

# Forest Hill Opposes Low Rent Housing

by bruce m. lantz

Last week the Capital District Planning Commission voted six to one in favor of rezoning the Forest Hill area to allow for the construction of 130 units of low rent public housing.

This recommendation now goes before the Fredericton City Council for approval. The issue was tabled at the Jan. 27 council meeting after the presentation of a petition by some residents of the area concerned who are opposed to the move.

The petition was brought before council by Lewis T. Smith and Leo Brandon, who were representing the residents of Forest Hill. The petition contained 585 signatures which comprised 70% of the householders of Forest Hill. In an interview with the Bruns, Mr. Smith said that the stand taken by the residents of this area had been largely misrepresented by the press to

date. He asserted that most of those who signed the petition were in favor of the proposed type of housing. According to Smith, the rezoning proposition has "no practical reason except that there was a chance to use the land available here and make a quick profit."

He further stated that many householders are opposed because Forest Hills "is the last area where middle income people can purchase a dwelling" and also because they were not told of the possibility of such a situation occurring when they purchased their homes.

Smith added that Forest Hills "is the wrong area for a tenant with a low income" as there is no bus service there and a lack of shopping facilities. He mentioned that there are at least two other areas in Fredericton suitable for such development, both of which are already properly zoned.

At the City Council

meeting, Mayor J.W. Bird turned the chair over to Deputy Mayor DiGiacinto and left the council chamber. This action was related to the fact that the work on the new buildings would be done by Fredericton Housing Ltd. if council approved the recommendation. Mayor Bird stated that although he has no ownership interest in this company, several members of his family do. Bird said he believed it important that "decisions by this council must not only be reached in a fair and impartial manner, but they

must also appear to be reached in a fair and impartial manner."

The plan as presented by the CDPC would call for the construction of five two and one-half storey buildings. These dwellings would be government subsidized and would be leased to tenants at rents proportionate to their incomes.

Donald Buck, head of the Urban Renewal Commission in St. John, said that low rent housing that is not handled properly can simply create

ghettoes which are immediately stigmatized; a proper solution would be to spread the low rent areas out over the city, so that no one area becomes labelled as poor. If this is done, Buck said that such housing would be of advantage to all concerned. He said that it would prevent slums, which in turn lower land value immensely. He added that low rent housing places the individual in a better environment which gives him a chance to better himself and break the poverty cycle.

## Drug Centre to Open

The Telegraph-Journal, week before last, suggested in an editorial the need for drug aid centres throughout New Brunswick.

Two residents of Fredericton are now setting up one such centre here. Mr. Bill Page and Doctor Roach have been advertising this set up to the town fathers and the community for five months and the centre is now in its final stages.

The purpose of the drug aid centre is to make information on dangerous drugs readily available to users here in Fredericton and on the campus. It will be presented in the form of pertinent medical data and personal counselling.

Page, the work force behind the centre, has previously worked with "The Trailer", a mobile drug aid centre in Toronto, and has closely followed the progress of "Road", another Toronto based drug aid centre. Dr. Roach although an optometrist, is very knowledgeable in chemical use and an invaluable aid to Page in setting up appointments and speaking engagements. According to Page, Dr. Roach is one of the most knowledgeable men (in chemicals) that he has met.

Page admitted to having "used various chemicals". At fifteen he worked for "Trailer" and continued to work in various half-way houses throughout Canada.

He is a resident of the city and feels he knows the attitudes of the city well. This he says "will be very important in approaching the establishment of a day rest centre here in Fredericton."

The centre is expected to be on Charlotte Street between University and Church. Although an exact location has not as yet been settled on, anywhere in this area would roughly centralize it. It will be an old apartment building equipped with the basic necessities.

The project appears to be backed financially by the New Brunswick government and Page seems to have been given "carte blanche". When asked how he convinced his backers, Page said that the government was already concerned with the problem and was understanding of his plans. He also told them that as far as

chemicals are concerned, Fredericton is three to four years behind Montreal or Toronto. If the flow of bad chemicals can be stopped before it is too late there will be none of the problems of speed freaks and freak-outs here in Fredericton.

The organization itself is tailored along the lines of now operational centres in other cities such as Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver.

The organization hopes to promote a basic understanding of the problems of drug use and the problems of the drug users. Page "does not want to rehabilitate anyone," he said in a phone interview, but, "help those who want it."

"I will not solicit for the centre in the streets. I want to clean all the shit chemicals out of Fredericton but if people don't come in, it won't happen."

The centre will have, among other things "a 24 hour phone service, free legal advice (Hazzen Strange), free medical aid (Dr. Eric Jamieson), and hopefully, a drug analysis lab where chemicals will be analysed and the results made public on mimeographed sheets. Above all, it will be a place to drink coffee, listen to tunes and talk to people with the same hangups."

As for people resources, Page said he had "all the volunteers he needed and many more standing by." Page and two friends will be working 8 hour shifts when the program starts, trying to handle the problems they are expecting.

Several interviews with private citizens have revealed that generally the people are in favour of the idea and feel there is a definite need for the centre. However there were several criticisms of the idea. Two regular chemical users, one from the campus and one from Fredericton High School offered these criticisms: "It's a good idea but the place is going to be busted and besides that, the kids won't want to be associated with anything that would cause their parents to suspect they were doing dope or chemicals."

The other said, "Page has got a really together idea but it will turn out like the one here last summer: lots of hassle from the heat and citizens of Fredericton bitching their heads off about the long haired

weirdos ruining their tourist trade."

One non user, a college student said, "people on this campus involved in drug use need professional help and this centre is one good way of getting it. I'm afraid the people won't go because they think they're alright."

A Fredericton businessman was concerned with commercial effects, "I don't think Mr. Page realizes that the people involved in drug use here make money from selling drugs and are not willing to help something that will take money out of their pockets."

A Fredericton housewife is expecting trouble from the type of people she feels the centre will attract. Fredericton does not need a drug aid centre because there is very little problem with drug users here. The centre will give Fredericton a bad name because all the hippies will come here and stage their love-ins and peace marches.

Dr. Jamieson who will contribute his services comments: "I support Pages' ideas and plans wholeheartedly and have offered my help, if he needs it. The students on campus and downtown teenagers will be grateful of a place to gather and talk or just relax."

City Hall when contacted did not comment at the time but indications are that the Mayor is in support of the plan.

As for the near future, Page said, "the centre will run indefinitely, until the problems are cleaned up here in Fredericton. I hope it won't be busted, it would be to the advantage of the people of Fredericton and RCMP to let the house try and solve their own problems without harassment."

Quoting Page again, "it looks like the RCMP will let me try it my way for a while." "Of course after a while interest in the centre will drop but by that time it will be firmly established and running on reputation. The financial setup will remain the same if a certain progression can be shown in Fredericton's drug situation."

"All in all, the future of the Fredericton drug aid centre looks good. I hope we can do something about the problems involved in drug use.

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