

## For CHMC

# Students low priority

by Fred Promoli

A perennial issue on university campuses is housing for students. Co-operative housing is quickly becoming an effective method of easing the burden for many low-income people; to explain this movement in general terms and to discuss how it might apply to students, Tom Falus visited Dalhousie Monday evening.

Falus, a project planner in Toronto, has a considerable amount of first-hand experience in non-profit and co-operative housing. As a student he helped initiate and develop a non-profit housing project; he has held the post of co-ordinator of non-profit housing for the province of Ontario, and is presently in charge of the St. Lawrence project, an 8,000 unit non-profit development near the Toronto waterfront.

A short NFB film entitled "Co-operative Housing" introduced the topic, outlining several projects which have been completed in Toronto. The absence of leases, the threat of rent increases at a moment's notice, eviction orders, and being forced to deal with unsympathetic, anonymous landlords through their lawyers are among the reasons for tenants

seeking to organize themselves. The aim of the present movement is to provide housing to low and moderate income people in an integrated setting. This setting may take the form of a group of existing older buildings, or it may be a completely new building programme.

"Non-profit" housing and "co-operative" housing are basically the same, giving the members one vote in their operation; in the latter, however, "dues" are paid by the membership, rather than "rent". This further adds to the psychological advantage the programme gives, helping the participants to feel they actually own their homes.

The basic terms for starting a co-operative involve setting up a non-profit corporation. This requires six unpaid directors, and approximately \$150 in charter and lawyer's fees. "Start-up" grants of up to \$10,000 are available from CMHC. Mortgaging is 100 per cent at 8 per cent interest amortized over 50 years, making it both a cheaper and more stable proposition than private financing. This is especially suited to people on fixed incomes, since only taxes and utilities are subject to increase.

The procedure is outlined in a



Newly appointed education minister George Mitchell

booklet called "Co-op Housing", available free from the local CMHC branch. Tom Falus suggests that the time period involved from inception to moving day would be approximately two years, with a further two years before the members' organization is totally self-sufficient.

Co-op housing can be so good that it becomes a trap, Falus said. The families enjoying its benefits feel reluctant to leave, especially as rents come down once the mortgage is paid off. He cited an Estonian group in Toronto which had a twenty year mortgage, now paid, whose payments are now \$65 per month. When the buildings become too old and must be replaced, at least the land is available free of charge to the members who rebuild on it.

What sorts of spin-off effects may emerge from co-op housing? Falus gave examples from Toronto, Thunder Bay, and Temiskaming which included food co-ops, health care centres, day care co-ops, co-op automobile garages and gas stations, and mushroom and turkey-growing co-ops. Obviously, then, there are applications for rural areas as well as for the urban ones originally conceived.

In the Maritimes, there is a tradition of co-ops in the fishing industry, for example. Building co-ops are also provided with money from the CMHC, the difference being that the participants themselves have the skills required to go from site to site to erect the frames for each other, using the government provided "sweat equity", an incentive to spend their free time on the project. They then finish the work individually, and end up owning the building outright.

Falus asked the group to tell him what is happening in terms of co-op housing here in Halifax. The reply from the chair was "Not much", followed by "How can students

form a co-operative?" CMHC considers students as low priorities, Falus said; it does not encourage students to carry out their own projects because funds are limited and should go to low income people. Students are not low income people - they are "lowish" income (this got the biggest rise of the evening out of those in attendance), and do not compare to a family with four or five children living on a meager wage "forever".

Therefore, Falus said, interested students should work in conjunction with low income people to organize co-ops, especially within the context of existing housing (although some new building projects are being undertaken successfully this way). This is consistent with the prediction of the Alberta department of advanced education (Gazette, Oct. 21, 1976).

A discussion ensued, touching upon the recent developments with Peter Green Hall, the married student residence run as a co-op by students, complete with day care centre, although owned by the university. The only real difference between it and a co-op would seem to be that the residence is more selective in its occupants; the waiting list is certainly as long as those for some of the projects in Ontario.

Barbara Beach, the Student Union Housing Secretary and chairperson of the meeting, announced that an opportunity for all interested persons to find out more about existing co-operative housing specifically in Halifax and to discuss possibilities for the future will occur in a second meeting on Tuesday, November 23, at 7:30 p.m. in Room 314 SUB. The speakers will be Susan Derbyshire, programme manager for CMHC, Johanna Oosterveld, a founding member of the O.V.O. Co-operative in Halifax, and John Graham, the Director of Housing for Dalhousie University.

## FHSS formed

A group of high school students in the Halifax area have organized to "give high school students a say in the multi-faceted aspects of education". The founding meeting of this organization, called the Federation of High School Students (FHSS), was held on November 9 in the Dalhousie Student Union building.

To detail the purposes and goals of the group a three person steering committee was selected to do the research and organization for a November 25 meeting. On the steering committee are Jenifer Watts and Mark Lee of Queen Elizabeth High School and Jeff Regan of Sackville High School. This steering committee is mandated to establish the agenda for the next FHSS meeting at which time representatives from regional high

schools will discuss possible action they may take on various education issues.

The organization of high school students in this region grew, in part, from the work done by university students trying to organize National Student Day (November 9) in Halifax. As well, many high school students were aware that they needed to have input into decisions that affect their education.

The first meeting of FHSS followed a public meeting of high school and post-secondary students with Minister of Education George Mitchell on Tuesday. Groundwork for FHSS had been done over the past month by various high school students interested in seeing such a group formed to protect the rights of high school students.

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portfolio. He did express sympathy for student concerns but failed to back up this concern with any concrete promises for action, despite repeated efforts by Dal student Bernie MacDonnel to get such a promise.

General meetings held at the major post secondary institutions in the city met with varying degrees of success. At Mount Saint Vincent seventy-five people attended an educational session with administration and student representatives. The organization of this event sparked interest in broad student concerns and may mean further action in this area in the future.

At St. Mary's University one hundred students listened to an outline of the National Student Day issues prior to the free NSD disco planned by that student union. At the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD) an afternoon general meeting brought few students out of the classrooms to discuss student issues. Organizers there were disappointed and confused about the seeming lack of concern on the part of NSCAD students and say they are unsure of what to think of the poor attendance at the meeting.

Earlier in the day at Dalhousie, a

noon hour general meeting drew one hundred students to the lobby of the student union building but the workshops in housing, student aid and unemployment were attended by only a handful. Consequently, they were discontinued after one hour.

Nevertheless, student leaders at Dalhousie are calling the day a "qualified success" since they did do extensive educational work with the pamphleting and discussions with students prior to the actual day. National Student Day co-ordinator for Dalhousie Bernie MacDonnel said that he thought that the students who were exposed to NSD material or events had probably learned more about student aid and related problems, and that this must be considered worthwhile.

MacDonnel also stated that any failure of National Student Day must rest squarely on the shoulders of the Student Union since "the overall lack of support for National Student Day in principle and in substantive terms by the student government was a real problem. The only person on the executive who did any work for the day was Student Union President Gordie Neal: he did a great deal of work."

### In Remembrance

Students who have taken anthropology courses at Dalhousie will be saddened to hear of the passing of Professor R.R. Larsen. He had a talent for inspiring his students to better themselves—Professor Larsen was a teacher obsessed with perfection; seeking it in himself and hoping for the same in his students.

Beyond that, he was a very approachable and sensitive person—I wish we could go for another walk together.

"You never gain something but that you lose something." Professor Ray Larsen, who died October 30th, began his academic career at Dalhousie in 1972.

"He was a very warm individual who enjoyed talking with his students. We'll all miss him in the sociology-anthropology department."