

# feature

## Where have all the homos gone?

Introduction by LIZ WOOD for Canadian University Press

The title of this social comment humour piece sounds funny, right? When it was first published last December that's what most gay people thought, too. But since February 5th, when four bathhouse clubs were raided by 150 Metro Toronto police, and over 300 people arrested, many gays don't think "the day the homos disappeared" is so funny anymore.

Most say they feel a strange feeling of fear every time they see a policeman, anywhere. They also say it's not the average cop-on-the-beat who is to blame, but rather the hierarchy: people such as provincial attorney-general Roy McMurtry and Toronto police chief Jack Ackroyd.

In an editorial titled "The strong arm of the law" the Monday following the raids, the Globe and Mail said:

"The Metro Toronto Police claim to be understaffed. Yet they have been able to waste men on six months of investigation, on a 150-man raid, on policing the ensuing reaction, and on the court work that will result. And all for suspicion of conduct which is legal between consenting adults in private."

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the Metro Minority Task Force, the Right to Privacy Committee, several aldermen, provincial election candidates, and several churches agree that something strange seems to be happening. They have all called for an inquiry into the raids, their purpose and why they were ever authorized.

McMurtry has refused. The Metro Toronto police commission has refused.

The article by Robin Hardy then, is reprinted with kind permission of the Body Politic, a national gay lib publication, as a reflection on current events.

The day the homos disappeared, Nora Lindquist had planned a dinner party. First, the bakery didn't have any spinach quiche. Nor could she get any of that delicious key lime pie she'd

hoped to impress everyone with and the cheese souffle she attempted fell in like a punctured basketball the moment she took it from the oven. In desperation she phoned out for Chinese food — at least it was from one of the best restaurants in town.

Her guests arrived late, and two didn't show at all. Nora wasn't surprised that her husband Bill Lindquist absented himself. In fact, she was quite happy; they didn't like each other very much, really. If it wasn't for the corporation's disapproval of divorce, he would have walked out long ago, taking Nora's lifestyle with him.

But no Wayne Simon! That made Nora furious. It was important to have one gay man at her dinner parties. It was as important as the right arrangement of flowers in the centerpiece. It was, well, fashionable. She never asked lesbians though. They made her uncomfortable. And lovers made being gay seem too serious somehow — more than one gay person and they started flaunting it. Wayne Simon had been perfect. He was single, he was a famous fashion designer — but he wasn't here! The homos must have been planning this for weeks; why couldn't they have waited for some other day, or at least warned her in advance? It was quite rude, Nora bristled, putting every homo who had ever lived firmly in place once and for all.

And now Emily Tilchrist, who sat across from Nora at the Roche-Bois dining table, wouldn't shut up about it.

"It was just dreadful today dear," Emily crooned, tucking a forkful into her mouth. "Mmm, this is delicious. Did you get it from the corner take-out on Parliament Street?" Emily raised her eyes coquettishly and continued before Nora could answer. "It was simply dreadful. First, I couldn't get my hair done. Alain had disappeared. Vanished into thin air. In fact, his entire salon was closed. Then I met Adrienne for lunch as Crispin's and we had to wait an hour to be served — they only had one waiter left. When we finally did get the

food — they cook artichokes so nicely there, you know, so much better than at L'Ombrellino — it was lukewarm. And soggy."

Nora thrust aside visions of grinding raw artichokes into Emily's facelift. "Yes, well I was talking to John today about the homos disappearing. John Sewell."

cent of the population has disappeared."

"Darling," said Emily, her voice venomously chilled for the kill. "They're all homos. Ten per cent of the population. The closeted ones are gone, too."

"By the way," she added with

homos had disappeared during an election year. His headache accelerated three throbs per minute.

Downtown had been particularly badly hit. Most of the good restaurants never opened, and the ones that did were running pretty sloppy service. Hundreds of boutiques were closed, and theatres by the dozens were cancelling performances. Traffic was jammed up because ten per cent of the buses and streetcars had been abandoned in the middle of the streets. Hospitals lost hundreds of nurses; schools missed thousands of teachers. The switchboard at City Hall was overloaded — telephone operators had vanished in droves — and even when people did get through to the departments they wanted, chances were the person they wanted to talk to wasn't there. And all the ones left were too grumpy. All the happy people had disappeared, or so it seemed to John Sewell.

But that wasn't the reason for the mayor's headache. The throb was coming from Queen's Park.

The provincial cabinet had called Sewell because Sewell was a friend of the homos. It shouldn't have upset Queen's Park that the homos had disappeared, but it upset a lot of Queen's Park's friends. Bell Canada was crippled. Hydro was a halfpower. Banks had lost loan officers and accountants, the stock market had lost brokers, and insurance companies were missing actuaries. The courts were being adjourned because court reporters and clerks had disappeared. Interprovincial trucking was at a standstill, with empty semi-trailers blocking the King's Highways. In the north, a third of the miners failed to show up for morning shift. Queen's Park's friends were pissed off. Lindquist was miffed because he'd begged off her last dinner party. Or so he figured. "Tell her to come in," he buzzed back, and his headache floored the throb throttle.

Nora strode into the room with an expression of Great Concern on her face and started talking even before she hit the floral print wing chair. "John, I just can't understand why Bill would do a thing like this. I mean, I'm sure it can't just be the homos who've disappeared. Bill's gone! They must have taken people with them."

The throbbing in Sewell's head left very little room for thought, but he knew that Nora wasn't alone in her panic. Police Chief Ackroyd was demanding that the homos be found and punished for spiriting away 20 per cent of his force. And it wouldn't be very many hours before Renaissance International discovered the absence of tens of thousands of school children.

Nora gave a well-practiced stifle to her sob, but before Sewell could sympathize, even before he could indulge his vision of the floral print wing chair swallowing Nora in one satisfied gulp, the intercom buzzed. The man from Queen's Park was on the phone again. Queen's Park needed the homos back, and they had come to John Sewell for help.

"Look, John," the premier's administrative assistant had said on the phone. "We want you to make some kind of statement, you know, to calm the atmosphere — the way you



MY MOTHER FEELS MUCH SAFER NOW THAT WE'VE KICKED OUT THOSE GAY TEACHERS...

She dropped the last name less than casually. The mayor was Someone Worth Knowing to her dinner parties. John had declined this time around, though. At her last party he had joked about joining the Tory party and found it reported the next day on the front page of the Star, thanks to that frozen tuna fish in the baggy grey flannel who had sat too attentively beside him all night. It would take Nora months of careful manipulation to get the mayor back to her table.

"John is just frantic. He told me — quite confidentially, of course — that no one seems to know where they've gone or why they took all of those other people with them."

"All the other people?" exclaimed Emily, her curiosity overcoming her jealousy.

"Why yes," said Nora, victoriously sipping Chateau Yquem from her Boda wineglass. "It's not just the homos, you know. Ten per

cent of the population has disappeared."

John Sewell gazed through the plate glass wall of his City Hall office, out across the square to the serene plumes of water rushing in the fountain. The hanging plants, he noted, blocked too much of the view. He hated plants. Occasionally he had visions of the Swedish ivy spreading before his eyes, doubling in size, doubling again, shutting off the entire window and then reaching across the floor, closing off the door, circling the legs of his chair, curling around his knees ...

The pastel jungle print fabric on the wingback chairs across from his desk encouraged the nightmare. He hated those chairs, too. He wanted his office redesigned, but at the moment it looked unlikely. There were no more interior designers. Maybe he'd find someone with taste during his next term in office — if he had a next term in office. The homos, his homos, his voting

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continued on page 16