

CO-EDS FOR COEXISTENCE

FOR the third week in a row, St. Francis Xavier University is in a state of turmoil.

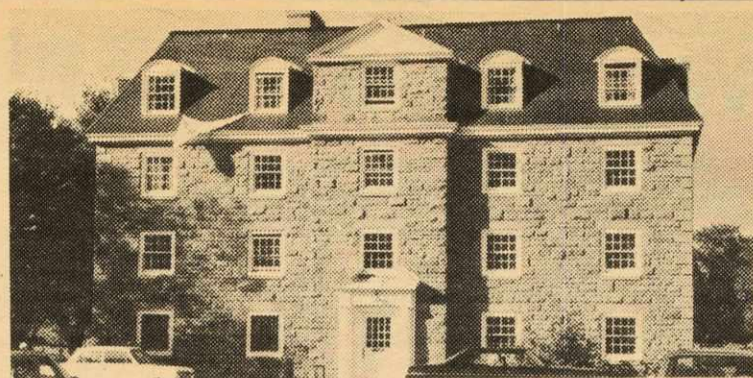
X wants open housing and the administration has seemingly closed the doors to any discussion of the problem with the student's Council. Two weeks ago, the question was put before the students in a referendum after two years of struggle. Overwhelming support was given for open housing.

When no reaction came from the

ruling powers of the University, the students staged a sit-in in one of the three existing lounges. After a half hour the protest died and the situation is slowly coming to a boil.

The administration has threatened suspension if there is any further action, while the students speak of occupation and strike.

Steven Wright went to the quiet town of Antigonish last week to view the situation. This is how he sees the problem and how it began.



CAMERON HALL (Side View, The Occupied Hall)

The demonstration was broken up when prefects entered the residence and began to take down the names of those involved. Most people voluntarily gave their names, figuring that the university could not possibly punish so many students. No disciplinary action has been taken to date, but the administration is using the threat of discipline to stop the students from fighting for their requests.

In the past, infringement of residence rules has been met by suspensions, expulsions, and a minimum fine of \$75. The administration's stand was clarified in an interview with Mr. J. K. MacDonald, the Dean of Men.

"I don't care if there are 40 universities with open housing, St. F. X. has made its position clear." When asked for the reasons given by the Administration for refusing the students' request, Mr. MacDonald declined to answer. He refused to say whether it was because St. F. X. is a Catholic run college, because of parental objection, or because it would give St. F. X. a bad 'public image', although these reasons are given by the students.

Dan O'Connor the External Affairs Commissioner for the Student Union said that no reasons were given the students by the administration.

It seems that the administration is taking upon itself the role of a parent for the students, keeping them away from what they consider 'harmful influences', and withholding any information they see fit.

On talking with Mr. MacDonald I got the impression that there was no problem. He explained that there were lounges on the ground floors of most residences where students could freely mingle. I took him on his word and proceeded to examine these lounges Mr. MacDonald had spoken the truth. I saw five lounges, two in the women's residences at the 'Mount' and three in the men's residences.

The lounges at the 'Mount' were beautiful, just the place to take a girl, as long as you don't mind the bright lighting and the occasional nun patrolling the place to make sure that all is well. The lounges in the men's residences are something different.

In one residence, Mockler Hall, the lounge boasts a concrete floor, an unobstructed view of a myriad of pillars, and the latest in contemporary furniture design, such as a ladder settled on two garbage cans. In another residence the lounge consists of a few broken straight-back chairs, and a settee with the stuffing coming out.

The remaining residence lounge is the only one worth considering. This means that there is one mixed lounge to serve an enrollment of 2,300. Added to this there are no provisions made for areas where couples can go to be alone and not on public display.

The Student Union is aware of its bad bargaining position and is seeking all the support it can get from other universities. They have received support from St. Mary's, Guelph, U.N.B., and Dal, among others.

Things of the St. F. X. campus are quiet at the present time, but there will definitely be action taken after the 17th of November. This is the date of the next Student Union meeting. If the Council decides to use direct action, it is quite likely that there will be further demonstrations and sit-ins. If the Council decides to negotiate with the administration there may still be action, because a campus group, the students for a Democratic University, has promised to lead the students. This group, while not a group representing the majority of students at the present time is rapidly gaining sympathisers, and it could well be a force to reckon with.

Further confrontation seems likely. The administration's oppressive 'keep 'em in their place' philosophy of reaction guarantees it.

At first glance the campus of Saint Francis Xavier University seems to rank as one of the quietest and most contented in Canada. Mock-Georgian buildings nestle among the ubiquitous trees. The many sports fields and the great expanses of lawn add a feeling of openness which is lacking in most universities.

But all is not the way it seems. At the present time St. F. X. is one of the most divided universities in Canada. The split is over the issue of open housing.

The student body at St. F. X. has voted by an overwhelming majority to introduce open housing. They are asking for the right to entertain friends of the opposite sex in their rooms. This is not an unusual request as most universities, including Dal, already have an open residence policy. The administration, however, sees the request as a dangerous one, and not in keeping with the university's reputation.

St. F. X. and Mt. Saint Barnard are two separate colleges with two separate administrations, but on this issue the two are as one. The "Mount" girls are just as anxious as the St. F. X. students to open up the residences.

This is not the first time that the students have requested open housing. Last year a similar request was made. At that time the administration refused the privilege but to appease the students a committee (was set up) to examine social conditions on campus and make recommendations for improvement.

This committee, known as the President's Council on Social Life, was organized in January of 1969. It met frequently, but it did not make any worthwhile recommendations to clear up the problem. The committee is regarded by the students as a sellout, and for this reason there have been no formal briefs presented by the student body. But as long as it exists the administration is able to point to it and say to critics, "See, we are doing something, but the Students will not cooperate". This justification fools no one... least of all the students.

This year the students again requested visiting privileges in the residences. Frank McKenna, the president of the Student Union at St. F. X. led the fight for open residences. On Monday, October 20th, the Students' Council passed the following resolution.

"Move that Council instruct all members and suborganizations that this union does not recognize the present policy regarding participation in decisions concerning residence affairs, that regulations regarding open housing shall be set up democratically by the residents of each residence and that these regulations are to be enforced by the Student Discipline Committee, prefects, house committees, and Campus Police. For the purpose of this resolution open

housing is defined as women being present in male residence rooms and men being present in female residence rooms."

The council, in taking this step, was trying to decentralize and democratize the university and give the students the right to control their own residence environment.

To obtain the true feelings on the student body a referendum was held on Thursday, October 23rd. The referendum, considered of three questions. The first question was, "Are you in favour of open housing?" This was merely asking the students' opinion, and the Council stipulated that to be truly representative 75% of the student body had to answer. The actual vote was 78.9%.

The next question asked the student if he was willing to go along with the action taken by the Council. This would mean supporting the above motion. The third question asked if the voter were in favour of seeking open housing through negotiating with the Administration. The last two questions received the magical 50% so the Council decided to act on its own.

On Thursday night, after a meeting in the Oland Centre, 500 students, including 100 girls from Mount Saint Barnard, marched over the Cameron Hall, one of the large men's residences, where they held a peaceful sit-in that lasted under a half hour.

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