

**Comment**

# Housing in Review

by John D'Orsay

The sale of Rochdale, the student housing co-op and free school in Toronto by Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation last week indicates that the federal government may have some ideas on what to do about student housing.

The apparant direction of the Trudeau government, on student housing, seems to be a retreat to early '60's policy.

The Rochdale sale is consistent with its new direction since CMHC took a five million dollar loss selling the eighteen story, 341 unit building to the Metro Toronto Housing Co., Ltd., for public housing. The building had cost 5 million to build in 1968, 2.5 million to renovate in the last two years, 2 million in legal and receivers fees for CHMC to gain title for the students, 2 million in city taxes and 2.5 million in unpaid interest on the debt.

The Metro Toronto Housing Co. bought the building for nine million and intends to recover the costs by charging \$205 per month for bachelors and \$227 for two person suites. The sale has various other agreements for rent subsidies and grants from the province and federal government attached to it to permit further rent reductions. One half the tenants would be eligible for these subsidies and would be selected from waiting lists numbering some 2,700 already.

CMHC admits that Toronto has a shortage of student housing exceeded in severity only by that at Simon Fraser. However, the integration of the lending body into a department concerned with the problem of the urban environment (the Ministry of State for Urban Affairs) has awakened policymakers to the fact that students are part of the low income housing problem. The thinking of the ministry is that students housing and public housing are two fronts for attacking the same problem. This being the case whether any money goes to student housing becomes a moral and political issue: should the available money be put into student accomodation or into housing for low income people? The bias of the ministry appears to be toward the low income component, perhaps

reflecting the fact that this group includes one third of the population while students are seen as temporarily displaced members of the high income group. The second factor involved is the term for which one requires housing for the poor: this is a lifetime need.

As one spokesman for the ministry said "I look at Acadia, where students are living in pretty bad conditions in town. I ask, should I build a university residence, and make the slums available for workers? The students are only going to be there eight months of the year anyway."

The willingness of the federal government to indirectly alleviate the student housing problem stumbles over the Nova Scotia government's decision not to build public housing. With the provincial government out of the cost sharing programmes there won't be any relief, for students or the poor, from the present situation.

The president of CMHC, William Teron, has persisted in the attitudes that made him a millionaire developer in Ottawa: blaming students and the poor for their housing problems rather than the distribution system that made him wealthy.

Presently the Student Unions of the University of Manitoba and the University of Winnipeg, both located in Winnipeg, are participating in a joint project to help alleviate the housing crisis in that city. Negotiations are being held between the students and the Federal Government concerning the availability of money to the Unions for the construction of student housing.

Perhaps the activities in Winnipeg will be an example to the Student leaders in Halifax. When one considers the apparent housing crisis at Dalhousie it seems that all angles should be tested to solve the problem. Developing a Student Union Building Housing project has not yet been tried, and a "wait and see" attitude should not be taken, but this avenue should be explored thoroughly. If we act now, instead of crossing our fingers, maybe in a few years we will have adequate housing.



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