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Problems of the deaf discussed at Halifax conference

Interview by Glenn Walton for the Dal Gazette with Bob Williamson, Vice President of the Registered Interpreters for the Deaf of Nova Scotia [RIDNS].

Gazette: First of all, how many deaf or hearing-impaired people are there in Nova Scotia?

Williamson: There are approximately 55,000 people in Nova Scotia who have varying degrees of hearing loss, of whom about 16,000 live in the metropolitan Halifax-Dartmouth area. Of those 55,000, approximately 600 are profoundly deaf, i.e. people who cannot use any hearing to help them communicate.

Gazette: What are their main problems?

Williamson: There are three basic problems. First, the main problem is obviously communication. Some people master speech, meaning they can vocalize and learn to lip read, but many others, especially the congenitally deaf have great difficulty master-

ing speech. These people communicate with sign language, which is a language in its own right, but which few hearing people know. To communicate they need interpreters.

Secondly, because of this communication barrier, many deaf have limited access to public social services, which are available to hearing people. For example, when a deaf person wants to consult a lawyer or a doctor, it would be impossible for them to communicate their needs without an interpreter.

Third, there is a sense of isolation caused by the communication barrier. Deaf people are adversely affected by poor public attitudes and by discrimination. By poor public attitude I mean phrases like 'deaf and dumb' or 'deaf mute', phrases which are misleading and offensive. Deaf people have the same intelligence as any other group of people, as well as the same

vocal cords. Discrimination often leads to unemployment or underemployment as well as the denial of access to public services.

Gazette: What is the RIDNS?
Williamson: The Registered Interpreters for the Deaf of Nova Scotia is a voluntary charitable non-profit organization established to foster the right of visual language interpreter services for the hearing-impaired community of Nova Scotia. Its objectives are to promote interpreting services throughout the province, to promote training and evaluation of visual language interpreters, to educate the public about sign language and the ethical use of interpreters, to educate the public about sign language and the ethical use of interpreters, including arranging sign language classes in the metro area, and perhaps most importantly to promote the rights of the deaf to equal access to communication via a visual language interpreter. There is an interpreting service in Halifax available to anyone's use.

Gazette: But surely not all deaf people can get interpreting whenever they need it?

Williamson: Usually you have to call in advance, but if you do, you can have one.

Gazette: Then a student can have interpreting?

Williamson: Yes, interpreting has been done at Dal and other educational institutions.

Gazette: It must be very expensive.

Williamson: Yes, but the philosophy of the interpreting service is that the deaf should have equal access to communication, therefore the deaf person is not required to pay.

Gazette: Who pays?

Williamson: The Interpreter Service for the Deaf bills public services for any interpreting. Often they find it difficult to collect from private firms or lawyers, who often add the cost of the interpreting to their deaf clients' bills. Therefore, the interpreting

service pays for the service out of a floating fund.

Gazette: Is the government supportive?

Williamson: Yes, generally, but the RIDNS is working towards a firmer government commitment.

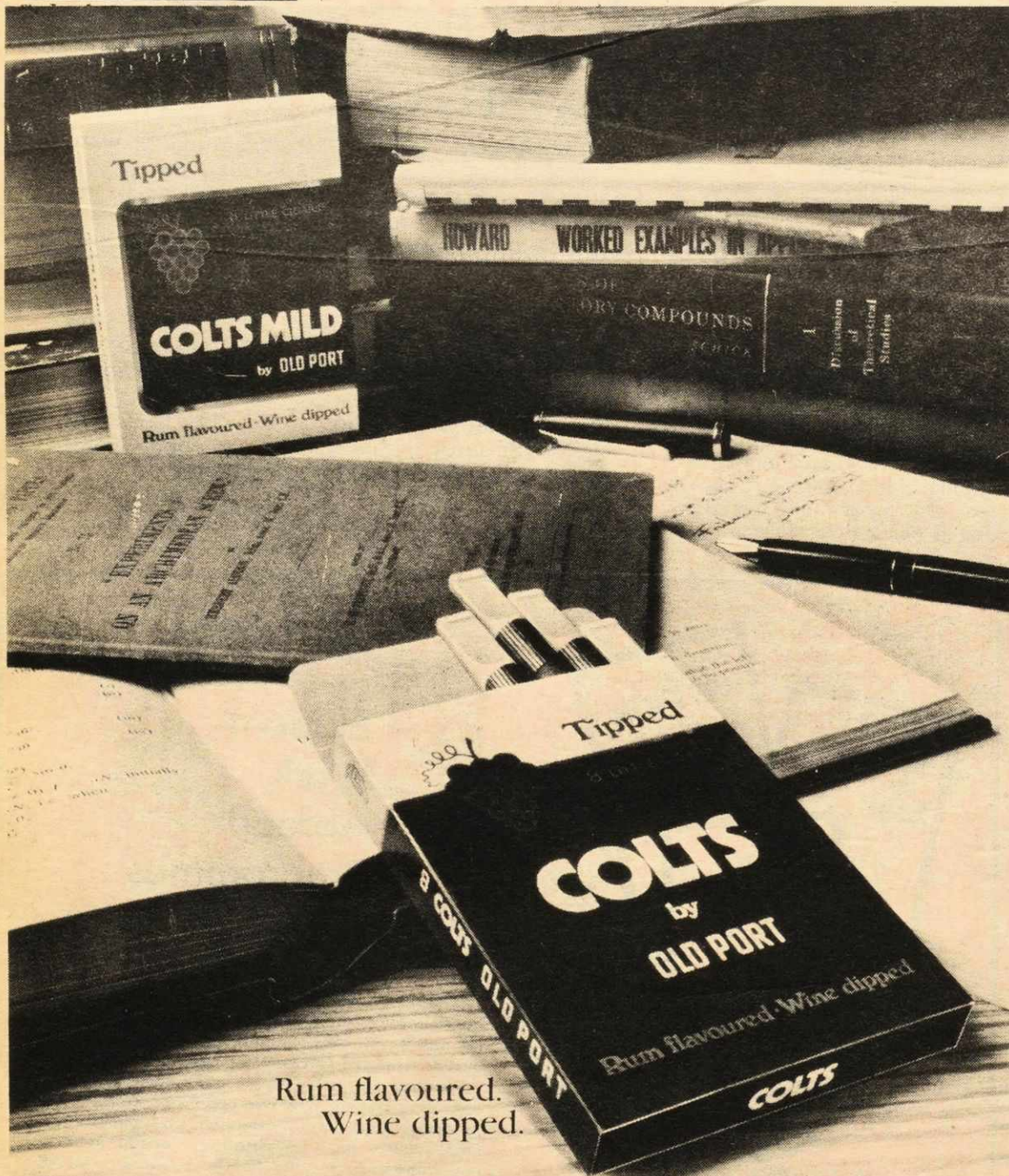
Gazette: This is the International Year of the Disabled Person. What is the RIDNS undertaking?

Williamson: The RIDNS has secured a \$28,000 Canada Community Development Grant from CEIC (Canadian Employment and Immigration Commission) for a 6-month project to search the province locating and evaluating people who act as unpaid visual language interpreters. The resulting registry will provide access for the deaf to services such as hospitals, by providing an insured interpreters service.

Gazette: Recently the Conference on Human Rights and Access Services for Hearing Impaired People was held in Halifax. What was discussed?

Williamson: The conference met to exchange the experiences and ideas of the specialized support services (like the interpreters service) which have developed across Canada. Gordon Fairweather, chief commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission spoke about federal human rights and the disabled. The deaf will be protected under the new Human Rights Charter if it is passed by Parliament and sent to Britain. He asked the conference for its support of the federal proposal.

Other speakers outlined the types of services offered to the deaf across Canada; spoke—or signed—about the problems a deaf person faces, and praised the work of the recently formed Metro area Community Service Board for the Deaf, which sponsored the conference. Incidentally, this conference, where all the different service groups in the country got together, was the first of its kind.



Rum flavoured.
Wine dipped.

Crack a pack of Colts along with the books.

Tim and Larry announce contest winners

Tim and Larry, radio personalities on CKDU, almost FM, have announced the winners of their "Draw Tim and Larry" Contest. The winners are Karen Robicheau, First Prize, and Ann MacDonald, Second Prize. Honorable mention was given to everyone who entered.

The winning drawing was a splendid colored picture entitled "We used to be priests, but we're all right now!" It features Larry as a curly redhead attired in mesh stockings and 5" heels, holding a long whip. Tim is featured reclining in "red satin"

shorts, he "eats spinach" and he has "chest hairs so thick that he has to part it with two combs."

The author, Karen Robicheau, describes herself as age 19, grade two.

Second prize went to Ann MacDonald. It shows Tim as a cyclops (one eye) with antennae. He is holding a tree and Larry sits cross-legged on a branch. The tree is noted as Tim and Larry's Tree of Knowledge or the lude tree (sic).

Tim and Larry wish to thank all entries.