NORTHERN IRELAND GAY RIGHTS ASSOCIATION

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Dear Editor,

In the Sunday Life editorial regarding that newspaper's role in the events leading up to the murder of Rev David Templeton, there was another critical point worthy of comment, which your own editorial of 31 March 1997 failed to pick out. This was the sentence: "We felt the public had a right to know that a minister - someone in a position of trust and offering moral guidance to his congregation - was not practising all that he preached."

Aside from the fact that not even tabloid editors, the new all-powerful arbiters of contemporary morals are free of sin, the Sunday Lifenever provided any evidence of David Templeton preaching against that which he was accused of. Indeed that newspaper never printed any details of what David Templeton preached or talked about. To them he was a legitimate target because he was a clergyman; yet we all know clergy come in differing forms, saying different things. They must be judged individually. And judged for real offences. So many more column inches are devoted on Sundays to trivia like owning an adult video compared to crimes of violence with actual victims.

I did not know David Templeton but from what I have recently read and heard he was a modern cleric dealing with religion very much in today's language. I suspect he was not a hypocrite although he was probably a cautious man.

But in truth anyone who manages to hold down a job or is married, is fair game for a full page spread in the tabloids, if they are revealed to have come to the attention of the police, and are duly informed on from within the RUC or Customs. And most gays, who still live on the margins of legality, will receive police attention at some time in their lives.

The Sunday Life's editor Martin Lindsay, has another question to answer and that relates to his unfulfilled promise on Radio Ulster's Talkback last week to reveal details in Sunday's paper of what he described as the "additional material" that was supposedly discovered at David Templeton's Ballyduff home.

He was appearing to listeners to indicate that he knew of something very damaging to David's reputation. It seemed to suggest that there was something new and sufficient to get locals enraged, which the editor was boasting he had been told about. Yet in Sunday's paper there was no mention of the promised "additional material".

Why? Perhaps it had something to do with the local police saying that when they inspected David Templeton's flat after the attack they found nothing untoward, nor had he ever come to their attention for investigation since he had moved in.

Yours faithfully

PA MagLochlainn (President) 1 April 1997