

Election pull-out - Inside this week.

the Dalhousie Gazette

February 10, 1983
Volume 115, Number 18

Dal may ignore students in big sale

by Ken Burke

A recent \$2.65 million sale of Dalhousie university property containing student housing has prompted student council to call for assurances that alternative accommodations will be provided for 40 displaced students.

Property bordering on Spring Garden Road, Summer, College and Robie Streets was sold to United Equities Ltd. for more than \$1 million profit on its assessed value of \$1.49 million. The property includes the Hart-Butler House on the Spring Garden and Summer St. corner, a row of houses on Summer St., the Philae Temple on College St., and the Tupper parking lot.

The sale took place just six months after the university purchased the Hart property, completing the block's ownership.

Currently the 40, mostly female graduate students, live in row houses on Summer St. University Vice President (Finance) Robbie Shaw said in a *University News* article the students may occupy the property until the end of the year, and that alternative housing for the 40 would be found on or near campus for the next school year.

It is this vague assurance which prompted the student union to demand further information on the sale.

"We seriously question the ability of the administration to supply alternative housing" said Dal Board of Governors student rep Atul Sharma.

A motion put forward by Sharma and passed almost unanimously, with one abstention, at last Sunday's council meeting, demands an immediate response to the question of where the alternative housing will be found. Council opposes any future sales until numbers and locations of alternative housing are received, and urges student senators to seek the support of Senate in the matter. It also requests a clarification from the Dalhousie Faculty Association (the faculty union) on their endorsement of the recent sale.

Sharma said student council is not opposed to the sale of university housing, but it is concerned that "the first target is student housing."

Robbie Shaw said the university is working on planning the alternative housing, but "It's going to take a lot of work."

"We have some single family units that could be converted to student use," said Shaw, adding, "We're trying to develop a game of musical houses."

In a second motion, student council decided to consult legal counsel to develop means of actively opposing any rezoning application for the property, and



Childerhose/Dal Photo

using such means to block the finalizing of the sale if the university has not made known its alternative housing plan. The sale is conditional on United Equities

receiving approval for rezoning the block for condominiums.

"We want to indicate opposition to future sales unless further information is coming," said

Sharma.

Shaw said he would not comment on the possibility of a student move to block the rezoning application.

Will Ruth ever get a better deal?

by Alec Bruce

Ruth, a first year chemistry student at Dalhousie, doesn't get along with her teachers very well. She never submits her assignments on time; she's slow and clumsy in the laboratory; and she usually fails tests and examinations. She's always asking those damn difficult questions on obscure phenomena, the kind of questions you can't find answers for in books.

What's worse is that the answers she does get never seem to take root. Professors, when they talk about Ruth, label her as one of those "problem students". But they're as accurate as they're polite.

Ruth knows she's not stupid -

she has an I.Q. of 135. She understands everything she hears in her classes and she does exceedingly well on her infrequent oral examinations. Ruth's problem is that she can't read or write. She suffers from dyslexia, a condition that makes her misinterpret the characters of written English.

Ruth knows that with professional counselling she could circumvent her handicap. But counselling costs money and Dalhousie's free student services are painfully ill-equipped to deal with a problem of this sort.

Ruth, through no fault of her own, may be forced to drop out of university before the end of her first

year.

Ruth is not alone. According to Students' Council Vice-President (internal) John Russell, close to 600 new students will drop out of Dalhousie University in the next few months for reasons having little to do with their academic abilities. If the administration cared more about personal problems, says Russell, this alarming trend among undergraduates would begin to reverse itself.

"Many students who arrive at Dalhousie from regional high schools are unaccustomed to the world," states Russell. "Life at university often takes them completely by surprise. Some of these students have severe personal problems which, in this environment, affect their academic environment. If we made learning more enjoyable for these people and helped them with their problem we might be able to keep a few deserving students from dropping out. But we don't really do anything in this area."

While Russell stresses that the various student services at Dalhousie - the Dean's office, the chaplaincy, and the psychological counselling centre to name a few - are doing the best they can with tiny staffs and limited resources, he believes the onus is on the administration. To redress the problem, the administration must beef up the counselling staffs, coordinate the disparate activities of the student services and recognize the degree to which some students suffer from personal

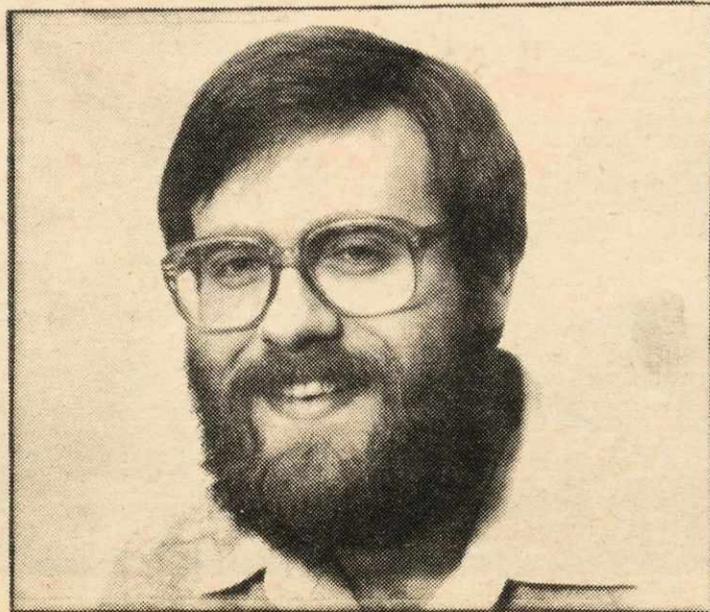
problems at university.

In his position paper for the Students' Council, drafted last October, Russell identifies six possible reasons why students who are otherwise able and qualified become discouraged from studying at Dalhousie.

- Dissatisfaction with the academic program offered.
- Lack of financial resources.
- Unhappiness with the atmosphere at Dalhousie: attitudes to the students by the administration and faculty.
- Sexual harassment and security deficiencies.
- Student failure to adjust socially.
- Other personal problems: alcoholism, poor study habits, language problems, skills problems, etc.

Although Russell offers only tentative solutions to these problems, from course evaluations and financial assistance to orientation programs and new counselling services, he is convinced the administration must be responsible for all programs designed to help students with their problems. He sees any attempt to deal with student attrition at Dalhousie effective only if it emanates from the Vice President.

"The university as a whole," says Russell, "does not now, in its philosophical and financial planning, lend adequate weight to



John Russell

Childerhose/Dal Photo

continued to page 3