

Continued from page 12

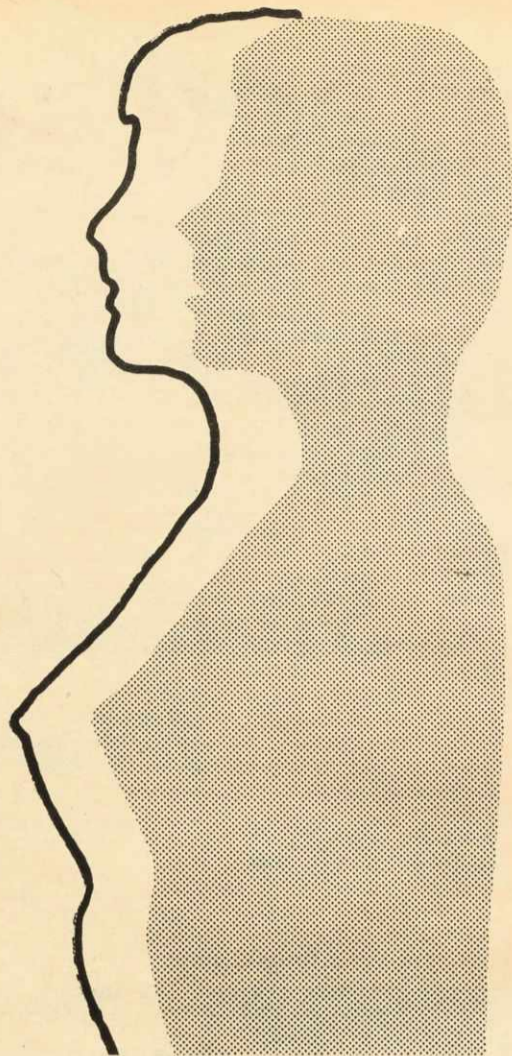
"I think he's a homophobe and he hasn't recanted. I don't think the attorney-general should occupy that position if he has those beliefs and if he says them publicly," said Derrick.

Derrick wants the government to say it is committed to the Charter. "Giffin has shown us the danger in the Charter, by threatening to use the opting-out clause. But I think it would be politically obtuse to rely on that clause."

Giffin has given the justice system in Nova Scotia a poor image, said Derrick, who describes herself as a "social agitator." "He dis-serves the application of justice in Nova Scotia. He's shown that one community at least cannot rely on being treated equally here. And that's inconsistent with what's happening across Canada. Sure, gay people are discriminated against across the country, but there are some steps being taken by other provincial governments, like Quebec, and the federal government to do something about that. They are at least taking some steps towards liberalizing attitudes towards gays. But what does Nova Scotia do? It has an attorney-general who says gays are weirdos and he caters to the people who believe that. That's a horrifying position to adopt in 1986," says Derrick.

Wayne MacKay said he is always trying to fight opinions in central Canada that generalize about Nova Scotia and said he doesn't want this issue to be something that people outside the province think can happen "only in Nova Scotia." "What I've been saying a lot lately is that it's not necessarily Nova Scotians speaking, it's the government. A significant number of Nova Scotians are incensed by what Giffin said. But here we have a government who is opposed to protecting the rights of its people, especially minority groups. The government here is up-front about its opposition to the Charter. They don't want it to protect people."

Continued on page 18



"What do we have in Nova Scotia? An attorney-general who says gays are weirdos."

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Say goodnight, Giffen



by Lois Corbett

As attorney-general of Nova Scotia, Ron Giffin may have set back the province's justice system 10 years when he told police chiefs nothing could force him to hire gays as police officers, but as a senior cabinet minister in the Buchanan government, his remarks, and the response they have generated, reveal a government on its way out of power.

In March, a Decima Research Ltd. private opinion poll showed that 56 per cent of the province's population still supported the Conservatives, up five per cent

from November, 1984. But an Omnifacts poll released at the end of July shows that support has faltered: the Conservatives are now running second to the Liberals in the province as a whole, and third after the New Democrats in Halifax.

The Nova Scotia Conservative Party has been right in the middle of the Giffin issue since he told the annual meeting of Atlantic police chiefs he would introduce legislation if necessary to keep gays off the province's police forces. The party's president, John Abbass of Sydney, said he didn't want anything to do with gays. "I don't want them around me, and I don't know any homosexuals in the Tory Party."

The Daily News, a Halifax tabloid, ran that story under a huge red headline crying, "No Gay Tories."

The vice-president of the party later said gays are still welcome in the party, despite what Abbass said.

"I don't think there is anything wrong with Mr. Abbass stating a sexual preference, but there is always a danger that his personal beliefs might be interpreted as party policy," said vice-president Deborah Grant.

"I would like to hope that member of the gay community would look beyond anyone's personal beliefs. We're still very much an open party," she said.

Members of the gay community and their supporters, however, will not be that forgiving in the next election, many people say. Anne Derrick, a Halifax lawyer, said Giffin "is at the twilight of his political career, and he has fully discredited himself," and others extend that argument to include the entire Conservative government.



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