

Dalhousie Gazette

Vol. 104

December 3, 1971

Number 12

Power
and love
to the
people

3 to 5 million rats in city

Stop the rats campaign now on

by Dorothy Wigmore

The city of Halifax has one of the largest rat populations in North America, somewhere between two to five million. This means that there are at least eight rats for every person in the city. In 1970, 46% of these rats were bacteria-carrying.

In light of this enormous problem, a group of Halifax citizens who either have or have had a rat problem or are concerned about this issue, have formed a Citizen's Health Union.

They are publicizing the issue, holding public meetings and circulating a petition demanding the City take immediate action to deal with the problem. So far over 300 of approximately 350 people contacted have signed the petition.

The problem is not isolated to one area of the city, the Union discovered. Although the largest concentration of rats are found in the areas around the Dump and along the waterfront, low-income residential districts are also a haven for the rodents.

THE RATS ARE DANGEROUS IN TWO WAYS. First, there is the danger of rat bites. No one knows how many people in the city have suffered from this. However, there is a more important aspect to the problem.

The bacteria carrying rats, which have increased from 21% to 46% of the entire rat population since 1961, carry two kinds of harmful bacteria. One kind infecting humans may cause Weil's disease, which may result in jaundice, hemorrhages and meningitis. The other type accounts for hundreds of cases of food poisoning in Canada every year. Young children are most susceptible to these bacteria and to being bitten.

Responsibility for rat control lies with a number of agencies and departments. The Federal government is responsible for rat control on Federal property along the waterfront. The Provincial department of Health and Welfare is responsible for the rest of the city, although actual health care and pest control programs are carried out by municipal health units.

LITTLE IS BEING DONE TO CONTROL THE RATS. The two city Public Health Inspectors are responsible only for city-owned housing. The best they can do is advise private home owners on pest control methods and poison available.

Landlords are responsible for rat control in all houses and apartment buildings they own. Since they rarely follow up on complaints, or tenants fear eviction

for complaining, the tenants often have to resort to private exterminators. The \$15 to \$20 they pay for each extermination effort will likely be wasted, since the rats will either return later or they will simply go next door.

The same thing happens at the City-owned dump. The weekly baitings of rat poison merely drive the rats into surrounding residential areas. The City, says the Union, is not using the most effective and advanced methods of rat control. One they suggest is the use of steroid mestranol, which causes sterility in foetal and new born rats.

As they put it, "At present the City is conducting an ineffective, hit-and-miss, chase-the-rats-around-the-City campaign".

Since the rat population is controlled by the amount of food and space available for them, killing off a few here and there does not accomplish anything. When rats burrow through sewers to the streets, the City sends out its works employees to kill the rodents, put poison and glass in the hole, and cover it up. A Union spokesman explained that this only means the rodents will come up a few feet away again.

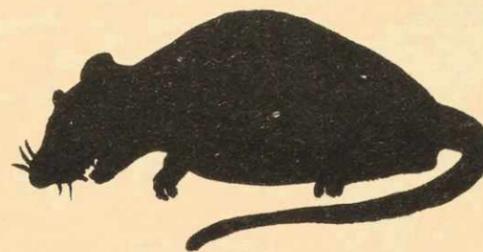
In fact this kind of program can increase the rat population, rather than kill it off. As already mentioned, it drives the rats to other areas of the city.

THE CITIZENS' HEALTH UNION IS CALLING FOR a co-ordinated and single agency control program to be carried out on a city-wide basis. They suggest the City Health Services Department is the logical agency to do this, aided financially and otherwise by the Provincial and Federal authorities.

The program, not to be contracted out to private companies, would not be expensive or cause tax increase the Union says. They point out the City finds money to the tune of \$10,000 for garbage bags when city workers go on strike, it pays City Manager Cyril Henderson a huge salary, and it also gives out private contracts for work that can be done more cheaply by city workers. The provincial government should also be prepared to aid in the cost of the program, the Union says.

The Atlantic Health Unit, apparently in response to the citizens' concern, is taking another survey of rat infestation in the city. A spokesman for the Citizens' Union said that "At most it offers citizens just one more survey at the taxpayers expense; this time apparently, as survey of other surveys that have already

STOP THE RATS



Citizen's Health Union

been done".

The spokesman added, "Direction and involvement from Citizens are the key to an effective rat eradication program — it is the common citizen who knows the extent of the problem, has been forced to live with the problem and who has for too long been ignored."

THE CITY WILL NOT BE ABLE TO USE THE ARGUMENT of different responsibilities for different areas, according to the spokesman. George Lahey, Director of the Atlantic Health Unit survey, admitted recently on a local radio show that an unco-ordinated attack on the rat problem could easily lead to an increase in the size of the rat population here. He also admitted that the Health Services Department's efforts are ineffective and are responsible for driving rats to residential areas from the Dump.

The Citizens' Union spokesman felt the City would be pressured into moving on the problem. "That will depend on the extent of public support and involvement," he said. "They can be pressured into it, and now that people have information and know about the problem, that pressure is going to be considerable."

Anyone interested in signing the petition or helping the Union in their efforts should contact their office at 429-0437 between 3 and 6 p.m., Monday to Friday.

Government agent exposed in metro left

The Solicitor General's Security Services Department really does exist. It's hard at work in Halifax, or it was until one of its agents was recently exposed.

Dave MacKinnon, a well-known figure in left-wing groups, was recently exposed as a conscious paid SS agent. He was a member of the New Morning Collective, one of the Canadian revolutionary organizations Solicitor-General Goyer said the SS would investigate.

MacKinnon started working for the Security and Intelligence branch of the RCMP in June, 1971. At that time, the central staff of New Morning and the leadership of the Partisan Party in Vancouver and Red Morning in Toronto, knew of his activity.

He was supposed to be operating as a double agent in the interests of the left. His task was to give only general information about the left to the SS and to collect information about the security force for future use by the left.

But New Morning came to the conclusion that MacKinnon, because of his practice, is either a conscious police agent, or is so "fucked up", he must be treated as an agent.

One example they cited was the Eastern Front, which MacKinnon apparently instigated. The small group was responsible recently for throwing a molotov cocktail into a Halifax federal government office building. New Morning denounced the act, and the group, as adventurist.

This criticism and others has now extended to the former agent. He was accused of being an adventurist and provocateur. The latter accusation fits well with a police agent's actions.

MacKinnon was also exposed because his stories of his activities and information he had did not click with other information New Morning received.

During his five months working as a double agent, MacKinnon reportedly earned about \$5000 for the information he gave. When the SS was formally set up in August, his salary apparently jumped considerably.

As a result of MacKinnon's actions, the New Morning press release warned that "the left in Canada do not deal with MacKinnon as he cannot be trusted."



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