

You're driving along the Bicentennial, round the corner and there it is: Halifax. Stop the car, get out and have a look. It's like looking at a person through a one-way mirror — you don't know the person although you know you are going to very shortly, and you try to anticipate what he or she will be like.

Once into it, the university environment is fairly standard. The people are friendly enough — but only if you don't get too close. The people are like the city; one creates the other in a never-ending circle. Their public place is rather appealing. Peggy's Cove, Land's End, the Public Gardens, the Citadel, Fisherman's Market, the Dingle all have their own "charm".

You have to find the real part yourself. No one is going to take you on a tour.

It's not easy to find out what a city's like by your self. And even when you think you know what it's all about, you're not very sure.

It's an enigma, a dichotomy, and therefore a challenge. Halifax comes across as a schizophrenic, unable to decide or control the personality it wishes to assume. It tries to take one step forward and leaves you wondering if it hasn't actually lost a few inches.

Halifax has the ocean — too bad it's being polluted — but it is there, for the present at least. The power of the sea clearly affects the personality of the people, and the people seem insulated to the fact that they are destroying rather than controlling its influence.

One loves yet despises this city, and most students won't stay around after they graduate. It's a nice place to explore but people outgrow it. Why? It's hard to explain.



Probably an elaborate snow-job

The potential of Encounter is, say the people in the know, "tremendous... incalculable". In fact, the only drawback to the entire project is that to work it needs people.

Theory is a marvellous toy, but putting theory into practice is another matter altogether.

The specialists who are coming to the area from the United States by and large know next to nothing about Nova Scotia. This was intended, so that they would have no preconceived ideas, and could therefore be open to anything anyone cares to say to them. Objectivity again.

And so, when the sessions begin, if only those people show up who are on the planning committee, who draw up the programs, who plan their presentations in meeting rooms weeks before, then theirs is the only point of view the think-tank will consider when making its recommendations. And those same people are the ones who are always listened to anyway when decisions are being made.

The idea of the whole thing is to get the ordinary people, YOU, involved.

People who talk about the fact that when they have spent an hour getting across the bridge, it is absolutely impossible to find a parking space.

People who wait in the rain on a Sunday afternoon for four hours before a bus put in an appearance.

People who are going to university and paying one of the highest tuition rates in the country and don't know why.

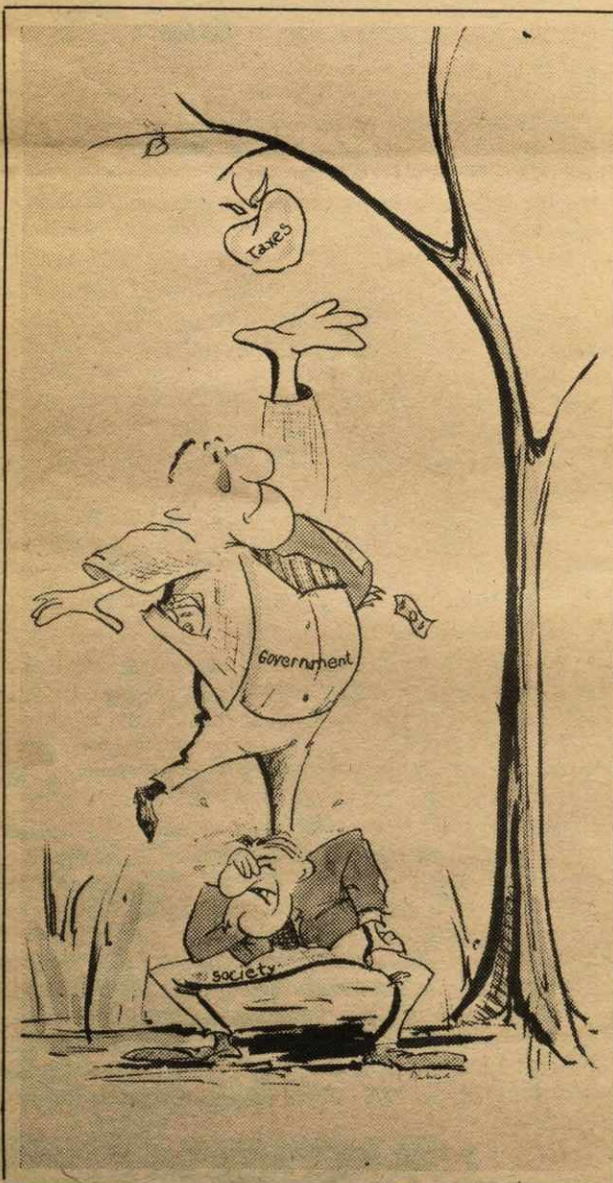
People who can't go swimming anywhere except in a chlorine pool from fear of being poisoned by the water, in lakes and the ocean.

If Encounter is to be anything like a successful experiment, people like you have to stop sitting around drinking coffee discussing the world, and go discuss the world with the men who can do something about it.

When such people as A.R. Harrington, top man for Nova Scotia Light and Power are planning and supporting a venture of this sort, the REAL people absolutely must (OF THEIR OWN INITIATIVE) get out and have their views heard.

The members of the think-tank will listen to anyone who cares to speak, no written briefs are needed. But if they are to consider the ideas of the people who are going to have to live in the Halifax area while they are making their recommendations for its future development, then those people must show up.

Encounter will be another exercise in keeping the power where it is now, in maintaining all the structures that ordinary people rant about. The future of this type of confrontation is extremely uncertain, largely because it has never been tried in this way before. Its organizers are confident that it will be a viable means for getting greater participation at various levels of the governing process but only people can make it that.



IS PEOPLE