

Housing (from page 1)



Look fellas...like I told ya a million times. It was just a gag. I hand the Campusbank teller the note. She's supposed to laugh. Like ha ha.

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Committee members were in general agreement that present laws relating to necessary repairs were inadequate. It was suggested that tenants should be able to take matters into their own hands rather than waiting for reluctant landlords to act. The feeling was that an agency should exist through which a tenant could obtain permission to have the work done himself. The landlord would then pay the shot in reduced rent. In cases where the tenant could not afford to carry out repairs, enforcement against the landlord should be more effective.

These are the pointier examples of the unjust condition of tenant-landlord law in the province and they are more than unsubstantiated generalities. At the Neighborhood Centre meeting, people were past the stage of being ashamed of poverty and oppression. They now recognize that their position in the context of housing is not their own fault, but a result of exploitation. And they spoke up.

Whether or not the select legislature committee can do anything as a result is another question. One thing is certain; the failure to include rent-control in the committee's terms of reference is a serious oversight... or maybe they planned it that way.

Inspection and enforcement of standards regarding sanitation and overcrowding are not enough when the

main crunch is financial. Without rent control, the landlord can still charge what the market will bear and pass along any new expenses to the tenants in higher rent.

The people at the Neighborhood Centre meeting knew this. They new that rent control is the teeth missing from previous housing legislation. When committee chairman James Vaughan put aside questioning about rent control on the grounds that it wasn't included in the scope of their investigation, the committee's credibility nosedived.

But Vaughan is different from the usual sort of chairmen of touring governmental sideshows. The 'bad-boy' of the Conservative Family Compact, Vaughan has long pressed for housing reform and been a general short-circuit in the Stanfield-Smith machine. Some observers feel that his reputation within the party will present difficulties for any worthwhile recommendations produced by the committee.

The nine-man body will make its report to the legislature before the close of the current session. Given that a fall election is a distinct possibility, it wouldn't be unreasonable to suspect an attempt at the old pre-poll snow job... token reforms have a way of bringing in votes from trusting electors.

Whatever the outcome, any change will probably fall far short of the need. When the impetus behind things comes from the top, it usually is.

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