

First of a Series

CO-OPS AND HOW THEY WORK

CHEZ

HENRI

OTTAWA (CUP) — The primary responsibility of students living in a co-operative residence is to assume an equitable share of the work load.

Co-op residences do not hire staff (with the possible exception of a cook). All of the menial jobs around the house are broken up into fags — duties-by a 'fagmaster' who is elected by the students.

Fags include food preparation, dishwashing, cleaning of halls and common rooms, care of the yards, administration, house repairs, and all such tasks for which a university residence or an apartment building would ordinarily hire a staff.

Fag duties take up about six hours of a student's week. The system is sound in theory, but this theory rests on the fags. If these begin to slip

the co-op quickly becomes an inviting living place.

For this reason co-ops are usually co-ed. In all-male or all-female houses there is a tendency to laxity on the part of the members. This is less true in a co-ed house. Again, the fagmaster's job is to make sure fags are carried out — in fact that is his fag, and he is responsible to the co-op government for this part of the operation.

Co-op government is invariably a participatory democracy. The general membership be it eight co-operating students or 300, elect a board of directors with a president and full slate of officers. The names of officers and structure of government vary from co-op to co-op as conditions dictate. But the common positions are usually President, Administrator, Purchaser, Fag

Master and others as required.

Most co-ops also elect a judiciary committee to decide on questions of discipline in the house, and a selection committee to screen applicants for membership in the co-op.

There is by no means unanimity on this stereotyped form of government. Some co-op members find it distasteful to have a "President" and a "Board of Directors". They equate these forms to bureaucracies in the Western tradition which they feel only serve to bind people to commitments which should really come from within the students themselves.

Al Wood, Manager of Waterloo Co-operative Residences Inc. points to the statement of purpose of the WCRI to make his point in favour of some minimal form of admin-

istrative structure:

"Waterloo Co-operative Residences Inc. is a residential community in which STUDENTS, learning through the experiences of different kinds and types of people, provide low-cost housing with personal and social freedom along with responsibility. Opportunity and facilities are provided for involvement and interaction within the framework of the co-op and the academic community and society."

The emphasis on the physical dimension in this statement of purpose perhaps reflects the size of WCRI. A smaller co-op — a single house — could afford to emphasize more tangible aspects of co-op living, while still providing for a degree of administrative control. Al Wood would call it "responsibility."

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