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## Canadian trek

# Cycling for the homeless

by Michael Orsini

**MONTREAL (CUP)** — John Green is wheeling his social conscience into motion.

The 26-year-old Concordia University student is embarking on a six-month bicycle trip across Canada next October to raise money for the homeless.

Green chose to cycle during the dead of winter because that's "when people need shelter the most — it's cold."

His trek will begin in St. John's, Nfld., winding down more than 4,000 miles and 12 cities later in Vancouver. He might even make his way through the tundra of the Yukon and Northwest Territories.

Green doesn't expect to turn everyone's attention to the plight of Canada's homeless.

"It's naive of me to think this (trip) is going to make a drastic change in people," says Green, a second-year Applied Social Sciences student. "There are always

going to be people who give a shit and people who don't give a shit."

An estimated 250,000 Canadians have no fixed address, according to a recent report on homelessness prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD).

There are only about 14,000 beds in the 472 shelters across the country to accommodate these growing numbers.

The CCSD wants provinces to develop programs to slow down or stop the demolition of rooming houses. Quebec has lost two-thirds of its 15,000 rooms in the last 10 years, making affordable housing almost impossible for those who need it.

The CCSD's acting executive director said the number of homeless people is only going to get worse.

"If unemployment goes up, homelessness is going to go up," Valerie Sims said.

"Affordable housing is not getting better with the recent federal cutbacks to social housing."

So why has Green chosen to become an activist for the homeless?

"I guess part of it is just showing that I care," he says. "I'm generally interested in helping people."

Green is creating an organization to promote alternative projects for the homeless, such as Dans la Rue, a mobile shelter for Montreal street kids.

He is also trying to get corporate sponsorship to help cover the spiralling costs of the trip, including airfare to Newfoundland, at least two specially-designed bikes, and other cycling equipment.

Green said erasing the stereotypes commonly associated with people living on the street will be a daunting task.

"To be on the street doesn't mean that you're a failure. When was the last time you walked in for a job without bathing for three weeks?"

"Potentially, this problem can touch anybody."

## Socialist

• continued from page 5

If Nyanga conveyed a sense of exotic socialist urgency, Wright's tone was strictly down to earth. She emphasized the need for Canadians who care about their individual and collective destinies to act.

"The system is yours. You're part of the political process. Make politicians accountable" she said.

Nyanga concluded by appealing for support from Canadians. "We need your help. We're concentrating all our fires on getting rid of apartheid."

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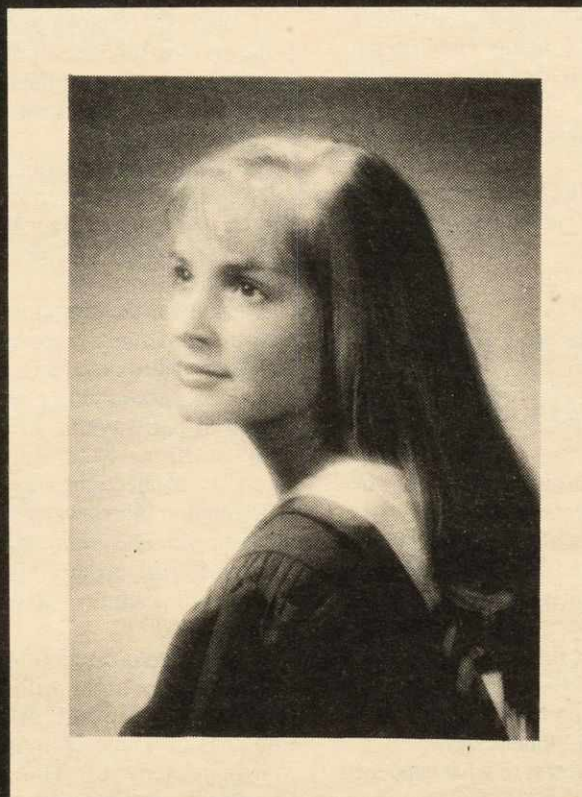
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