

# Responsibility is the criteria for housing

by Phillip Saunders

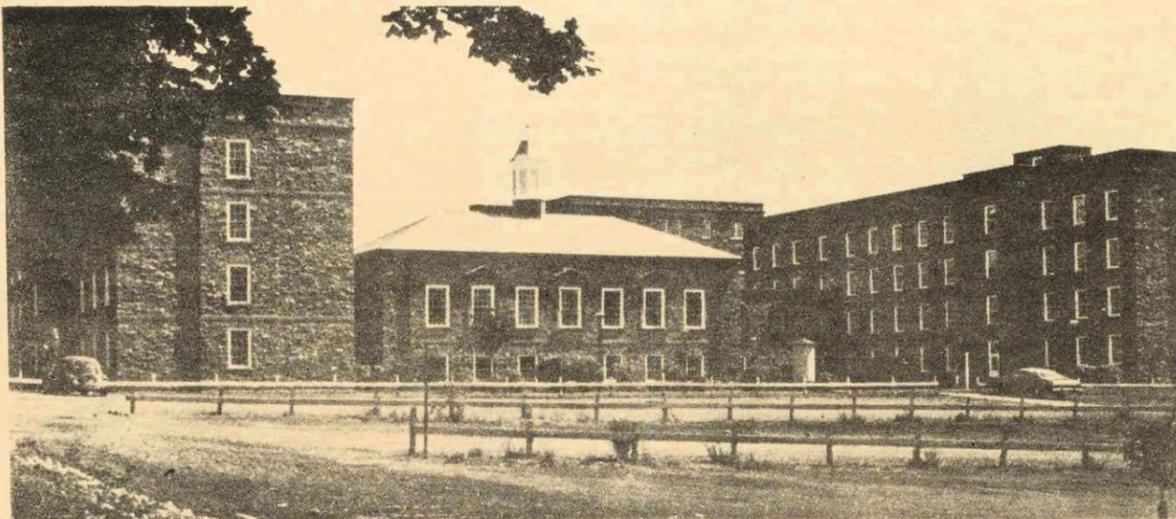
"It is September; the academic year is beginning, students are registering, leaves are turning; and at Dalhousie the facilities for student housing again appear inadequate."

October has arrived since Bruce Russell wrote those words, and the problem of inadequate housing still remains. Many students are still not housed, and many more are in situations they can only regard as temporary. You will be pleased to know, however, that Mr. Russell is not one of them. Our Student Union President is living in a University house on Seymour St., a house that was never put on the housing list for general student consumption. Residing there with him are Mark Crossman, Student Union Treasurer and lease-holder, last year's Council Chairman Ron McCabe, Peter Russell (related) and Peter Clarke, Student Senator.

The administration of the University houses has always been the subject of complaints by students who don't manage to obtain one, and charges of allocation on the basis of friendship and position are common. Individual cases are mentioned regarding non-students living with student tenants, and even of professional people registering as part-time students in order to take advantage of the low rents and convenient location provided by University housing. It is well known that the "lengthy waiting list" referred to by Mr. Russell is widely avoided by leaseholders passing on the leases to their tenants.

John Graham, Director of Housing Services, quite rightly points out that it is very difficult to track down non-students who are not leaseholders living in University housing with students. However, this is not the only difficulty with the allocation system. We have already noted the problem of favoritism, of people avoiding the waiting list through position or contacts.

The house occupied by Mr.



This is not the home of Bruce Russell. This is Howe Hall.

Russell and company did not enter the normal housing stream, Mr. Graham notes, because it was designated as "special" a house of particular value or quality that is normally reserved for some special purpose such as faculty accommodation. This particular house was intended for law faculty, but was to be vacant this year. As a result Mr. Graham allowed it to be taken by the present tenants, the justification being that it had to be let to someone of "special responsibility", and that it would come more closely under his personal supervision. Mr. Graham could not name the other tenants living in this specially supervised house with Mr. Russell, but did say that because of the value and condition of the property it was desirable to have someone there who would be responsible for any damage. The lease for a "special" is the same as for normal University houses, with the same damage clause. We might also note that another person, a third year law student, asked for the house before it was allocated, and was turned down by Mr. Graham. He has been on the housing list for a year, and has now given up looking and is living at home..

Another "special", on LeMarchant St., has as one of its occupants a Student Union secretary who is a part-time student. She also occupied the house when she was a non-student. Again Mr. Graham pointed out that special responsibility for a valuable property was the reason for the allocation. It seems strange that out of the entire full-time student population of Dalhousie it was not possible to find one responsible student.

#### "A little uncomfortable"

Mr. Russell, when questioned about allocation procedure, said that he was "partially aware" of the secretary's case, but did not keep close tabs on the day-to-day operations of the housing office. As to his own house, he allowed that "I feel a little uncomfortable about it", but added that he felt he had justified it through his work to increase the quantity of housing on campus.

While it is true, as Mr. Russell says, that the problems in the allocations of the relatively small number of University houses do not comprise the main difficulties in

housing, they do give us some indication of the kind of disorder that exists in the Union bureaucracy with regard to housing. We do not even have a Union housing officer as such. Mr. Graham is Student Union Manager and Director of Housing Services for the University, with his salary paid half by the Union and half by the University. It is obvious that, in the present situation, confrontations over housing policy are bound to arise between the Union and the Administration. Is it fair (or wise) to place Mr. Graham in a situation where he must choose between conflicting loyalties? Why does the Union not have its own housing director independent of any ties to the Administration? One case in point involves the University houses on Henry St., converted to office use last spring. The decision was taken over a year ago, but Bruce Russell was not informed by John Graham of the action prior to the Administration beginning construction. As a result no protest was made by the Union. But, apart from these structural problems with the Union bureaucracy, exactly what has the Union done to increase the

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IF YOU HAVE FREE TIME  
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AS HOST FOR HIGH SCHOOL TOURS...  
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OFFICE IN  
THE BASEMENT OF THE FACULTY CLUB**