housing, employment and property ownership was given second reading (approval in principle) in the Nova Scotia House of Assembly this week.

The amended Human Rights Act, when passed will "put teeth" into existing human rights legislation, according to Hon. James M. Harding Q.C., Minister in charge of Human Rights.

The new law will provide stiff penalties for discriminatory practices and permits the Human Rights Commission to more effectively enforce the provisions of the Act.

In an exclusive interview with Mr. Harding, the Gazette learned that although Nova Scotia had the first legislation in their field in Canada, it has taken over a decade for this legislation to be made even partially effective. "Over the past ten years we have been moving towards stricter penalties." First there was need for the government to endorse a policy with respect to Human Rights and having finally managed to do this, it was necessary to influence the community to accept it. "The government had to be wary of going too quickly before the members of the public were prepared to go along." Perhaps this explains why it took outsiders to point out the deplorable situation of human rights in this "progressive province".

Mr. Harding has been connected with the Human Rights Commission for five years during which time there has been only gradual change. The Department of Labour enforced the Fair Employment Practices Act for the Commission and the basic approach was through an inter-departmental committee on Human Rights. In addition, extensive efforts were made to support the activities of the NSCAAP.

This new legislation seems to go no further than the policies outlined by the Premier at the Human Rights Conference last December when some controversy developed over the appointment of Marvin Schiff. When asked why it took the government eighteen months to appoint a Human Rights co-ordinator the Minister replied "Through a process of elimination none of the applicants were ideally suited to the position even after a prolonged national advertisement campaign." There was a "conscious and sustained effort" on the part of the Government, because of the importance it attached to the position, to find the correct person. "In fact" said the Minister, "if I had not felt that Marvin Schiff was suited for the position I would have hesitated to recommend to the Government any person to fill the position."

When asked what role Marvin Schiff played in the formation of the new legislation, the Minister pointed out that the principles had been determined prior to Schiff's introduction to the situation. In fact, the Premier had made several commitments to the NSCAAP over the summer which were incorporated into the legislation, along with suggestions that Mr. Schiff brought back from the Ontario scene. The black community also had a say in the drafting of the legislation in the person of Mr. Gus Wedderburn, an influential member of the Human Rights Commission.

Although there are two areas of discretionary power in the legislation, (the Minister and the Justice of the Supreme Court) the Minister pointed out that the processing of complaints has not resulted in remedial action after the prolonged and somewhat lenient procedures of the present Act. "There must be a considered appraisal of the steps in the process and a new dimension must be added -- that of Ministerial Review. (The Minister has the power to impose fines up to \$500 on an individual and \$100 on a company. Compensation to the claimant is also set by the Minister. However, Mr. Harding wished to emphasize that the Commission will attempt to get the respondent to react without resorting to court proceedings. If the reaction is not favorable, "for every day there is an infraction, the process can be started over again." This would result in additional fines and compensation.

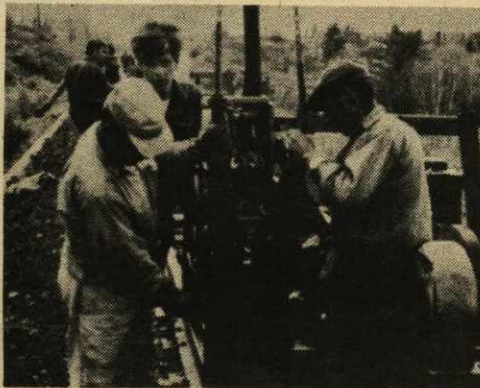
When asked whether the legislation was designed to protect specific minority rights or if it was aimed at helping the people who are being discriminated against, the Minister replied: "Specific minority rights. We took a very broad viewpoint instead of being negative and imposing prohibitions we decided we would adopt very general sweeping provisions with a large number of exceptions which would leave the matter open and subject to interpretation by Courts."

Commenting on the Gazette's request for the interpretation of the provisions regulating against discrimination in housing, the Minister said: "This applies (also) to individual rooms defined as single room accommodations in private dwellings where there are basic facilities; we do not however, want to legislate anything so personal as who a homeowner will have living in his home. We condemn discriminatory attitudes, but we uphold the principle of the privacy of the home."

If you feel this legislation does not go far enough, take positive action, write to your MLA.



In Frobisher Bay



The labour



At a Yukon Mine

## The Frontier College

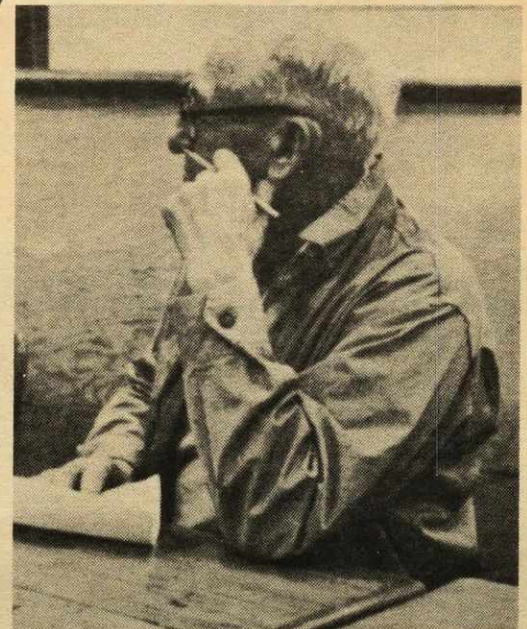
Looking for a summer job that is a little out of the ordinary that will provide a real challenge, and will bring a reasonable amount of monetary reward? Then try working for Frontier College this summer. Come to the recruiting session on Wednesday, February 26th, in the McInnes Room from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m., where the Frontier College film will be shown and interviews arranged.

What is Frontier College exactly?

It is an organization which arranges for college students to work as "labourer-teachers" on railway gangs, in mines and in logging and construction camps during the summer months. The "labourer-teacher" will work a normal working day with the men usually in a menial task of sorts, and in his spare time he will teach English, mathematics and other subjects as well as organize recreational and cultural activities. However, the role of the "labourer-teacher" is unlimited. He may well act as counsellor, social worker, friend, teacher and even translator, to what may be termed the forgotten men of Canada. The majority of men with whom the labourer-teacher will come in contact will range from the old or new immigrant to the man who has left home and a family to the hardened criminal. These are the men who will have the most to gain from the labourer-teacher and the services he can offer. The point to remember is that the labourer teacher is Frontier College in the community, and he will have to rely on his own initiative a lot of the time to get equipment and services which he may require. However the headquarters in Toronto will get anything you may want or will find someone who will supply the equipment to you. Frontier College will support the labourer-teacher through thick and thin. But it is up to the individual to do what he can on his own.

There are seventy students employed during the summer throughout Canada, from Newfoundland to Yellowknife. The labourer teacher will be paid an honorarium at the end of the summer, depending on the amount of money he can earn. Frontier College guarantees a minimum of \$1,000 take home pay for 16 weeks work.

If you are still interested in this challenging and want to find out more about Frontier College, come to the meeting on February 26th.



A Student



You Give The Ball To Me