

Rents hiked dramatically

by Greg Harris

Building a two bedroom igloo in quad and then moving in with friends could be the easiest way to beat the high cost of accommodation. Rents have sky-rocketed since controls were lifted in July and there doesn't appear to be any relief in sight.

Statistics compiled by Tracy Kutzt, director of the Students' Union Housing Registry (SUHR) show significant increases in rents for all types of accommodation. Average monthly rents increased 25 percent from January to October 1980.

The average monthly rent for one bedroom with cooking facilities increased from \$127 to \$172, a 35 percent increase; two bedroom suites from \$269 to \$352 (35 percent); three bedroom houses from \$492 to \$590 (20 percent); and four bedroom houses from \$572 to \$648 (13 percent).

The increase in the range of rents has been even more substantial. The top price for a two bedroom suite in the SUHR's January listings was \$450 per month; in the October listings the most expensive was \$900.

The top price for three bedroom houses went from \$600 to \$1500. Because of the absence of rent controls landlords have acquired more power.

"Landlords can do anything they want with the rent. Up it by 50 percent, double it, depending on what the market will bear," says Kutzt. Landlords are given free reign as long as they give three months notice of the increase.

The Students' Finance Board (SFB) considers \$175 per month the maximum students should be paying for accommodation. But \$175 is only the average figure taken from SUHR statistics.

"Some people have needs that just aren't met by the \$175... I'd like to see them (SFB) have more flexibility. Their assumption is that most students live together.

"There is a fair amount of low cost housing, but a lot of it is so scummy I wouldn't want anyone to live in it." SUHR listings consist largely of accommodation at the "lower end of the scale," she says.

"People are now phoning up (the SUHR) and asking to share one bedroom." Some students "can't really afford" to pay the rents as they stand, she says.

"Students eventually give in and cut back on other things," Kutzt says.

Julian Koziak, the provincial minister of consumer and cor-

porate affairs, says rent controls won't be reinstated.

"The long-term effects of rent controls are bad: they destroy the provisions of living in new facilities," he says.

Koziak cites an increase in house purchases as one of the benefits of lifting controls.

However, high interest rates are inhibiting development, even

without rent controls. Koziak says the government is working on "rental incentive programs," which are intended to stimulate construction.

Koziak says the situation for students is not that bad.

"Two people sharing (a bedroom) is not that bad a thing when you take a look at housing in this province and this country ...

there has been a constant decline in percent of occupation in dwellings.

"The doubling up concept is useful. It shouldn't be looked at askance ... I think we should learn to live together," he says.

Kutzt says the chances of widespread rental increases in January 1981 are "fairly good."



photo Bill Inglee

the Gateway

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It is impossible to enjoy idling thoroughly ...

... unless one has plenty of work to do.
Jerome K. Jerome

Hazardous radiation in labs

LONDON, ONTARIO (CUP) - An accident that exposed a number of students to low level radiation may cost a University of Western Ontario researcher his research license.

The accident took place in a biochemistry department lab in Western's medical science building October 5. Department chairperson Bishnu Sanwal said the accident occurred when a student spilled a few drops of solution containing a radioactive isotope.

Sanwal said the student discovered the contamination during a post-experiment geiger counter check of the work area several hours after the accident. By that time, a number of other students had passed through the contaminated work area.

Subsequent efforts to clean up the spill with paper towels and cleanser proved ineffective and university officials were called, said Western safety officer Dwight Barratt. The exposed

floor area was covered with half-inch thick plexiglass shielding and marked to prevent people from entering the work area.

Geiger counter readings indicated a local radiation field of 20 millirems per hour, 180 times the

maximum permissible level established by the Atomic Energy Control Board (AECB), said

Barratt. But later examination indicated that students had been contaminated to an extent of less than six millirems, probably because equipment in the area shielded them, he said.

The AECB's maximum allowable level of radiation exposure is 500 millirems per year, or about 10 per week. A typical X-ray exposes a patient to about 20

millirems of radiation.

"This was a serious incident," said Barratt. "It would indicate that something went wrong in the normal operation of that lab. Because of that, the (University's) radiation safety committee will be reviewing Dr. Sanwal's licence."

Sanwal said the spill was insignificant and not dangerous at all.

But Barratt said the spill could have been harmful if it had not been quickly detected because the radiation effect would accumulate in those working in the lab.

"That's why we roped off the area before there was a problem," he said. The radiation effect is intense only in the immediate area of the active material, he added.

Executive power threatened

by Peter Michalyszyn

Democracy prevailed - at Students' Council Tuesday night, almost.

Council narrowly defeated a motion to restrict the SU executive's decision-making power in a 12 to 10 vote.

Law Rep Clarence Hudson proposed a motion demanding all changes in SU service and retail operations be ratified in council before being implemented.

He said he was tired of reading about SU decisions in the Gateway.

SU President Nolan Astley defended executive action, however, noting that Council met only every two weeks, and decisions often had to be made in the interim.

One such recent decision, Astley said, was to close RATT after it lost its liquor license. The executive had no choice but to lock up the bar and could not wait over a week to have Council ratify the decision.

However, Astley admitted he should have thought twice about the executive decision to cut the SU Information Desk's operating hours.

In the November 18 Council meeting commerce rep Phil Soper questioned the rationale behind this cutback.

No one could deny Soper's accusation that the cutbacks had been made unjustifiably and without proper analysis.

But with the decision made, and the cutbacks implemented before the November 18 Council meeting, Council could do nothing more than accept or reject it; they accepted it.

"We certainly don't want to get into the habit of walking over council," Astley said.

Council dumped the motion only after trying to pass amendments to make it less restrictive.

One amendment would have forced the executive to have all its decisions ratified by Council even if the decision had already been

implemented; the executive is not required to do this now.

Another amendment suggested councillors be given at least 24 hours notice on executive decisions, to then be ratified in the next council meeting.

Two more amendments were defeated before Council junked the original motion altogether.



TIMES RUNNING OUT... ONLY A FEW SHOPLIFTING DAYS LEFT TIL XMAS!

Now that the Gateway Reader Survey results are in (page 8), we've found you want some more humor (page 7), more photo features (page 9), and less of everything else.

That's why there will be only one paper next week. Look for us on Thursday.



Do you trust these two with your money?

photo Bill Inglee