

IS CO-OP BOUND TO FAIL ?

by larry lamont

The new co-op housing is destined for failure — a repetition of what happened to Rochdale and what is happening to the downtown co-ops.

The new Montgomery St. residence will be filled by people only interested in inexpensive accommodation and those who are fed up with university residences. These are the types presently living in co-ops — people lacking a co-operative consciousness in a co-operative that is supposedly running on a co-operative philosophy.

Co-operation is an idea which differs with individual philosophies. However, all people with co-operative philosophies share a common belief in self-denial for achieving a common end synonymous with all. Co-operation is working together. Co-operation is selflessness. Co-operation is above individual pettiness.

Today the N.B. Residence Co-operative is a bureaucracy incorporated under the Co-operative Associations Act of New Brunswick which, by next month will house approximately four hundred students in a 2.7 million dollar apartment complex. Two years ago the NBRC was one house on Brunswick St. — a commune held together by the sheer magnitude of problems confronting it. Today that house is just another residence. Something happened.

As the NBRC expanded, co-operative living declined. The founding members of the Co-op were concerned with solving the problems of student housing shortage, high rents, poor university residences. To

a large extent these problems are closer to solution as a result of the efforts of the NBRC. However, somewhere along the way the means got subordinated to the ends. We've got cheaper accommodation, but not co-operation. The constitution of the NBRC reads that one of its purposes is to "provide housing on a co-operative bases": I submit that the NBRC is no longer fulfilling this purpose.

Co-operation has failed because it has become bureaucratic in nature. Bureaucracy in the Co-op does not encourage participation from the individual house member. The NBRC Board of Directors has fifteen members, all voluntary, but none of which are Co-op residents. A General Manager and a Business Manager are employed primarily to get the Montgomery Street Complex under way. There is a committee of three for each house and a house manager elected on a rotational basis, who is responsible for buying the food. In a house of fifteen there is actually only one person contributing to the general welfare of the house beyond the limits of his fag duties. Management is done higher up by the Board, the members of which are anonymous to the individual house member.

Essentially everything has been done for the house member already. The Co-ops have been open for two years, resulting in fall of l'espirit de corps and new ideas. The house member no longer sees himself as a participant in a bold project, or even a member of the Co-op. He is a student with only a roof over his head.



The individual house member can only identify with the house by working collectively with the other residents. But this is defeated by the fag system, by which each member does his weekly chore in rotation by himself. A fag list is in itself a revelation that one cannot do any work for the general welfare of the house unless he has something dictated for him to do. It does not imply that each house member has any sense of co-operation at all. The fag list is a bad computer.

But fags are either not done, done poorly, or done half-heartedly. The Co-op is comprised of people with only self-interest in mind. One does not move into the Co-op because one is interested in living in a co-operative

environment, an experiment in community living. One is interested in the \$32.00 per month that can be saved by living in one of the downtown houses. There is no co-operative consciousness among the members. A fag master must look around the house each week to see if the weeks fags were done!

It is absurd that when one is getting something for practically nothing, one cheats on it as much as one can; co-operation here means the minimum, or nothing if you can get away with it. Walk into one of the downtown Co-ops today and you will see the ever familiar sight of dusty halls, sinks full of unwashed dishes, and bathrooms that resemble the SUB on a Friday night. And you YOU, after all,

expect the house member to participate in the management of his affairs, when that same member does not do his dishes because no one is looking.

I am convinced that the problem is unsolvable as the NBRC is structured now. The structure inhibits co-operation in co-operative housing. The NBRC will either have to disband or substitute a structure which makes communal living the only priority.

If the situation is hopeless now, it will be chaotic in a few months. The problem will not be solved by any resolutions from the Board of Directors. The people moving into the Montgomery Street Co-op will be leeches. The NBRC is up against the wall.

VIEWPOINT

what do you think of the brunswickan



dave beattie
eng 1

"It does a pretty good job of covering events on campus."



danny porter
arts 1

"Interesting, informative, explanatory in that it gives information about the day to day routine of university life."



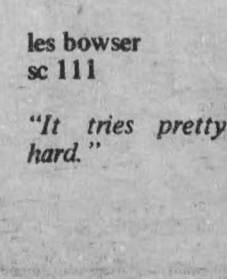
bob brown
sc 111

"Not too much. It could improve."



robert foster
sc 1

"It's not any better or any worse than any other university papers I've read."



les bowser
sc 111

"It tries pretty hard."



zoltan szabo
bus admin 11

"Good paper but one-sided."



richard violette
sc 1

"I find that the Brunswickan is a good paper for students."



gordon falconer
sc 11

"Compared to the Daily Gleaner it is number one."



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ME

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the condition of often a disgrace, y to drunks, but ber patrons. Why Student Council set of rules, em, and sanction d?

must also add a the writer of the nk possibly, you r point across a if you did not rity (majority of supervisor when s to leave SUB) in kan, for I'm sure not reiterate this his mother or

Sincerely,
John Harper
Arts 3